

Black History and the Class Struggle

No. 15

Free Mumia Abu-Jamal! Abolish the Racist Death Penalty!



New York City, August 1995: Labor-centered united-front demonstration initiated by Partisan Defense Committee, part of international campaign of protest and publicity that won stay of Jamal's execution.

Workers Vanguard photos



Black Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!

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Introduction

This edition of *Black History and the Class Struggle* centers on the fight to free black journalist and death row political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal from the hands of the state's executioners and the prison hellhole that now confines him.

In the history of the United States, the causes of class-war prisoners have come to define entire political generations. In the 1920s, the case of Sacco and Vanzetti—two Italian anarchist workers framed up and sentenced to death on charges of murder and robbery—symbolized a decade of ruling-class reaction against leftists, immigrants, blacks and labor following the 1917 Russian Revolution. Ushered in by the mass deportations of immigrants and jailing of radical leftists under the Palmer Raids, the 1920s saw the massive growth of the Ku Klux Klan and the decimation of the trade unions. In the 1930s, the defense of the Scottsboro Boys—nine black youth railroaded to prison on fabricated rape charges—became synonymous with the fight against Jim Crow racism in the American South. Today, the name of Mumia Abu-Jamal has come to embody the fight against the racist death penalty in the U.S. both nationally and internationally.

As the article "Death Row Speedup Targets Minorities" lays bare, the increase in executions is an expression of the impulse to genocide by America's racist capitalist rulers. The cruel and bitter reality of a whole generation of black ghetto youth caught in a system that couldn't give a damn whether they live or die, much less get any education, is addressed in the article "Desperation, Segregation and the 'Ebonics' Controversy." The destruction of social programs benefitting the working class and poor have taken first aim at blacks and immigrants. After banning "illegal" immigrants from attending public schools and from receiving non-emergency medical care, the state of California recently passed Proposition 227, abolishing bilingual education in the public schools. The article "Down With 'English Only' Racism!" demonstrates that the ruling-class war against immigrants and blacks is aimed at increasing the exploitation and oppression of the entire working class.

The campaign by cops, prosecutors and judges to carry through the execution of Mumia Abu-Jamal—a powerful spokesman against the racist brutality and reaction which defines American capitalist society—epitomizes the apparatus of state repression deployed by the rulers of this country against any who would

oppose them. Since taking up his case over a decade ago, the Partisan Defense Committee—a legal and social defense organization whose views are in accordance with the proletarian, revolutionary, internationalist principles of the Spartacist League—has sought to make his cause synonymous with the struggle to do away with a social and economic system based on exploitation and increasingly hideous oppression. The power to do that lies in the hands of the multiracial working class, which produces all the wealth in this society. Mobilizing that power is a question of building a revolutionary workers party, acting as the champion of all the oppressed, that can bring to the working class the consciousness of its historic interests to be the instrumentality to shatter the power of the racist capitalist rulers and their state.

Fundamental to such consciousness is the understanding that victory for labor is predicated upon its political independence from the capitalist exploiters. As we wrote in a special *Workers Vanguard* supplement titled "Unchain Labor's Power!" (reprinted in *WV* No. 673, 5 September 1997), issued following last summer's successful Teamsters strike against UPS:

"Translating the widespread sentiment of victory in the UPS strike into an aroused and struggling labor movement—mobilized in defense of its own class interests and the interests of blacks, immigrants and all of those at the bottom of this society—is at bottom a political question... The fundamental starting point must be the understanding that this society is divided into two hostile classes: workers who are forced to sell their labor power in order to survive and the property-owning capitalist class to whom their labor power is sold. The interests of these two classes are irreconcilably counterposed."

The impact of the UPS strike—which broke two decades of crushing defeats for labor—has been seen in an outbreak of labor struggles recently, from Philadelphia transit workers to the United Auto Workers strike against General Motors in Flint, Michigan. But these battles have been grievously undermined and betrayed by the trade-union misleaders, who subordinate the interests of labor to the enemy class. Breaking this treacherous alliance requires building a new leadership of the trade unions, rooted in the program of class struggle as against the class collaborationism of the present labor bureaucrats, whose policies have meant a series of defeats and betrayals of labor struggle.

The article "Coleman Young: From

CIO Union Organizer to Overseer for Auto Bosses" elaborates the historical roots of the ties that have long bound the power of labor to the Democratic Party, which just as much as the Republicans is a party of the capitalist exploiters. A radical, and often courageous, black and labor activist, Young served his political apprenticeship in the orbit of the reformist Communist Party (CP). Organizers of many of the battles that formed the CIO industrial unions in the 1930s, the CP channeled this militancy into support for Franklin D. Roosevelt's Democratic Party. The forebears of the current AFL-CIO leadership cemented this alliance through the purge of CP supporters and other militant workers from the unions in the late 1940s and '50s.

Looking at the world through the same prism as the capitalist rulers, the trade-union tops see allies of labor in the parties of capital, its cops and courts. Our articles on the frame-up of Mumia Abu-Jamal at the hands of various agencies of the Philadelphia police and the courts give the lie to this treacherous myth. Far from being a "neutral" body which can be pressured to act on behalf of labor and minorities, as the union bureaucrats and liberals preach, the capitalist state is an institution for the defense of the propertied class against workers and all the dispossessed.

The all-sided attacks on immigrants and blacks—bipartisan policies led by the Democratic Clinton White House—aim to reinforce the racial divide which the

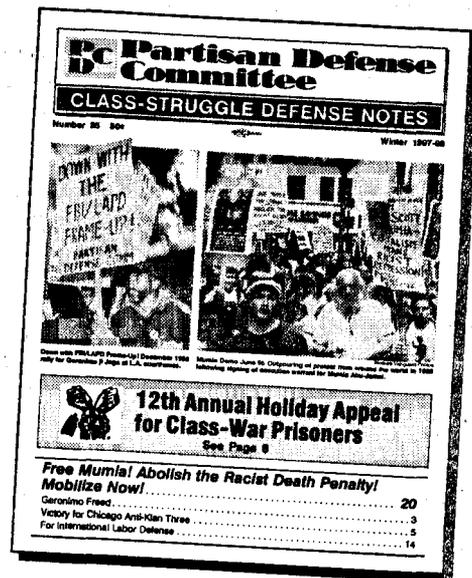
capitalists created in order to increase the exploitation of all the working people. The forcible subjugation of blacks at the bottom of this society has long been a key prop of the American capitalist system, with the color bar used to obscure and reinforce the irreconcilable class divide between labor and capital. Struggles such as the fight to mobilize labor for Jamal's freedom are crucial to imbuing the working class with the understanding that it must champion the cause of black emancipation if labor itself is to be free. Out of such struggles will come the leading elements of a multiracial revolutionary workers party, armed with a program to eradicate the entire system of capitalist exploitation through proletarian socialist revolution. ■

Join the Campaign to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal!

Funds are urgently needed for legal defense!
Make a contribution today to the Bill of Rights Foundation (earmarked "Mumia Abu-Jamal Legal Defense") and mail to: Committee to Save Mumia Abu-Jamal, 163 Amsterdam Ave., No. 115, New York, NY 10023-5001

Organize protest! Pass motions demanding Jamal's freedom in your unions, campus, community and church organizations. Get your union or organization to make a contribution and join rallies and protests for Jamal. Publicize Jamal's case in your union or organization's newsletter.

Spread the word! Contact the PDC for flyers and copies of *Class-Struggle Defense Notes*, with its coverage of the struggle to free Mumia and all class-war prisoners. The current issue of *CSDN* (No. 25, Winter 1997-98) is available for 50 cents. The PDC video, *From Death Row, This Is Mumia Abu-Jamal*, can be purchased for \$20 from our New York City address.



The Partisan Defense Committee is a class-struggle, non-sectarian legal and social defense organization which champions cases and causes in the interest of the whole of the working people. This purpose is in accordance with the political views of the Spartacist League. Our heritage is the working-class defense policies of the International Labor Defense (ILD), under its founder and first secretary from 1925-1928, James P. Cannon. The PDC was initiated by the Spartacist League in 1974, and stands on the record of principled defense work conducted by the Spartacist League.

The PDC is partisan: we stand unconditionally on the side of working people and their allies in struggle against their exploiters and oppressors. We place all our faith in

the power of the masses and no faith whatever in the "justice" of the courts. While favoring all possible legal proceedings for the cases we support, we recognize that the courts, prisons and police exist to maintain through organized violence and terror the rule of one class over others. In its partisanship, the PDC is also anti-sectarian. We champion causes and defend cases whose victorious outcomes are in the interest of working people, irrespective of particular political views. We defend, in the words of James P. Cannon, "any member of the workers movement, regardless of his views, who suffered persecution by the capitalist courts because of his activities or his opinion" (*The First Ten Years of American Communism*).

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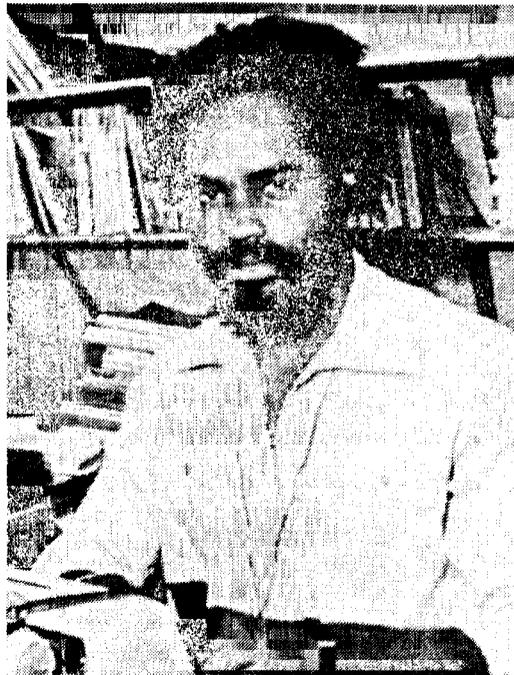
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Mumia Abu-Jamal's Life of Struggle

• For over 30 years, Mumia Abu-Jamal, 44, has been in the cross hairs of Philadelphia's racist cops. At the age of 14, Jamal was beaten and arrested for protesting a presidential rally for Alabama governor George "Segregation Forever" Wallace, held in the white racist bastion of South Philly—home of Mayor Frank Rizzo. He fought to change the name of Benjamin Franklin High School to Malcolm X High School and was later expelled for circulating pamphlets calling for "black revolutionary student power."

• Co-founder and Minister of Information of the Philadelphia chapter of the Black Panther Party in 1969 at the age of 15: Jamal wrote for the *Black Panther*, which, he recalled, "charged my pen with a distinctive anti-authoritarian, and anti-establishment character that survives to this day." He wrote Panther leaflets which drew death threats from the Police Civil Disobedience Squad. As Minister of Information, Mumia was featured in a front-page article in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* in January 1970. The FBI and Philadelphia police began daily surveillance of Jamal, including putting him on the FBI's Security Index and the ADEX list. While still in his teens, he was arrested during one of many cop raids during the notorious FBI/cop COINTELPRO conspiracy against the Black Panther Party.

• Widely acclaimed journalist: Jamal was broadcast around the country on the National Black Network, Mutual Black Network, National Public Radio, the Associated Press and Radio Information Center for the Blind. He interviewed Julius Erving, Bob Marley, Alex Haley, Puerto Rican independence fighters and international public figures. His work was guided by "the principle that we are oppressed Black human beings first." Jamal spoke "of the triumphs and tragedies of poor and oppressed Black and Hispanic people with passion and eloquence—in both English and the Spanish language." He was elected president of the Philadelphia chapter of the Association of Black Journalists at age 26 in 1980. *Philadelphia Magazine* named Jamal one of its "people to watch" in 1981, citing his "eloquent, often passionate, and always insightful interviews [which] bring a special dimension to radio reporting."



Mumia Abu-Jamal in 1980

Philadelphia Magazine

• Well-known supporter of Philadelphia MOVE: Jamal covered Rizzo's 8 August 1978 press conference following the siege on the Powelton Village MOVE home by more than 600 heavily armed cops earlier that day. Rizzo blamed the "new breed of journalism" for the death of one cop during the cop assault and warned, "They believe what you write, what you say. And it's got to stop. And one day, and I hope it's in my career, that you're going to have to be held responsible and accountable for what you do." Jamal recalls that after the Powelton Village cop attack, he "gave voice to the members of the MOVE organization.... Most black reporters ignored them, while the white press slandered them."

Jamal was conspicuous for his uniquely favorable interviews with MOVE members from the depths of Philadelphia jails. He describes how:

"While walking to work one day I... passed in front of an idling cop car—I glanced at the driver, white, with brown hair, and wearing dark shades. He 'smiled,' pulled his hand out of the car, and pointed a finger at me, his thumb and other fingers cocked like a gun—Bang! Bang! Bang!—the finger-gun jerked as if by recoil, and, the cop returns his fire-finger to the window, giving it a cowboyish blast of breath, before returning it to an imaginary 'holster.' He & pal laff. Car rolls."

His esteem among colleagues was so great that the day after his arrest, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* (10 December 1981) wrote a feature article, "The Suspect—Jamal: An Eloquent Activist Not Afraid to Raise His Voice." The *Inquirer* described him as a "gadfly among journalists and easily recognizable because of his dreadlock hairstyle, revolutionary politics and deep baritone voice," and noted he was credited with opening up the Association of Black Journalists to minority groups less organized than blacks "who usually never had access to the press in getting their voice heard."

On 3 July 1982, Jamal was falsely convicted of murder after a month-long frame-up trial and sentenced to be executed. In 1989 and again the following year, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court denied Jamal's effort to appeal his death sentence. Then, on 1 October 1990 and again on 26 November 1990, the U.S. Supreme Court denied Jamal's petitions for review of his conviction and death sentence.

On 1 June 1995, Tom Ridge, elected governor of Pennsylvania in November 1994 on a right-wing "law and order" platform, signed the warrant for Jamal's execution on August 17. Ridge acted with full knowledge that on June 5 Jamal's attorneys were filing a Pennsylvania state court petition for review of Jamal's conviction and sentence and for the removal of "hanging judge" Albert Sabo from hearing his appeal.

The signing of the warrant touched off international protest which won a stay of Jamal's execution on August 7. After a weeks-long court hearing, on September 15 Judge Sabo issued his denial of Jamal's petition to overturn his death sentence and conviction. In the course of Jamal's appeal of Sabo's ruling to the Pennsylvania Supreme Court, two supplemental court hearings have been held.

A final decision on the appeal is expected by the state Supreme Court at any time. Governor Ridge has vowed that if the court upholds Judge Sabo, he will issue a new warrant of execution. The fight to save Mumia from legal lynching has become *the* focal point of struggle against the racist death penalty in the U.S. ■

Court Hearings: New Evidence of Frame-Up

Free Mumia Now!

13 JULY—On 7 August 1995, Mumia Abu-Jamal was granted a stay of execution ten days before he was scheduled to be put to death. What stayed the hand of the state's executioners was a massive international campaign of protest enlisting broad sections of the labor movement, civil libertarians, leftists and youth, as well as several heads of state including Nelson Mandela of South Africa and French president Jacques Chirac.

At the time the death warrant against him was lifted, Jamal and his legal defense team were in the midst of a battle in the courtroom of notorious "hanging judge" Albert Sabo, fighting to reverse Jamal's frame-up conviction and death sentence for the 1981 shooting of Philadelphia police officer Daniel Faulkner. Sabo, who presided over Jamal's original 1982 "trial," predictably ruled against Jamal's appeal in a 154-page decision issued on 15 September 1995, only four days after the closing arguments in the appeal hearings. Further evidence of Jamal's innocence and of prosecutorial misconduct presented in two subsequent appeal hearings was also denied by Sabo in decisions that echoed virtually verbatim the prosecution's frame-up case. Jamal's appeal is now before the Pennsylvania Supreme Court.

With a decision expected to come down any time now, the sinister forces

who want to silence forever the man who became known as the "voice of the voiceless" for his searing indictments of the racist brutality of American capitalism are again gearing up their campaign for death. On June 14, supporters of the Fraternal Order of Police (F.O.P.) and others who want to see Jamal dead took out a full-page ad on the back page of the Sunday *New York Times* "Week in Review" section raising a cry for Jamal's execution. As Jamal's lead attorney, Leonard Weinglass, wrote in a letter of response which the *Times* refused to print:

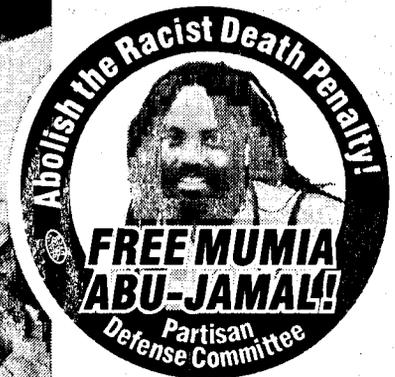
"Since this sinister ad only repeats old, discredited tales and completely ignores the evidence presented in Jamal's appeals, one is left to ask, 'Why now?' The Pennsylvania State Supreme Court is about to render a decision on Jamal's appeal of Judge Sabo's predictable denial of a new trial for Jamal. Pennsylvania Governor Tom Ridge, who signed Jamal's death warrant in June 1995, has vowed to once again order Jamal's execution should he lose his appeal. Anticipating the possibility of a repeat of the massive protests that succeeded in saving Jamal's life in August 1995, the pro-death penalty and law enforcement forces now seem more determined than ever to defeat and deflect the strength of that movement."

Throughout the winter and spring of 1995, the Partisan Defense Committee initiated rallies in the United States and internationally aimed at mobilizing sup-

port for Jamal. In August of that year, days before the death warrant was stayed, PDC-initiated protests for Jamal centered on the power of organized labor were held in major cities across the U.S. These protests were infused with the understanding that the social power of the multi-racial working class must be mobilized in Jamal's defense and organized according to the principle of non-sectarian, united-front defense. Now in this phase of the struggle—the crucial race against the executioner's clock and the fight for Jamal's freedom—our job is above all to bring to the international working class the consciousness that the way out of this whole system of racist capitalist injustice is the struggle for socialist revolution through the instrumentality of a Leninist proletarian vanguard party which fights as a *tribune of the people*.

V. I. Lenin, leader of the victorious Russian workers revolution in 1917, described the need for a party which, like the Bolshevik Party, is able to "produce a single picture of police violence and capitalist exploitation...in order to clarify for all and everyone the world-historic significance of the struggle for the emancipation of the proletariat." The case of Mumia Abu-Jamal more than provides just such a picture of police violence and persecution and the impulse to genocide represented by the institutionalized

WV Photo



South African workers at June 1995 COSATU protest hold up flyers demanding, "Save Mumia Abu-Jamal!"

James/Philadelphia Inquirer



**Mumia Abu-Jamal in
1969 as Minister of
Information
for Philadelphia
Black Panther Party**

barbarism of the death penalty, which stands at the pinnacle of a legal apparatus of racist repression and capitalist injustice in the United States.

The PDC pamphlet, *The Frame-Up of Mumia Abu-Jamal*, published shortly after a death warrant had been signed against Jamal in 1995, exposed the travesty of justice which put this innocent man on death row. As noted in the pamphlet's central article (reprinted on page 11), the prosecution's frame-up case rested on three legs: three eyewitnesses who identified Mumia as the only person who could have killed Faulkner; the claim that Mumia "confessed" to the shooting as he lay bleeding from near-fatal wounds in the hospital that night; that Mumia's gun which was found on the scene was the murder weapon. Evidence and witnesses at the Post-Conviction Relief Appeal (PCRA) hearing in the summer of 1995 and two subsequent appeal hearings have thoroughly exposed the prosecution's case as an assemblage of lies manufactured through police coercion of witnesses and the systematic withholding of evidence of Jamal's innocence from the defense.

The Witnesses

The frame-up prosecution of Mumia Abu-Jamal began on 9 December 1981 at about 3:55 a.m. near the corner of 13th and Locust Streets in Philadelphia. Police officer Faulkner had pulled over a VW driven by Jamal's brother, Billy Cook, which was carrying another passenger. The cop began beating Cook, and this was witnessed by Jamal who was driving a cab through the area at the time. Jamal stopped the cab and approached the scene. Shots rang out, and when police arrived two minutes later, Faulkner was

found critically wounded on the street. Nearby, Jamal was slumped on the curb bleeding profusely from a bullet hole in his chest.

At the scene, four eyewitnesses told police they saw a black man flee. In the following week, another eyewitness made the same statement to the police. One of these witnesses even reported to the police that he saw the actual shooting and that a third man—not Jamal and not his brother—shot the police officer and ran away. Yet the police coerced most of these witnesses to change their stories through manipulation—including the promise of favors—and outright terror, while the prosecution suppressed all evidence of Jamal's innocence and supplied false information to the defense.

At the 1995 PCRA hearing, one of the eyewitnesses, William Singletary, was called by the defense to testify. A decorated Vietnam veteran and Philadelphia businessman, Singletary was found at the scene by arriving police on the night of 9 December 1981. At the 1995 hearing, it was Singletary who testified that he saw another man shoot the cop and run away. Singletary described how, after clearly stating his observations to the detectives on the night of the shooting, he was held for hours at the Police Administration Building, where cops repeatedly tore up or threw in the trash the statements they did not approve. Singletary testified that finally a Detective Green warned him "to write what he wanted me to write," and that "they would take me to the elevator and beat me up." Singletary finally wrote a false statement denying he had seen the shooting. It was this statement that was given to Jamal's attorney in the 1982 trial, in which Singletary was not called to testify. At the 1995 hearing, Singletary said

that he was forced to abandon his business as a result of constant police harassment, threats and suspicious damage to his gas station. Finally, he fled the city in fear of the police and was only found by Jamal's defense team many years later.

Another eyewitness was Robert Chobert, a white cab driver who told a police inspector at the scene in 1981 that the man who shot the policeman "ran away." The night of the shooting, Chobert reported to police that the shooter weighed 225 pounds. This couldn't have been Jamal, who weighed 170 pounds and was found by the police slumped on a curb, bleeding from a shot fired by Faulkner. By the time he was called to testify at the 1982 trial, Chobert had changed his story to claim that Jamal was the shooter. Why Chobert would reverse his original account became clear at the 1995 hearing, where he testified that at the time of the shooting he had been driving his cab without a license while still on probation for felony arson—specifically, throwing a Molotov cocktail at a public grammar school. Chobert also admitted that prosecutor Joseph McGill had promised to "look into" getting his driver's license back. For the next ten years, he continued to drive without a license, unhindered by the police.

Dessie Hightower, a young black accounting student, also told police at the scene that he saw the shooter run east down Locust Street away from the scene. Deborah Kordansky reported seeing the shooter run in exactly the same direction from the window of her hotel room overlooking the corner of 13th and Locust. Later in the week following the shooting, Veronica Jones, a prostitute who was at a corner a block away from the scene, told police that she saw two black men



Susan Schary

Court artist's depiction of defense attorney Rachel Wolkenstein being dragged to jail in handcuffs on orders of "hanging judge" Sabo during Jamal's 1995 PCRA hearing.

into police corruption in Philadelphia's 39th District, also testified that White was a police informant. The use of police informants to frame up innocent people, particularly those who have been targeted by the government and the cops, is standard operating procedure. In 1997, Geronimo ji Jaga (Pratt)—who like Jamal was a former leader of the Black Panther Party—was finally released from prison after 27 years on evidence that the chief prosecution witness against him was a government informant. This critical fact demonstrating the pro-police bias of this witness was not disclosed to the defense during Geronimo's trial. In Jamal's case, the prosecution has now conveniently disappeared White, claiming that she is dead without even providing fingerprints to demonstrate that the corpse they claim is White is in fact her.

The "Confession"

Another central pillar of the prosecution's case, which was retailed again in the F.O.P.'s advertisement for death in the *New York Times*, is the claim that Jamal confessed his guilt on the night of the shooting, after he had been critically wounded and then nearly beaten to death by the cops. The account of this supposed "confession" was not even reported for *over two months* after the shooting. The original official police report by Officer Gary Wakshul, who was with Jamal the entire time from his arrest through his medical treatment, said that "during this time, the negro male made no comments." Wakshul, who the prosecution claimed was unavailable to testify in the 1982 trial, was subpoenaed by the defense in the 1995 hearing. When asked about the flat contradiction between his

original report and his later statement that Jamal had confessed, Wakshul incredibly claimed that he hadn't recognized the "importance" of Jamal's supposed confession until a "round table" meeting called by the District Attorney's office to orchestrate the cops' testimony. Here prosecutor McGill solicitously asked police officers "to raise their hands if they heard" Jamal confess and Wakshul raised his hand.

This was the first time this meeting of the cops and the D.A. was made public. Wakshul also gave the lie to the prosecution's argument that he was unavailable to testify at the 1982 trial. In 1995, Wakshul acknowledged that while he was officially listed as being on vacation during the original trial, he was at home in Philadelphia waiting to be called by the prosecution to testify.

Once Again on the Non-Smoking Gun

For the past 16 years, the prosecution has brazenly claimed that Jamal's licensed .38 calibre gun was the murder weapon. At the time of the shooting, the medical examiner's report specifically said that Faulkner was "shot with .44 cal[ibre]." The prosecution's own expert admitted that neither the bullet from Faulkner's head nor one recovered at the scene could be matched to Jamal's gun. Moreover, a copper jacket found at the scene could not have come from either Jamal's or Faulkner's gun—evidence which again points to the fact that the shooter was a third man who fled the scene.

Reports also show that the medical examiner had removed two pieces of lead from the wound in Faulkner's head.

While the examiner had measured both fragments and included this information in his autopsy report, one of the bullet fragments mysteriously disappeared. Only one was received and examined by the police lab. No one from the prosecution's side can explain what happened to the missing fragment, nor can they deny the significant impact it would have on findings regarding the calibre of the bullet. But most damning of all is the fact that there is no evidence that Jamal's gun was even fired, much less by Jamal!

At the 1995 hearing, a weapons expert who himself was a former Philadelphia police instructor and former head of their crime lab, testified that he found it incredible that the police had failed to conduct any of the standard tests to tell if the gun had been recently fired by Jamal. Considering the tight gang mentality of the police, it is all the more incredible that they didn't conduct such tests in order to pursue the killer of one of their own. Or maybe they did and subsequently buried the results that demonstrate Jamal's innocence.

Another new eyewitness, Marcus Cannon, who was walking up the street at the time of the shooting, saw two white men who appeared to be part of a street scene jump into action with guns drawn like undercover cops and rush toward the site of the shooting. Pamela Jenkins also testified that there were several police officers present at the time of the shooting. Yet the presence of these cops or the substance of what they witnessed has never been released by the prosecution to the defense.

Racist Frame-Up Machine: The Cops, the Courts and the D.A.

The blatant frame-up of Mumia Abu-Jamal throws into sharp relief the whole nature of the capitalist state as a machinery of repression and violence in defense of the propertied rich minority that rules this society against all of the exploited and dispossessed. Judge Albert Sabo—known as the "king of death row" for handing down more death sentences than any other sitting judge in the U.S.—presided over all the appeals hearings, as he had over Jamal's 1982 trial. His prosecution bias was so blatant that even the *Philadelphia Daily News* (2 October 1996), which generally serves as a mouthpiece for the racist Philly cops, complained that Sabo's "heavy-handed tactics can only confirm suspicions that the court is incapable of giving Abu-Jamal a fair hearing."

At the 1995 hearing, Sabo denied Jamal's defense any discovery, quashed over 25 defense subpoenas and ruled out

the presentation of any evidence on several defense claims. When Rachel Wolkenstein objected to the quashing of any evidence of racial bias in the application of the death penalty in Philadelphia, Sabo ordered her to be handcuffed and thrown in jail. A week later, Leonard Weinglass was fined \$1,000 for taking "too long" to hand over autopsy slides. "Explaining" these blatant attempts at intimidation, Sabo told the defense, "Counselor, justice is just an emotional feeling." A year later, when Veronica Jones came forward to give her true account of what she witnessed at the scene of Faulkner's killing in 1981, she was arrested while on the stand on an outstanding bench warrant issued *more than two years earlier in New Jersey!*

At every session of the 1995 hearings, a praetorian guard of armed Philadelphia cops organized by the F.O.P. occupied one side of the courtroom. On the other side were Jamal's family and supporters, who were subjected to search by a metal detector and harassed by court guards. Outside the courtroom in July 1995, Philadelphia hospital and health care union Local 1199C was besieged by 300 gun-toting cops for daring to rent its hall for a Jamal benefit.

While hardly unique to Philadelphia, the coercion, intimidation and terror practiced by the Philly police force is notorious. In 1979, the U.S. Attorney General filed a civil rights lawsuit against the city of Philadelphia and the police department, charging a pattern of persecution which reads like a litany of police practices in apartheid South Africa. The suit cited "widespread, arbitrary, and unreasonable physical abuse," including "shooting nondangerous, nonviolent, fleeing criminal suspects" or "suspects who cease flight," "shooting criminal suspects who make gestures or verbal comments while surrendering," and "physically abusing the witnesses (including victims) of shootings to discourage them from disputing the justification of the shooting fostered by the Homicide Division."

In the midst of Jamal's 1995 PCRA appeal hearing, Philadelphia was again rocked by further revelations of police corruption, brutality and frame-up of innocent victims. In one case, they set up a 53-year-old black grandmother, Betty Patterson, on charges of cocaine and crack dealing. The "evidence" was drugs which were planted in Patterson's house by cops attempting to frame up her sons in a murder case. Patterson was jailed for three years! In 1996, she won a million dollar lawsuit against the city of Philadelphia. Since the start of what has become known as the 39th Police Dis-

trict scandal, *300 convictions* have been thrown out and many innocent victims of this frame-up machine freed from prison.

Hard on the heels of the cop corruption scandal came the revelations of a pervasive pattern of racist jury rigging. The latest disclosure came right from the horse's mouth: Philadelphia District Attorney Lynne Abraham. In a transparent election ploy against a rival for her office, Abraham released a ten-year-old "training" videotape showing an assistant D.A. giving a one-hour lecture—shot through with blatant racism—tutoring new prosecutors in the "art" of rigging juries, particularly to exclude blacks. While this training tape caused something of a sensation, what it revealed was simply standard operating procedure. In Jamal's 1982 trial, eleven blacks were excluded from the jury. Those who were allowed to serve fit the racist criteria given in the D.A.'s video: blacks from the Deep South where, the D.A. argued, its "different way of living"—i.e. the heritage of virulent Jim Crow racism—would have instilled a "respect" for police authority. The Pennsylvania Supreme Court denied Jamal's defense from including this blatant evidence of jury rigging in his appeal.

The trail in the frame-up of Mumia Abu-Jamal goes from the cops through the D.A.'s office and straight up to the office of Pennsylvania governor Tom Ridge. In the immediate period before Jamal filed his appeal papers in 1995, prison authorities opened and copied privileged correspondence between Jamal and his attorneys. The copies were forwarded to Ridge, who signed a warrant of execution three days before Jamal's attorneys submitted their legal papers seeking the overturn of his conviction. In late 1996, a federal judge in Pittsburgh ruled

that the state had violated Jamal's basic constitutional rights. This decision—the first and only acknowledgement by any judge that Jamal's rights had been violated by the state—is now being appealed.

Abolish the Racist Death Penalty!

The case of Mumia Abu-Jamal throws a spotlight on the barbaric, racist death penalty in the U.S. A form of institutionalized state terror, the death penalty is directly descended from the system of black chattel slavery codified in the Supreme Court's Dred Scott decision that blacks "had no rights which the white man was bound to respect." The death penalty is the Jim Crow lynch rope made legal. Today, its victims are overwhelmingly blacks and Hispanics whose lives the ruling class of this country consider worthless. The centrality of the death penalty to the state's machinery of repression was baldly put in the D.A.'s reply to Mumia's motion for a stay of execution during his 1995 hearing: "The death penalty...is the highest exercise of the state's authority; and it should not lightly be disturbed." Revealing the state's utter racist contempt for the life of Mumia Abu-Jamal, it grotesquely argued that: "The carrying out of a valid death sentence cannot constitute irreparable injury for purposes of requesting a stay!"

After winning a stay in 1995, Jamal warned of the danger that this would be used to dissipate and defuse the mobilizations that had stayed the executioner's hand. In his column titled "The Stay," he wrote:

"The state of Pennsylvania still has every intention of killing me—just not right now...."

"Although many radicals and progressives expressed joy at news of the stay, other political analysts saw it as a clever

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WHAT STRATEGY FOR BLACK LIBERATION?

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From Death Row, This Is Mumia Abu-Jamal

La Amistad and American Law



The film and publishing worlds are all abuzz over the controversy brewing around the Stephen Spielberg work, *Amistad*, and claims of plagiarism made by acclaimed writer, Ms. Chase-Ribaud. Not having seen it, however, the writer thinks it premature to offer an opinion at this time.

The story of the Spanish schooner *La Amistad* is a very real historical drama that provides some interesting insights into the struggle for freedom in an age of global white supremacy and unbridled capitalist greed that fed on Black misery and stolen labor.

In short, it is the story of how 49 captured and chained Africans, while being shipped from Havana, Cuba to Puerto Principe, escaped from their shackles, slew the crew of slave traffickers, including the captain, leaving alive two Spaniards (Ruiz and Montez) only on the condition that they navigate the vessel back east to Africa. Ruiz and Montez deceived the Africans, who were unfamiliar with navigation, by sailing east during the day, but west by night, thereby bringing the vessel into U.S. coastal waters. When the Africans went on shore for provisions they were met and seized by officers and crew of the U.S. Brig Washington. Once again, these Africans were shackled, this time by officers and representatives of the U.S. government. The schooner *Amistad* was seized for salvage, and Spanish diplomats filed a formal request for the return of their "pirated" property: the boat, its cargo, and 49 Africans, called "ladinoes" in their papers.

Most readers know that the Spanish diplomatic effort failed, and that the Africans prevailed in their suit for freedom, both in the Connecticut District Court and in the U.S. Supreme Court in 1841. Why? At the time of the decision, both America and the Spanish colony of Cuba were firmly held slave societies, each with millions of Africans in bondage. The case began less than 10 years after Nat Turner and his rebels rocked the nation with a slave revolt in Southampton County, Virginia. Fifteen years after *Amistad*, this same court would rule in *Dred Scott v. Sandford* (1857) that people of the "negro African race" were "regarded as beings...so far inferior, that they had no rights which the white man was bound to respect."

How then, can one reconcile the seemingly liberating message of *The U.S. v. The Libelants, etc., of the Schooner Amistad* with the damning repression voiced in *Dred Scott*?

To read the actual opinion of the court offers us invaluable insights and answers this question. Justice Joseph Story, who wrote the opinion in the case, left little room for the popular illusion that the *Amistad* case was about slavery—it was really about international law:

"If these negroes were, at the time, lawfully held as slaves under the laws of Spain, and recognized by those laws as property capable of being lawfully bought and sold, we see no reason why they may not justly be deemed within the intent of the treaty to be included under the domination of merchandise, and, as such, ought to be restored to the claimants;..." (*Amistad*, p. 591)

Having secured counsel, "Cinque" (his real name, Singbe-pieh) and the other captives argued that they were *unlawfully* seized in Africa, *unlawfully* taken to Cuba, and, as free-born Africans, fully entitled to resist slavery. The lawfulness of the Slave Trade was a crucial issue to the court, but international law was the determinant:

"Nothing is more clear in the law of nations, as an established rule to regulate their rights and duties, and intercourse, than the doctrine that the ship's papers are but prima facie evidence, and that, if they are shown to be fraudulent, they are not to be held proof of any valid title." (p. 595)

The problem, Justice Story wrote, was that the "negroes"... "had been transported from Africa, in violation of the laws of the United States..." and the "law of Spain itself."

That "Cinque" (Singbe-pieh) and his fellow captives were finally freed from their American captivity by a court composed primarily of slaveowners was a remarkable, and unprecedented, achievement. We are rightly and justly inspired by their passionate struggle for freedom from Spanish and U.S. shackles, and their victory.

For Africans born in the U.S., however, it brought them no closer to freedom.

Unlike the captives of the *Amistad*, international law did not apply to their wretched condition, and for them, as well as those shackled Black millions in Cuba, there was little to celebrate with this decision.

1 January 1998

© 1998 by Mumia Abu-Jamal

**If you wish to correspond with Jamal, you can write to:
Mumia Abu-Jamal, AM8335, SCI Greene, 1040 E. Roy
Furman Hwy., Waynesburg, PA 15370.**

move by a clever judge who did what higher courts would've done and, in so doing, attempted to blunt the edge off of a growing and militant anti-death penalty movement, in Philadelphia and beyond, thereby stymieing a series of planned demonstrations.

"Whatever the reasoning, let us utilize this precious time to build a stronger and broader movement, to not 'stay' one execution, but to halt them all! *Down with the racist U.S. death penalty!*"

There are many who seek to mobilize

to demand a "fair trial" for Jamal. But if anything, the case of Mumia Abu-Jamal—from the original 1982 trial to the subsequent appeal hearings—starkly demonstrates that there is no justice in the capitalist courts. While Jamal's attorneys fight to wield every legal weapon they can in his defense, what is urgently needed are mass mobilizations drawing on the power of the multiracial working class. In taking up the fight for Jamal's

freedom, the working class will be striking a blow against an entire system predicated on the brutal exploitation of labor and rooted in the racist repression of the black population. And in doing that they will be taking steps down the road to the emancipation of all of the working people and oppressed through a victorious socialist revolution that smashes the chains of capitalist exploitation and degradation. ■

1982 Trial a Mockery of Justice

The Frame-Up of Mumia Abu-Jamal

This article originally appeared in Workers Vanguard No. 625 (30 June 1995). Corrections have been made concerning the number of pages of FBI files Mumia has received and in two quotations—one by Officer Gary Wakshul about Mumia's supposed "confession" and the other by witness Veronica Jones, who saw one or two men fleeing the scene of the killing of policeman Daniel Faulkner.

On Monday, June 5, Mumia Abu-Jamal's legal team, led by prominent civil liberties attorney Leonard Weinglass, filed some 500 pages of legal papers seeking a new trial and the overturn of Jamal's death sentence. Early the previous Friday morning, as he was preparing his case in the prison law library at Pennsylvania's Greene Correctional Institution isolation facility, Jamal was handed an execution warrant by prison authorities. He was immediately removed from

there, deprived of his notes and other possessions and taken to a new cell in an even more restrictive area of death row where prisoners are held after warrants have been signed. Knowing full well that Jamal's lawyers were about to submit papers which unambiguously demonstrated his innocence, on the night of June 1 Governor Tom Ridge had nevertheless gone ahead and signed Jamal's death warrant scheduling his execution by lethal injection for August 17. Ridge's aim, he cynically proclaimed, was "to fulfill a campaign promise." This vindictive act was but the latest chapter in the grotesque history of the racist state vendetta against Mumia Abu-Jamal.

For 13 years, Mumia Abu-Jamal has been imprisoned on death row, falsely charged and convicted for the killing of Philadelphia police officer Daniel Faulkner in December 1981. For 13 years, Jamal has proclaimed his innocence and

indicted the system of racist injustice that seeks to kill him. He has powerfully accused his accusers of a politically motivated frame-up, a frame-up aimed at silencing forever his powerful voice on behalf of the oppressed. By the time of his arrest, Jamal was widely recognized as one of the most prominent young broadcast journalists in Philadelphia and president of the Philadelphia chapter of the Association of Black Journalists. For his fearless and incisive exposures of racism and police brutality, Mumia had earned the title the "voice of the voiceless"—as well as the undying hatred of the Philadelphia cops and their "law and order" allies in government and the media.

In many respects, Mumia was accorded the frame-up "justice" typically meted out to black people by this capitalist system, which regularly railroads ghetto youth into prison hellholes and has the highest rate of incarceration of any

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION	
Copy to:	1 - Military Intelligence, Philadelphia 1 - Naval Investigative Service Office, Philadelphia 1 - Office of Special Investigation, Philadelphia 1 - Secret Service, Philadelphia
Report of:	[REDACTED] b7C
Date:	OCTOBER 24, 1969
Field Office File #:	157-3927
Title:	WESLEY COOK
Character:	RACIAL MATTER - BLACK PANTHER PARTY
Synopsis:	WESLEY COOK, Negro male, age 15, has been affiliated with the BPP in Philadelphia since 5/1/69. Between June and October, 1969, COOK functioned as Branch Secretary or Minister of Communications for the Philadelphia Branch of the BPP. On two occasions in August, 1969, COOK spoke at anti-war rallies in Philadelphia. Articles written by COOK for the official BPP newspaper, "The Black Panther" are set forth as are background and descriptive data.
DETAILS:	I. BACKGROUND
A. BIRTH:	On October 30, 1968, WESLEY COOK, also known as WES, WEST, and MUMIA X, claimed that he was born in Philadelphia, Pa., on April 24, 1954.
	May 6, 1969 b7D



Everly/Philadelphia Daily News

Eight hundred pages of FBI files show Jamal was targeted by deadly COINTELPRO operation from age of 15, when he was a leader of Philadelphia Black Panther Party. Right: Jamal in custody in 1982.

industrialized Western country. But in this case there was more. Mumia Abu-Jamal was not just an ordinary young black man who got ensnared in a racist nightmare by being in the wrong place at the wrong time. As a Black Panther Party activist, journalist, potential black leader and later supporter of the Philadelphia MOVE organization, Mumia was *targeted for death* by the forces of "law and order."

As over 800 pages of FBI files recently released after a three-year battle show, from the time he emerged as a 15-year-old spokesman for the Philadelphia Panthers in 1969, he was subjected to constant surveillance, harassment and frame-up attempts by the FBI's COINTELPRO terror operation aimed at "neutralizing" black and leftist militants. A 24 October 1969 FBI report urging that Jamal be placed under high-level surveillance noted:

"In spite of the subject's age (15 years), Philadelphia feels that his continued participation in BPP activities in the Philadelphia Division, his position in the Philadelphia Branch of the BPP, and his past inclination to appear and speak at public gatherings, the subject should be included on the Security Index."

When Mumia told MOVE's side of the story following a bloody 1978 cop siege of its Powelton Village home, then mayor and former police commissioner Frank Rizzo fingered a "new breed" of journalist, such as Jamal, which, he threatened, would one day "be held responsible and accountable for what you do." Three

years later, on a dark Philadelphia street at four in the morning, the cops finally got the chance they'd been waiting for.

The case of Mumia Abu-Jamal has come to symbolize what the barbaric and racist death penalty is all about, and the "law and order" reactionaries hate him for this as well. They seek to paint the 3,000 people—overwhelmingly poor, black or Hispanic—on the country's death rows as nameless, faceless sadistic killers. And Mumia's eloquent and compassionate voice puts the lie to that.

The Philadelphia Fraternal Order of Police (F.O.P.) and its allies have waged a vicious and frenzied vendetta to silence Jamal and intimidate his supporters. Following a rally for Jamal in Philadelphia in 1990, F.O.P. head Richard Costello screamed for the electric chair for Mumia and an "electric couch" for his supporters. When last year National Public Radio agreed to air a series of commentaries on prison life by Jamal, the F.O.P. launched a noisy campaign of intimidation which was taken up by Republican Senator Dole and succeeded in censoring Jamal. And Democratic president Clinton has made a point of appearing at the F.O.P.'s annual Washington, D.C. rallies for cop power.

When a collection of Jamal's prison commentaries was brought out this May as a book by a major publisher, *Live from Death Row* (Addison-Wesley, 1995), the forces who want to see him dead orchestrated a high-powered media campaign seeking to drown out the passionate

humanity expressed in his writings. The big media, ranging from the *Washington Post* to the *New York Post* and Dan Rather's CBS-TV *Evening News*, tried to demonize Mumia as a vicious and sadistic "cop killer" by cynically parading around the dead cop's widow. In account after nauseating account, Maureen Faulkner "recalled" how Jamal "smiled" at her while a criminalist held up her husband's bloodied shirt during the trial to display the bullet holes. *But, as the trial transcript shows, Jamal was not even in the courtroom when this alleged incident happened.*

The forces of death have also propagated the lie that Jamal was accorded "due process" of law and found guilty by a "jury of his peers." Thus, in a June 2 letter to actors Ed Asner and Mike Farrell and other prominent supporters of Jamal, on the official stationery of Philadelphia District Attorney Lynne Abraham, Assistant D.A. Arnold Gordon wrote:

"From an evidentiary standpoint, the case against Mumia Abu-Jamal was overwhelming, one of the strongest I have seen in my twenty-five years as a prosecutor. A jury found him guilty and pronounced a justly deserved death sentence."

In fact, Mumia's trial was a mockery of justice from beginning to end, deeply tainted in every respect, as we will show in detail in examining the "overwhelming" evidence outlined by Gordon and presented by the prosecution in June-July 1982. As lead counsel Len Weinglass said at a June 5 press conference following the filing of the legal papers, "Mumia Abu-Jamal never had a trial." As these papers document, the "trial" was replete with violations of Jamal's constitutional rights and marked by widespread police and prosecutorial misconduct, including suppression of evidence of Jamal's innocence, coercion of witnesses and racist elimination of potential black jurors. In an article in *New York Newsday* (22 June), writer Terry Bisson captured the blatant miscarriage of justice at Jamal's trial:

"Abu-Jamal's murder trial was a policeman's dream. Denied the right to represent himself, he was defended by a reluctant incompetent who was later disbarred (and who has since filed an affidavit detailing his delinquencies). Abu-Jamal was prosecuted by a district attorney who was later reprimanded for withholding evidence in another trial. Abu-Jamal was allowed only \$150 to interview witnesses.

"But best of all was the judge. A lifetime member of the Fraternal Order of Police, branded a 'defendant's nightmare' by the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Judge Albert F. Sabo has sentenced more men to die (31 to date, only two of them



Ligato/Philadelphia Bulletin

Black Panthers dragged onto the street, forced to strip and searched at gunpoint in 1970 raid under notorious police commissioner, later mayor, Frank Rizzo.

white) than any other sitting judge in America. A fellow judge once called his courtroom a 'vacation for prosecutors' because of his bias toward convictions."

From the time the Partisan Defense Committee took up Jamal's case more than eight years ago, we have emphasized that the fight to save him cannot rely on the capitalist courts, but rather must look to the mobilization of the masses, centrally the social power of the labor movement. Since then, trade unions representing millions of workers—in the U.S., Britain, France, Germany, South Africa and elsewhere—have spoken out for Jamal. Many tens of thousands, perhaps hundreds of thousands, have signed petitions or written letters to the Pennsylvania governor's office demanding that "Mumia Abu-Jamal must not die!" Thousands have taken to the street, including in emergency demonstrations following the signing of the death warrant. Thousands must now be turned into tens and hundreds of thousands, bringing to bear the weight of the working class in this urgent phase of the struggle to save Mumia and secure his freedom.

The Prosecution's Case: Three Legs, All Lies

In dissecting the travesty of justice which placed Mumia Abu-Jamal on death row, we will begin by looking at the prosecution's account of the shooting incident. What happened in the early morning hours of 9 December 1981? It is undisputed that the events unfolded when an old VW owned by Jamal's brother, Billy, was pulled over by Faulkner. One of the occupants got out. The cop started beating him. Jamal, who was moonlighting as a cab driver at the time, happened to be in the area and saw this. These



WV Photo

Labor must be mobilized in defense of all the oppressed: trade unionists march in August 1995 Philadelphia demonstration for death row political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal.

events took place at about 3:55 in the morning in the middle of Philly's red light district. The street was dark, but the bars were closing and a number of people were in the area on foot or driving through. A number of shots rang out. The whole incident lasted less than two minutes, and a number of police cars immediately began converging on the scene. Jamal was found critically wounded from a bullet through the chest. Nearby lay a wounded Faulkner. Jamal eventually recovered after surgery, but the cop died an hour later.

As Jamal's lead counsel Leonard Weinglass said at the Philadelphia press conference on June 5, the prosecution's case against Jamal rested on three legs. First, the prosecution claimed three eyewitnesses identified Jamal as the shooter.

Second, the prosecution claimed Jamal "confessed" to the shooting when he arrived at the hospital to be treated for his wounds. Third, the prosecution argued that the fact that Jamal's gun was found at the scene showed he did the shooting. As Jamal's new legal filings show in careful detail, each prosecution claim was false and based on evidence which had been twisted around to implicate Jamal.

1 The Non-Smoking Gun: Ballistics and Forensics

Let us first deal with the question of the gun and the shooting. The prosecution theory of what happened during the shooting incident, as outlined by Assistant D.A. Gordon in his June 2 letter, runs as follows:

"Abu-Jamal, who had been driving a cab in the area, ran from across the street toward Officer Faulkner. Abu-Jamal shot the officer once in the back. Officer Faulkner fell to the ground; Abu-Jamal aimed and shot the officer four more times, including a shot through the center of his face. Officer Faulkner was able to fire one shot at Abu-Jamal during the shooting."

Gordon goes on to say that the bullet that killed Faulkner was "fired within twenty inches of the officer's face," the one in his back "was fired from a distance of approximately nine inches, and the shots that went through his clothing, were also fired at extremely close range." According to Gordon, two guns were recovered at the scene: "Officer Faulkner's weapon had been fired once, and Abu-Jamal's weapon contained five spent cartridges."

Join the Labor Black Leagues!

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These were +P cartridges, and, says Gordon, "The bullet that was removed from Officer Faulkner was also a +P bullet, but it was so mutilated that no comparison could be made to a bullet test fired from Abu-Jamal's gun."

Note carefully that Gordon does not talk of *Jamal's* gun having been fired. If you want to find out whether a gun has been fired recently, it's not hard: just smell the barrel for the odor of burnt gunpowder. (Ballistics experts say that the smell remains for four to five hours, and certainly would be present after four to five minutes.) Either the police incredibly failed to perform this simple test, or they hid the fact that Jamal's gun was indeed not used that night. As for the +P bullets, this variety of pistol ammunition is widely available. And while cops say Jamal's gun, which was licensed to him, had five spent cartridges, the cops never recovered more than three bullets from the scene. One of these was removed from Faulkner's body. As Jamal's legal brief notes, "the Medical Examiner judged the fatal bullet to be a .44 caliber. Mr. Jamal's gun was a .38 caliber pistol."

The police crime lab reported just enough test results to show that the rifling pattern of Jamal's gun (eight lands and grooves and a right-hand twist) was "consistent" with the bullet that killed the cop. But there are millions of guns with that rifling pattern in the U.S. A ballistics expert retained by Jamal's current legal team, having examined the police reports, lists a series of "issues of a firearm evidence nature which required further investigation and testing." Either police failed to do the normal tests or, more likely, the results proved Jamal's gun was not used and so they were kept secret. Particularly damning is the cops' failure to report if they tested Jamal's hands for gunshot residue. Yet, the ballistics expert pointed out, "In 1981 such tests were frequently performed when a suspect was apprehended immediately after a shooting incident." The police ballistics report was so inconclusive that a Homicide Division captain admitted at the time:

"One expert might say the bullet came from Mumia's gun and another might be brought in from Iowa who will say, 'I've got 20 years' experience and I say it didn't come from that gun.' We just don't know."

— Philadelphia *Bulletin*,
11 December 1981

A re-examination by Jamal's experts of the forensics reports also disproves the prosecution theory of *how* the shooting took place. If Faulkner was shot at "extremely close range," there normally would have been gunshot residue (stippling) on the back of his jacket, but there



no credit

Jamal in hospital after being shot and beaten by cops, December 1981. Failing to kill him in the streets, the "justice" system railroaded Jamal to death row.

was none. Moreover, the prosecution claim that Jamal was shot while standing over an already wounded Faulkner is physically impossible, according to Dr. John A. Hayes, a forensic pathologist who is the New York City Associate Medical Examiner and a former chief resident in anatomic pathology at the Boston University School of Medicine. Dr. Hayes points out that the bullet Faulkner fired at Jamal had a steep downward trajectory, entering his chest at the nipple and lodging in his lower back.

2 The "Confession": A Belated Fabrication

The second leg of the prosecution's case is that Jamal—an experienced court reporter and journalist—supposedly made a loud "confession" of guilt in the hospital. Again we quote Assistant D.A. Gordon:

"While doctors were attempting to provide emergency treatment to Officer Faulkner, other police officers were trying, despite Abu-Jamal's resistance, to bring him into the emergency room. While in the vestibule, Abu-Jamal turned to Officer Faulkner's former partner and said, 'I shot the mother fucker and I hope the mother fucker dies.' Abu-Jamal shouted this again when he was brought within a few feet of the area where Officer Faulkner was being unsuccessfully treated. (Hospital workers testified to Jamal's rantings at his trial.)"

In the first place, by the time Jamal was brutally dumped on the floor outside the door of the emergency room, with his arms handcuffed behind his back, he was in no condition to shout or "rant" much of anything. He had been shot through the liver, with a bullet lodged against his spine. A doctor who examined Jamal no more than ten minutes after his arrival found him "weak...on the verge of fainting." Another doctor who saw Jamal when he was first brought in—at the time of the alleged confession—only heard him moan as a cop kicked him.

The "hospital workers" who claimed to hear Jamal loudly proclaim his guilt were

a cop and a security guard. The cop was Garry Bell, Faulkner's partner and "best friend," who admitted he threatened to kill Jamal. (Three years earlier, Bell had shot dead a motorist after pulling him over for an alleged traffic violation in the middle of the night in the black ghetto of West Philadelphia.) The security guard, who first lied that she didn't know Faulkner at all, subsequently admitted that she'd frequently had coffee with him.

More importantly, neither Bell nor the security guard said anything about a "confession" until *more than two months after the fact*, when Jamal pressed brutality charges against the cops who beat him at the hospital. It was not in Bell's police log that night nor in a statement he gave a week later. However, Gary Wakshul, the cop who was assigned to guard Jamal and was with him the entire time between his arrest and his medical treatment, gave an official report to homicide detectives the next hour that "during this time, the negro male made no comments."

3 The Witnesses: Coercion and Concoctions

Now we come to the prosecution's "eyewitnesses." Gordon writes:

"Officer Shoemaker, the first officer on the scene, saw Officer Faulkner lying in a pool of blood and saw Abu-Jamal sitting on the curb next to a gun. He ordered Abu-Jamal to freeze. Abu-Jamal instead reached for the gun. Officer Shoemaker again yelled, 'freeze,' but Abu-Jamal continued reaching for his weapon which the officer kicked out of his reach.... Abu-Jamal was identified as the shooter on the scene by *three eyewitnesses* who had never lost sight of him during the entire incident."

Even by the cops' own accounts of what happened at the time, this story stinks. The "three eyewitnesses" were Cynthia White, a prostitute who said she was working the southeast corner at 13th and Locust at the time of the shooting; Robert Chobert, a cab driver; and Mark Scanlan, a young white motorist who candidly admitted he'd been drinking and

what he remembered was "confusion." On the scene, Scanlan told police that Jamal was the VW driver, and said he didn't know where the shooter went. At the trial, Scanlan said he couldn't identify the shooter at all. Furthermore, none of these "eyewitnesses who had never lost sight" of Jamal saw him being shot.

As for Chobert, he initially told arriving police that the shooter was 225 pounds and "ran away." Chobert later said the shooter ran "30 steps," and then changed that at the trial to only ten feet. Jamal, however, weighed 170 pounds and was found where he fell critically wounded at the scene. Chobert, who is white, supposedly identified Jamal from among three black men with dreadlocks on the scene that night. Chobert's "identification" of Jamal consisted of the police asking "is that the guy?" as they opened the van in which Jamal lay with his face and chest "very, very bloody" (as another witness reported). During this period, Chobert was on probation for felony arson (he was paid for throwing a Molotov cocktail at a school), with two prior charges for driving while intoxicated. Given that his livelihood depended on driving a taxi, this made him eminently susceptible to police pressure.

The star prosecution witness was Cynthia White. She was the *only* trial witness who claimed to see Jamal, gun in hand, shoot Faulkner. Initially even she denied seeing Jamal with a gun. White claimed the shooter was 5'8"—Jamal is 6'1". White claimed to be standing right where the VW pulled over. But no other witness—including Chobert and Scanlan—saw her there, and the only witness who recalled seeing her at all said she was over a half block away. White had a police record a mile long. At the time of the trial, she was serving 18 months for prostitution in Massachusetts,

with 38 prior arrests and three prostitution charges awaiting trial in Philadelphia. Following the shooting, Faulkner's precinct was given her photo and told to refer her to the Homicide Division if she was taken in. In the next ten days, she was taken to Homicide twice—on prostitution charges! Each time, she was let off; each time she tailored her story more to the cops' liking to implicate Jamal.

The prosecution, primly denied that White had been offered a deal for her testimony. But another witness, Veronica Jones, a prostitute who knew her, testified that a few weeks after the shooting, police hauled Jones in and offered to give her a deal like White:

"They were getting on me, telling me I was in the area and I seen Mumia, you know, do it, you know, intentionally. They were trying to get me to say something that the other girl said...and they told us we can work the area if we tell them."

Judge Sabo struck that testimony from the record as "not relevant" and "far afield." However, White did indeed continue to "work the area" not only with impunity, but *with police protection*. A recent affidavit by an investigator who tried (unsuccessfully) to interview White on Jamal's behalf at the time reveals: "There were always two (2) plainclothesmen near where she worked her corner on Locust." So much for the prosecution's "three eyewitnesses."

On the other hand, while only the dubious White claimed (belatedly) to "see" Jamal shoot Faulkner, at least *five witnesses* saw a black male run from the scene after the shooting in the direction of an alley about the distance of Chobert's "30 steps" away. Two of them, Chobert and William Singletary, explicitly said the running man was the shooter. Jones also initially reported seeing one or two men "jogging away," but

later, recanted, under police pressure. Dessie Hightower, a defense witness, actually testified at the trial that he saw a black man flee the scene after the shooting. Another witness, Debbie Kordansky, who was not available for testimony, also saw a man run away in the same direction.

Singletary was threatened with violence and arrest during his interview at police headquarters, as the cops threw away every statement he wrote until he finally relented by denying that he had seen the shooting. Following this, he was repeatedly harassed and threatened at his place of business, until he finally shut down and moved to another state. Singletary's story, which the police kept from Jamal and his attorney at the time, has been revealed for the first time in Jamal's new legal filings.

Finally, as to Assistant D.A. Gordon's claim that Jamal "reached for the gun" when the cops arrived on the scene, that story was invented by cop Shoemaker to justify his kicking Jamal, wounded and bleeding, in the face. The report filed that night by Shoemaker's own partner noted only that Jamal was pleading for help—saying, "I'm shot, I'm shot"—while the partner "went to the curb and recovered two revolvers...because I saw an intoxicated white male walk down from the corner...[and] was concerned about him going near the weapons."

The "Trial": A Travesty of Justice

1 A Hanging Judge

This, then, was the morass of contrived, coerced, partial and contradictory "evidence" which Assistant D.A. Gordon



Rizzo with FBI director J. Edgar Hoover, who oversaw murderous COINTELPRO campaign against Black Panthers. Right: Former Panther leader Geronimo ji Jaga (Pratt), frame-up victim released in June 1997 after 27 years in prison hell.



Camino Books

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claims to be "overwhelming, one of the strongest" cases he has ever seen. To secure a conviction on this basis, the cops, prosecutors and courts saw to it that Mumia was denied even a semblance of "due process," from his initial arraignment to jury selection to final sentencing. During the course of the trial, Jamal repeatedly protested the violation of his rights, exclaiming on one occasion:

"I have been told from the duration of this trial, the beginning of the trial, the inception of the trial, that I had a number of constitutional rights. Chiefly among them the right to represent myself. The right to select a jury of my peers. The right to face witnesses and examine them based on information they have given. Those rights were taken from me.... I want my rights in this courtroom because my life is on the line."

Jamal got a "trial" in name only. He had no counsel to speak of. An indigent man jailed without bail, Jamal was granted only \$150 each for an investigator and medical and ballistics experts. No pathologist or ballistics expert would accept so low a retainer, and the investigator ran out of funds after tracking down only two of the over 100 people interviewed by the police. His court-appointed attorney, Anthony Jackson, protested he was too busy to handle the case and needed help. Four times, Jackson requested additional funds from the court; four times, the request was denied. Finally, Jamal asked to represent himself and prepared his own case for

trial. Then, on the first day of the trial, the court completely stripped Jamal of his self-representation rights and forced Jackson to take over the defense. When Jamal protested, he was ejected from the court and missed large portions of the trial. That left the unprepared, unwilling and bungling Jackson—who failed even to subpoena witnesses or prepare them before putting them on the stand—to handle the defense alone.

Sabo is the most notorious hanging judge in the country, the "king of death row." He had served for 16 years as an undersheriff and is a retired member of the Fraternal Order of Police. Even former prosecutors have called Sabo a "prosecutor in robes." When he learned he had been rated unqualified by one-third of attorneys surveyed, Sabo openly bragged about his pro-prosecution bias, saying if he were a defense attorney "I wouldn't vote for me, either."

The prosecutor, Joseph McGill, was no stranger to frame-up prosecutions. McGill put another defendant, Matthew Connor, away on a life sentence for allegedly shooting a young girl, largely on the basis that a shotgun was found in his home; only after eleven years did it come to light that the girl had been killed not with a shotgun but with an ice pick! McGill's jury arguments against Jamal were a textbook in prosecutorial dirty tricks. With Judge Sabo egging him to "go ahead," McGill told the jury not to

worry about sentencing Jamal to death because he would have "appeal after appeal after appeal." Knowing this case had racially polarized the city, McGill pushed the overwhelmingly white jury to return a conviction because "the people of Philadelphia" demand "action."

2 A Kangaroo Court

In a "bedside arraignment" on 9 December 1981, Jamal was charged with murder in the first degree, i.e., premeditated murder. But even by the cops' own account, there could have been no premeditation in this shooting incident which, from the time Faulkner pulled over the VW until he lay wounded on the street, lasted less than two minutes. Presiding over the arraignment was... Municipal Judge Lynne Abraham, currently Philadelphia D.A.

Long before Mumia had his "day in court," he had been tried and convicted by the Philadelphia media. Faulkner's death was front-page news—and he was treated with all the sympathy and honor the capitalist press accords a dead cop—while Jamal was a prominent and controversial black personality. While an initial *Philadelphia Inquirer* (10 December 1981) headline read, "Jamal: An Eloquent Activist Not Afraid to Raise His Voice," the *Philly Daily News* (9 December 1981) was quick to point out that Jamal "wears his hair in dreadlocks and was associated

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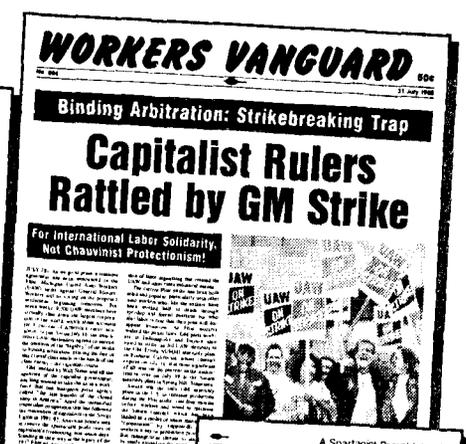
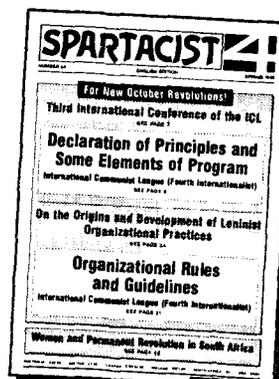
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with several black activist causes.”

Radio talk shows were flooded with calls, some of them demanding that Jamal be lynched. Article after article hammered away at his connections with MOVE and the Black Panthers, repeatedly invoking the Panthers' use of the Maoist slogan, “political power grows out of the barrel of a gun.”

Two days after the shooting, the *Daily News* falsely reported that “Preliminary ballistics tests indicate the shots that killed Police Officer Faulkner were fired from the gun recovered from radio newsman Mumia Abu-Jamal.” Four weeks later, a front-page headline blared, “Jamal Confessed,” attributing the claim not to Garry Bell but to a police inspector (who was subsequently convicted on payoff and tax evasion charges). This inspector was never called to testify at Jamal's trial. By the time of the trial, all but seven of the 80 or so members of the jury pool admitted to being familiar with media coverage of the case.

Judge Sabo and prosecutor McGill carefully screened the jury to ensure its “law and order” bias. On the third day of jury selection, Sabo denied Jamal—who was then still formally representing himself—the right to interview prospective jurors, claiming that the pace was too slow. McGill systematically excluded blacks from the jury, using eleven of his 15 peremptory challenges to remove all but three of 14 potential black jurors. One of the remaining three, a black woman who was the only juror personally selected by Jamal and who the judge had opposed from the beginning, was then removed by Sabo behind Jamal's back after she left briefly before the trial began to attend to a personal emergency. (When a white juror had to leave for a day in the middle of testimony, Sabo not only provided him with a court escort but rescheduled the proceedings to suit him.) The black juror was then replaced by a white man who openly confessed to bias in the case when interviewed by Jamal's attorney.

New evidence also reveals that during jury deliberations a clique of white jurors formed a secret faction which met to discuss the case at night and then took over the deliberations by picking one of their own as foreman.

In being excluded from the judge's consultation over the black juror and another secret consultation, Jamal's rights were violated both as legal counsel and as defendant. When Jackson protested on one occasion, “I would not want to do that out of the presence of Mr. Jamal,” Sabo snapped back: “I don't care about Mr. Jamal.” Indeed, Jamal's rights were

violated time and again during the trial. The court rejected repeated requests for a lineup to test White and Chobert's identification of Jamal. The court allowed the cops and prosecution to refuse to hand over the addresses of people they interviewed. The prosecution not only concealed evidence of Jamal's innocence, but also intimidated and coerced witnesses to conform to the cops' story. This was a clear and flagrant violation of the constitutional right to due process.

The *Brady* rule stipulates that the prosecution's failure to disclose evidence favorable to the defense invalidates a guilty verdict. The most egregious example of this in Jamal's case is how the cops threatened Singletary into changing his story and then forced him out of town. But it is not the only instance. The prosecution refused to reveal that one of the witnesses (Hightower) who saw a man run from the shooting scene had passed a lie detector test. They hid the fact that at least one other witness (Robert Harkins) was shown a photo array and apparently did not identify Jamal as the shooter. Harkins was never called to testify and recently admitted to Jamal's new investigator that a “detective ‘downtown’” told him “not to talk with anyone from the defense.” The prosecution also withheld numerous other pieces of information, including secret meetings with witnesses and evidence concerning the unreliability of the autopsy.

Another key legal guideline discarded in Jamal's case was the *Chambers* ruling which mandates that the jury must be allowed to hear testimony which would affect the credibility of prosecution witnesses. Sabo refused to allow Chobert to be cross-examined on his previous felony conviction. He struck the prostitute Veronica Jones' testimony of a police deal with Cynthia White. And when the defense asked for the detectives who interviewed Jones to testify, Sabo fumed, “we don't have to prove every witness is a liar on the stand.”

Most importantly, Sabo, McGill and the cops ganged up to make sure that Jamal's police guard Wakshul, who could have refuted the purported “confession,” would not testify. When Jamal's lawyer called for Wakshul to appear, the following exchange ensued:

“Court: What is this officer that you want? What is he going to testify to?”

“Jackson: That he picked Jamal up at the scene.”

“Court: So?”

“Jackson: During this time the negro male made no comment. He was with him the entire time.”

“Prosecutor: He is not around. I am going to object to bringing this guy in.”

Then, as McGill supposedly went to check on Wakshul's whereabouts, Sabo insinuated, “he could be on vacation.” Sure enough, despite a “no vacation” order on Wakshul's police report, McGill soon returned to report that “he is on vacation until July 8th.” Sabo then adamantly denied Jamal's appeal for a continuance, sneering: “Your attorney and you goofed.”

3 The Lynch Law Sentence

Following this monstrous frame-up, on 2 July 1982, the jury returned a verdict of first-degree murder. The next day, the Saturday of the July 4th weekend, Jamal was sentenced to death. Jamal's appointed attorney made no effort to prepare for the sentencing hearing and didn't call a single character witness to say why this talented and courageous writer, who had no prior criminal record and no history of violence, should not die. When Jamal rose to read a statement protesting the guilty verdict and the denial of his rights, Sabo used this as an excuse to let McGill openly introduce Jamal's political past and beliefs into the trial. McGill “cross-examined” Jamal about a 1970 newspaper interview in which he talked about his Panther activities. The trial transcript shows the following exchange:

“Q: You've often been quoted as saying this: ‘Political power grows out of the barrel of a gun.’ Do you remember saying that, sir?”

“A: I remember writing that. That's a quotation from Mao-Tse-Tung....”

“Q: Do you recall saying: ‘All power to the people’?...”

“A: Yes.”

“Q: Do you believe that your actions as well as your philosophy are consistent with the quote: ‘Political power grows out of the barrel of a gun.’”

“A: I believe that America has proven that quote to be true.”

McGill then argued that Jamal should die because these decade-old quotes supposedly proved that he had intended to kill a cop “all the way back then.” Based on constant surveillance by the Philly cops and the FBI and on Jamal's police files, which they didn't disclose, the prosecution knew that from “way back then” Jamal had never committed any criminal acts but had simply spoken out for his political beliefs.

In his argument to the jury during the sentencing phase, prosecutor McGill also sought to convince them that they would bear no responsibility for the legal lynching, claiming that Jamal could submit “appeal after appeal after appeal,” so that in reality the death sentence would be no

death sentence at all. This, as well, was a flagrant violation of Jamal's rights.

4 "Appeal After Appeal After Appeal"?

When in 1989 Jamal appealed this flagrant use of his political associations in his sentencing, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court backed up its man McGill, arguing that Jamal's membership in "an unpopular political organization" like the Black Panther Party demonstrated his "longstanding disdain for the system." The entire proceedings had an extraordinary character. Jamal's appeal was decided on by only four of the seven justices. Chief Justice Nix actively intervened in the oral arguments against the district attorney, making the point that the argument of repeated appeals had already been found unconstitutional in instances where the *same* D.A. (McGill) used the *same* language before the *same* judge (Sabo). Yet mysteriously, the chief justice did not participate in the vote.

Three years later, in a 1992 ruling on the *Dawson* case, the U.S. Supreme Court overturned a death sentence because the prosecutor had cited the defendant's association with the fascist Aryan Brotherhood. Yet the U.S. Supreme Court *twice* turned down a review of Jamal's appeal on the same grounds, once in 1990 and again at the time the *Dawson* case was pending before the court. In this and a hundred other ways, it is clear that Jamal's trial was a political frame-up from start to finish, from bottom to top.

Justice Demands Freedom for Mumia Abu-Jamal!

The frame-up of Mumia Abu-Jamal is an object lesson in the class nature of the capitalist state. The cops, the courts and the entire "criminal justice" system colluded and conspired to bring down this man whose only crime was that he was an eloquent and effective critic of the racist oppression they perpetrate and promote. As the legal papers recently filed by Jamal summarize in conclusion, "In this case, every basic trial element—the defense, the prosecution, the jury, and the court—was so riddled with prejudicial error as to deny Mr. Jamal any semblance of a fair proceeding." *Mumia Abu-Jamal did not have a fair trial, he could not have had a fair trial and he would not now be allowed to have a fair trial.*

Jamal is fighting for his life in a climate of all-sided racist reaction. Just look

at the political rulers of this country. Democratic president Bill Clinton took time out from his 1992 presidential campaign, when he was governor of Arkansas, to rush back to Little Rock to personally oversee the execution of a brain-damaged black man. The U.S. Congress last year added—with near unanimity—some 60 more capital offenses to the federal lawbooks. Now, with equal bipartisan fervor, it intends to define virtually any crime involving a handgun as a "terrorist" act warranting the death penalty. And more than once in the past year alone, the courts have allowed the executions of death row prisoners who were demonstrably innocent. Meanwhile, more than one and a half million people, most of them black and Hispanic, already languish behind prison bars. As Jamal points out in his column, "An Easy Kill..." (see *Workers Vanguard* No. 625), only with the millions of dollars of an O.J. Simpson can a black man hope for even a semblance of justice in America's courts.

In Pennsylvania, Jamal's case is a defining political issue. The governor is a fervent advocate of the death penalty who was once a prosecutor himself. In response to a question about racial bias in Jamal's trial, where the jury was overwhelmingly white, Ridge ludicrously asserted that juries are "colorblind.... Color has nothing to do with their ultimate decision." In the 1987 *McCleskey* ruling, even the U.S. Supreme Court admitted that race has plenty to do with death sentences, but ruled that it didn't matter. Ultimately, this boils down to the "principle" enunciated by Chief Justice Taney in the 1857 *Dred Scott* slavery case, that blacks "had no rights which a white man was bound to respect." It took a Civil War to overturn that verdict and the slave system which it represented, and it will take workers revolution to overturn capitalism and its system of criminal injustice. Our fight against the racist death penalty is part and parcel of the struggle to finish the unfinished tasks of the Civil War through a third, socialist American revolution.

The application of the death penalty is racist everywhere in the United States, but it is perhaps even more egregiously so in Pennsylvania. Well over half the men on death row in Pennsylvania were sentenced in heavily minority Philadelphia, which has consigned more people to the death mills than any city except Houston in the Deep South. Although Philadelphia (40 percent black) and Allegheny County (Pittsburgh and its suburbs, which are 90 percent white) have roughly the same population, Philadelphia has sent 15 times as many people to death row, and 80

percent of those from Philadelphia are black. The Philadelphia D.A. seeks the death penalty in as much as 85 percent of capital cases. The Philadelphia juridical system is marked by an unconstitutional "Homicide Unit" of hanging judges—like Sabo—who *only* hear murder cases. This special panel is apparently self-selecting: these are the judges who really groove on death. Jamal's lawyers have moved to disqualify Sabo as a biased judge, but under Pennsylvania's rules Sabo comes out of semiretirement to rule on his own bias!

For many years, Philadelphia was Rizzotown, as the notoriously racist police commissioner and then mayor ran the city with an iron fist of terror and brutalized the black population. But it did not require a Rizzo to frame up Jamal, nor to firebomb the MOVE home in 1985, killing eleven black men, women and children and destroying an entire city block. That heinous police crime was overseen by black Democratic mayor Wilson Goode, who at the same time refused to go to the scene because he said he feared for his life at the hands of the cops.

In Philly, many of the same people who hounded Jamal from the time he was a teenage political activist until they railroaded him onto death row are still around today in positions of power. The Philadelphia D.A. in 1981 was Ed Rendell, who two days after Jamal's arrest was already proclaiming Jamal guilty of murder; today Rendell is mayor. The Assistant D.A. who prosecuted Jamal, Joseph McGill, is today openly working as an attorney for the F.O.P., defending its members against charges of bribery, theft and corruption. And the arraignment judge in Mumia's case, Lynne Abraham, is now the "liberal" D.A. whose office has weighed in to try to intimidate opposition to Jamal's legal lynching.

Assistant D.A. Gordon's letter laid out the prosecution's tissue of lies in Jamal's case, and also issued some very real threats. He concluded with a denunciation that the "ill-advised Addison-Wesley decision to publish Mr. Abu-Jamal's book and reward him with a profit for his deed, looks to be the only true miscarriage of justice here," and ominously warned that those who support Jamal are guilty of an "insult to police officers, families of murder victims and the thousands of law-abiding citizens who are no doubt repulsed by your misguided and misinformed support for this very cunning but despicable murderer."

Nor did the FBI and its agents and surrogates in Pennsylvania cease their scrutiny and surveillance of Jamal with the demise of the Black Panther



New York Post

Entire West Philadelphia black neighborhood was obliterated in racist cop firebombing of MOVE home, May 1985.

Party and the supposed dissolution of COINTELPRO's Murder, Inc. As revealed by Jamal's recently released FBI files, they continued to keep tabs on him and his supporters at least as recently as 1991. Now it has been determined, on the basis of pretrial discovery in a civil rights lawsuit by Jamal against the prison authorities, that the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections has been intercepting, copying and evidently circulating *privileged correspondence* between Jamal and his attorneys. This includes several letters this year and at least two letters from 1994 which contained sensitive information about the legal strategy and investigation being pursued in Jamal's quest for a new trial and the overturn of his death sentence. And since the warrant was signed, all of Jamal's correspondence with his attorneys is being opened. This blatant violation of Jamal's constitutional rights is a concerted conspiracy to spy on and spike his legal defense efforts.

This sinister web of spying, intimidation and frame-up is not an aberration which can be cleansed from the system, as liberals would have it. Rather it goes to the very core of the capitalist state which, with its cops and courts, its prosecutors and executioners, is an instrument for the repression of the working class and the oppressed. This is part of the Marxist understanding of the capitalist state, and as Marxists we understand that it will take nothing less than a workers revolution to sweep away this machinery

of state terror whose purpose is to keep profits and interest payments flowing into the coffers of Wall Street. As part of a multiracial revolutionary workers party which champions the cause of all the oppressed, black workers will play a key role in sweeping away this system of exploitation, war and racism. Only in a socialist America, as part of an international socialist society, will working people and minorities find not only civil but social justice, a society in which youth will be faced not with a nightmare of ghetto and prison hellholes but education and meaningful employment.

Jamal's case is what capitalist state repression is all about: he was brutally beaten by the Philadelphia police as a 14-year-old anti-racist protester, spied on by the local "red squad" and the FBI, placed on "subversives" lists and subjected to several attempted frame-ups as a teenage youth. He was then shot by the cops in the dead of night, and when they failed to execute him on the streets, they have tried ever since to kill him through the courts. His trial was a travesty of justice from the start, presided over by a notorious hanging judge, with evidence suppressed, witnesses intimidated and black jurors excluded. The death sentence was blatantly based on his political beliefs, and his appeals have been dismissed out of hand. But despite the overwhelming forces arrayed against him, he has continued to fight, to be the "voice of the voiceless."

Mumia Abu-Jamal has been a special

target of the racist rulers, because he dared *and dares* to speak out with force and passion against their injustices. But the system which has tormented him also oppresses black and Hispanic minorities as a whole, as its apparatus of legal repression defends the property and interests of the tiny handful of fabulously wealthy capitalists against the working people who produce their wealth. Jamal's case serves as a reminder of the fundamental realities of capitalism, for the nightmare he has endured continues today. The recent FBI/cop street execution in Philadelphia of an unarmed 23-year-old black man, Glenn Thomas, is but one of the countless state-sanctioned murders which are a daily occurrence in the ghettos and barrios.

In Clinton/Gingrich's America, what possibility is there for a valiant fighter against oppression like Mumia Abu-Jamal to find justice in the criminal court system? The legal proceedings against him have been hopelessly tainted. When the police have ruthlessly suppressed, destroyed, and mutilated the evidence beyond recognition, when the D.A.'s office with its smear campaign has shown it will tell any lie to see Jamal dead, when the judges are hangmen in robes—what possible chance does Jamal ever have to get a "fair trial" from this lynch mob? Simple justice demands that Jamal be freed immediately. He must be free to write, free to publish, here on the outside where he belongs and where he can continue to struggle against racist capitalist oppression.

From IWW revolutionary labor organizer Frank Little to San Francisco unionists Tom Mooney and Warren Billings to anarchist workers Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti in the early years of the century, to the heroic Rosenbergs in the McCarthyite 1950s, to the 38 Black Panthers who were gunned down in the '60s—and the many more who were jailed, some of them still behind bars today, like Geronimo ji Jaga (Pratt)—Mumia Abu-Jamal is one in a long line of fighters for social justice who have been grievously victimized by the capitalist rulers. Jamal should not have spent a day in jail in the first place, and he should not be in prison now. He should be allowed to join his family and to join all those who seek and struggle for a society in which there will be no racist frame-ups and legal lynchings. While Jamal's lawyers pull every possible legal lever to win his freedom, what's urgently needed is to mobilize millions of workers and the oppressed worldwide to demand: Free Mumia Abu-Jamal! Abolish the racist death penalty! ■

of the death penalty as punishment—we do not accord the state the right to determine who lives or dies.

From the time the Spartacist League and Partisan Defense Committee first took up the fight to save Mumia's life more than ten years ago, we have sought to assist him in pursuing every possible legal avenue while putting no confidence in a judicial system which is part and parcel of the capitalist state apparatus. We have publicized Jamal's cause, raised critically important funds for his legal battles and fought to mobilize the broadest range of social forces in his defense. And we have succeeded in this, making Mumia's struggle known to trade unionists, death penalty abolitionists and many others, not only in the U.S. but internationally. The PDC has organized united-front actions where all organizations agreeing with the demands to save Mumia from execution and to abolish the racist death penalty can speak in their own name, carry their own signs and banners and distribute their literature. These protests were infused with the understanding that the social power of the multiracial working class must be mobilized in Jamal's defense and in defense of all the oppressed.

Our non-sectarian, class-struggle defense work stands in the tradition of the early International Labor Defense (ILD), the American arm of the "International Red Aid" established by the Communist International in the early 1920s. As pioneer American Trotskyist James P. Cannon, an early leader of the ILD, wrote during the worldwide campaign of labor protest on behalf of anarchist workers Sacco and Vanzetti, the ILD followed "the policy of the class struggle," which "puts the center of gravity in the protest movement of the workers of America and the world. It puts all faith in the power of the masses and no faith whatever in the justice of the courts. While favoring all possible legal proceedings, it calls for agitation, publicity, demonstrations—organized protest on a national and international scale. It calls for unity and solidarity of all workers on this burning issue, regardless of conflicting views on other questions."

International Protest Stayed the Executioner's Hand

Jamal's powerful voice became known to millions around the world through his 1995 book, *Live from Death Row*, and the scathing indictments of racist oppression and degradation he continues to write from behind bars. When Governor Ridge signed a death warrant against Jamal in June 1995, it touched off an explosion of protest and publicity. Hundreds of thousands of students, workers and others—including Jamal's fellow

writers—fought for his life. Trade unions from throughout the U.S. to Brazil and Japan spoke out on his behalf. A number of heads of state, including French president Jacques Chirac and South Africa's Nelson Mandela, also demanded that Jamal not be put to death.

As the scheduled date of execution neared, the PDC initiated emergency united-front protests, centered on bringing to bear the power of organized labor, in New York City, Chicago and Oakland as well as in Canada and Australia. The protests drew hundreds of trade unionists and were endorsed by dozens of unions and labor officials, as well as a wide range of other organizations. Under the watchword of the united front, "march separately, strike together," the protests were based on unity in action while allowing for the free debate of contending strategies and programs which is vital to advancing the consciousness of the working class, anti-racist youth and others.

The outpouring of protests was the crucial factor in winning a stay of execution for Mumia in August 1995. At the time, Mumia issued a message to all those who had participated in the protests, urging: "Let us utilize this precious time to build a stronger and broader movement, to not 'stay' one execution, but to halt them all!" To put a final halt to the grisly workings of capitalism's machinery of death—be they the guardians of death row or the cops who operate as "judge, jury and executioner" in gunning down minority youth on the streets—requires sweeping away this entire system based on exploitation and oppression. The social power to do that lies in the hands of the multiracial working class, with its numbers, organization and discipline—and most importantly, its capacity to bring the wheels of the profit system to a grinding halt.

Integrated unions representing millions of workers have gone on record in support of Jamal. But these millions have not been mobilized *in action* to combat this racist frame-up. The responsibility for that lies with the pro-capitalist trade-union misleaders, who fear calling their members into action to defend their economic interests, much less in defense of blacks, immigrants and others who are cast off to starve in the streets or locked away in prison hellholes. The labor bureaucracy seeks to tie the working class to the interests of their exploiters through the agency of the capitalist political parties, especially Clinton's Democrats. During the last presidential elections, the AFL-CIO poured tens of millions into the Democratic Party's coffers while working overtime to prevent even the smallest strike.

In fighting to mobilize the unions in united-front defense actions for Jamal and all class-war prisoners, we aim to suffuse the working class with the consciousness of its historic interests in fighting for all of labor and the oppressed against the *entire* capitalist system. We seek to forge a revolutionary workers party modeled on the one built by Bolshevik leader V. I. Lenin, who wrote in his 1902 book *What Is To Be Done?* that for proletarian revolutionaries:

"[The] ideal should not be the trade-union secretary, but *the tribune of the people*, who is able to react to every manifestation of tyranny and oppression, no matter where it appears...who is able to generalise all these manifestations and produce a single picture of police violence and capitalist exploitation; who is able to take advantage of every event, however small, in order to set forth *before all* his socialist convictions and his democratic demands, in order to clarify for *all* and everyone the world-historic significance of the struggle for the emancipation of the proletariat."

Our fight to free Mumia Abu-Jamal and abolish the death penalty is part of our perspective of winning workers to the understanding that the bourgeois state, with its cops and courts, is not some "neutral" agency which serves society as a whole but rather exists to defend the class rule and profits of the capitalists against those they exploit. It is crucially necessary to overcome, through integrated class struggle, the racial divisions fostered by the bourgeoisie to weaken the entire working class. Black oppression, the forcible segregation of the masses of black people at the bottom of this society, is intrinsic to American capitalism. As a strategic component of the proletariat, black workers will play a key role in the socialist revolution which is needed to root out racial oppression; and to win the proletariat to revolutionary consciousness, it is necessary to inculcate the understanding that the fight for black freedom is central to the struggle for the emancipation of labor itself.

Class-Struggle Defense vs. Reformist Appeals

We welcome the diverse efforts that have been made by many organizations other than our own, particularly since 1995, on Jamal's behalf. But whether liberal opponents of the death penalty or reformist "socialists," their starting point is far removed from our Marxist perspective. Seeking to pressure the bourgeois courts to be "just," they steer their efforts toward calling for a "fair trial"—as if Mumia could ever get a fair trial under this rigged, racist "justice" system. In a similar vein, the "Campaign to End the Death Penalty" launched by the

International Socialist Organization (ISO) echoes liberal criticisms of the death penalty. Both the ISO and its "Campaign" signed a leaflet last year which complained that "executing prisoners is significantly more expensive than keeping them in prison for the rest of their lives." Clinton and the Republicans likewise point to how expensive death sentences are as they seek to put a stop to "endless appeals" by death row inmates! The ISO "socialists" implicitly endorse the grotesque "alternative" of life sentences without parole—a living death for inmates—put forward by bourgeois reformers.

Most recently, the reformist Socialist Action (SA) group has initiated the "December 6 Mobilization to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal," kicked off by an August 16 rally in San Francisco which drew some 3,000 people and raised \$20,000 for Jamal's legal costs. Demonstrations are being called for December 6 in San Francisco and other cities in North America and Europe in conjunction with a "People's International Tribunal for Justice for Mumia Abu-Jamal" in Philadelphia initiated by Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal. The rallies sponsored by Socialist Action—called around the demands "Free Mumia Abu-Jamal! Abolish the death penalty! Stop police brutality!"—are not genuine united fronts but rather an extension of SA's reformist politics.

Even as we encouraged others to take up Jamal's cause, we realized that many of these groups would seek to silence and exclude the revolutionary Marxists in order to keep protests "safe" for Democratic Party politicians. Pointing to SA's repeated calls for a "massive, legal, peaceful demonstration" on December 6,

a PDC spokesman at an August 23 planning meeting in San Francisco said:

"Does Socialist Action believe that anyone is going to stand up and argue for an illegal, violent demonstration? Of course not. No one who wants Jamal's freedom would argue such a thing. It means that what Socialist Action is promising in advance is a mobilization subordinated to bourgeois liberalism—or to put it another way, your goal is a demonstration that is 'safe' for [San Francisco mayor] Willie Brown and his fellow Democratic Party buddies. We believe that the independence of the working class is crucial in the fight against all racist injustice, and that independence is gutted by reliance on the Democratic Party.

"This doesn't mean we argue to exclude Democratic Party politicians. We favor the broadest participation possible in the fight to free Jamal. If they agree with the demands of the demonstration, fine. But Socialist Action's desire for their participation becomes political capitulation by assuring these forces of the demonstration's 'respectability.' At the same time, it means you are limiting the participation of those with a real stake in the fight to free Jamal—leftists, minority youth and others who do not subscribe to this class-collaborationist political vantage point. In fact, you imply the exclusion of those whom the *bourgeoisie* may deem neither 'peaceful' nor 'legal'."

Socialist Action's call for "peaceful, legal" protests is a code phrase for exclusion of groups to their left. During the Vietnam antiwar movement of the 1960s and early '70s, the reformist Socialist Workers Party—whose cadre then included the current SA leadership—used that call to cement a class-collaborationist alliance with Democratic Party politicians. This bloc was sealed through bloody physical attacks against radical leftists, including the Spartacist League, who fought for the *victory* of the Vietnamese workers and peasants against U.S. imperialism. These days, Socialist

Action's chief role is as waterboys for the trade-union bureaucracy. In the 1983 Greyhound strike, prominent SA supporter Jeff Mackler helped to police a support rally in San Francisco in order to keep picketers away from the struck bus terminal.

Our comrade also addressed the reformist slogan "Stop police brutality," saying: "Only liberals and those who wish to foster illusions in the capitalist system of injustice believe *this* system will 'stop' unleashing their police on workers and the oppressed. We will take no part in lulling the working class and oppressed into believing that it can be any other way under capitalism." While we fight to mobilize powerful social protest against acts of police brutality, we know that the cops will necessarily resort to chokeholds, pepper spray, frame-ups and cold-blooded killings. Earlier this year, reformists sought to channel outrage over the killing of Aaron Williams in San Francisco into a call to fire one of the cops responsible. This was echoed by the mayor himself, who hoped that sacrificing one "bad apple" would make the *system* of repression more efficient and "credible."

Socialist Action exhibits a touching faith in the racist, strikebreaking cops as allies of the oppressed. In Canada, where the December 6 protests are being sponsored by the Socialist Action group there, SA leader Barry Weisleder last year wrote how Toronto cops "were friendly" to striking public employees and "in many instances acted as benign mediators" (*Socialist Action [Canada]*, Spring-Summer 1996). Would SA also describe as "benign" the U.S. Fraternal Order of Police, which has organized nationally to push Jamal's execution and which torments his supporters?

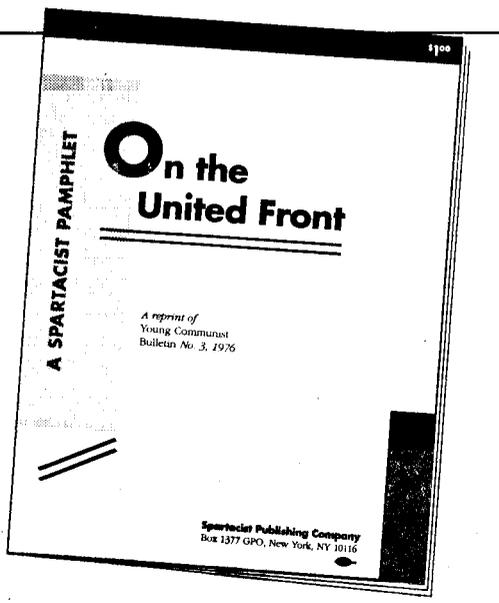
As opposed to SA's liberal, exclusionist policies, our comrades at the August 23 planning meeting argued for a genuine united-front demonstration—based on "unity in action, freedom of criticism"—around the demands "Free Mumia! Abolish the racist death penalty!" There are many and sundry organizations offering their own ways of fighting on behalf of Mumia. Well and good. For our part, we will continue to focus on mobilizing the power of labor through class-struggle, non-sectarian defense, which is the best hope for saving Mumia Abu-Jamal from legal lynching and to free him to carry on his work as the "voice of the voiceless" from outside prison walls. The fight to free Mumia is part and parcel of the struggle to forge the revolutionary workers party that is the most essential tool for the emancipation of labor and the oppressed. ■

On the United Front

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Death Row Speedup Targets Minorities

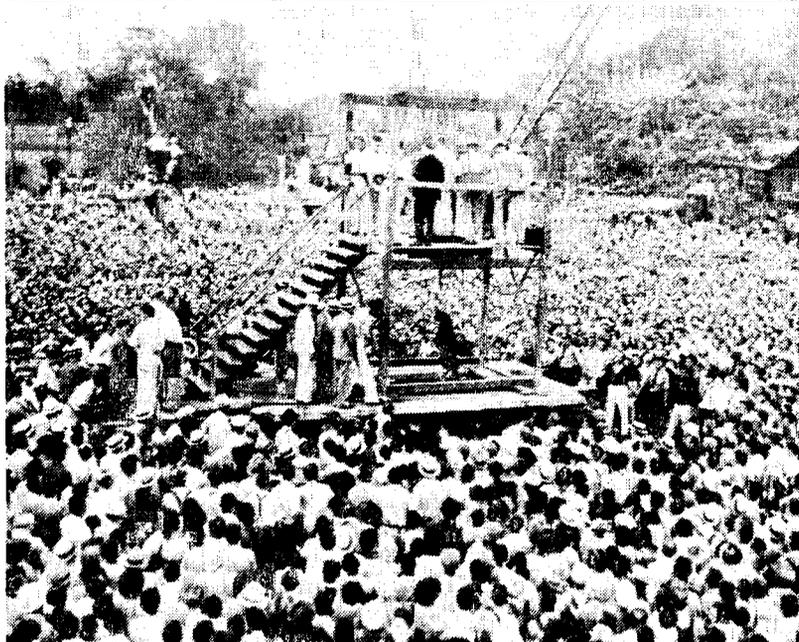
On July 13, the state of Florida agreed to give \$500,000 each to Freddie Pitts and Wilbert Lee to settle a wrongful conviction claim. The two black men were sentenced to die by an all-white jury for the killing of two white gas station attendants in 1963. Pitts and Lee were tried a second time after a white man confessed to the murders—and again convicted by an all-white jury. After nine years on death row, they were finally pardoned in 1975. And it was not until 35 years after their frame-up that they won some token compensation for the racist horror to which they had been subjected.

What is unusual about this case is simply that Freddie Pitts and Wilbert Lee lived to see their vindication. As a new study by the Death Penalty Information Center documents—certainly not for the first time—the death penalty is racist to the core. It is legal lynching, pure and simple. Blacks make up 42 percent of the country's nearly 3,400 death row inmates, well over three times their proportion of the population. And the states of the old Southern slavocracy account for an overwhelming percentage of those executed.

The focus of *The Death Penalty in Black and White: Who Lives, Who Dies, Who Decides* is far removed geographically from the Florida backwoods where Pitts and Lee had their near-fatal encounter with lynch law "justice." It is Philadelphia, Pennsylvania—not Philadelphia, Mississippi—which has become known as "the capital of capital punishment." Home to only 14 percent of Pennsylvania's population, Philadelphia accounts for the bulk of the state's death row inmates—and 83 percent of them are black. In the period examined by the study, 1983-93, black defendants in Philadelphia were sentenced to death nearly *four times* more often than whites. In the years since, blacks received eight of the ten death sentences handed down in 1994, ten of ten in 1995, three of four in 1996.

Notably, the study omits *the* Philadelphia case which has come to exemplify the racist death penalty in this country: the frame-up of black death row political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal. In the 16 years since he was falsely convicted for the December 1981 killing of a Philadelphia policeman, Mumia's fight for freedom has become the focus of opposition to the death penalty. The pro-death forces made this clear in their own chilling way barely a week after the new study was released, when the Philadelphia Fraternal Order of Police (F.O.P.) organized a full-page "advertisement" in the *New York Times* (14 June) screaming

Abolish the Racist Death Penalty!



Der Spiegel

Death penalty is racist legal lynching. Above: 20,000 watch hanging of black man in Kentucky, 1936. Below: Huntsville, Texas death row. Texas machinery of death slaughtered 37 last year, half the national total of executions.

Gerald Davis





Der Spiegel

1917 march in New York City protested national wave of lynchings by race-terrorist KKK.



William Loren Katz Collection

for Jamal's death (see "Racist Cops Escalate Campaign for Jamal's Execution," WV No. 693, 3 July).

The Death Penalty Information Center and other liberals seek to pressure Congress to pass a "Racial Justice Act" mandating that the death penalty somehow be applied in a "non-racial" manner in this profoundly racist country—an utterly utopian proposal. Those liberals, like Jesse Jackson, who oppose the death penalty proffer "alternatives" like life imprisonment without parole—a living death. Tailing the liberals, reformist "socialists" like the Workers World Party, the International Socialist Organization and Socialist Action have variously focused on demanding a "new trial" for Mumia or argue against the death penalty from the bourgeois standpoint of how much it costs or whether or not it is "effective" in "fighting crime."

As Marxists, the Spartacist League and Partisan Defense Committee oppose the death penalty in principle. We do not accord to the state the right to decide who shall live and who shall die. This barbaric legacy of medieval torture is today part and parcel of the machinery of repression wielded by the capitalist rulers against workers and minorities. That the U.S. remains one of the few industrialized capitalist countries to retain the death penalty is directly related to the black oppression which is a bedrock of American capitalism. The origins of capital punishment in the U.S. are rooted in the Southern slave system which was smashed by the Civil War. But the struggle for black equality was soon thereafter betrayed by the Northern capitalists, leading to a century of formal Jim Crow segregation in the South and the continuing subjugation of

the black masses as an oppressed race-color caste.

To fulfill the promise of black freedom and smash the racist apparatus of capitalist injustice requires a proletarian revolution led by a multiracial Leninist vanguard party. This is the task to which the Spartacist League is committed. And it is this understanding which has informed the campaign waged for more than ten years by the SL and PDC to mobilize the social power of the integrated labor movement in united-front actions in Mumia's defense and for abolition of the racist death penalty.

No Justice in the Capitalist Courts

Mumia did not and *cannot* get a fair trial under this capitalist "justice" system. His 1982 "trial" was a travesty. The prosecution coerced "witnesses" to lie on the stand and withheld crucial evidence from the defense. Mumia was denied the right to defend himself and saddled with a court-appointed attorney who was allowed a total of \$150 to interview witnesses and later admitted his own incompetency. Blacks were systematically excluded from the jury. The judge, Albert Sabo, was a member of the F.O.P. who has sentenced more men to die than any other sitting judge in the U.S. And when Mumia pursued his Post-Conviction Relief (PCRA) appeal in 1995, it was presided over by the very same hanging judge, who rejected the appeal out of hand.

On the eve of the filing of Mumia's 1995 PCRA petition, Republican governor Tom Ridge signed a warrant for Jamal's execution, which was stayed only as a result of a massive international cam-

paign of protest and publicity. Ridge, who was elected in a campaign centered on speeding up the pace of executions, has already vowed to sign another warrant in the likely event that Jamal's PCRA petition is rejected by the Pennsylvania Supreme Court, which may be imminent. Among the Supreme Court justices is Ronald Castille, who was the Philly D.A. at the time of Jamal's first appeal to the Pennsylvania Supreme Court in 1985. The D.A. at the time of Mumia's trial, Ed Rendell, is now mayor. Current chief prosecutor Lynne Abraham, described as the "Deadliest D.A." in a *New York Times Magazine* (16 July 1995) profile, was the municipal judge who presided over Jamal's December 1981 arraignment.

During the 1995 hearing, Sabo ordered the arrest of one of Mumia's lawyers, PDC counsel Rachel Wolkenstein, for daring to raise the issue of racial disparity now documented by the Death Penalty Information Center. Today, Abraham dismisses the new study with the laughable argument that the appeals process "is sufficient to make sure that our death penalties are handed down in a nondiscriminatory fashion" (*Philadelphia Inquirer*, 4 June). Denouncing University of Iowa law professor David Baldus, one of the authors of the study, Abraham sneered: "This is no more valid than his other studies, which have been discredited." This is an utter lie.

It was an earlier study by Baldus which showed that black defendants accused of killing whites in Georgia are sentenced to death far more frequently than those accused of killing blacks—and that whites charged with the murder of black people almost never receive a death sentence. That research was the

basis for a 1987 appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court by Warren McCleskey, a black man convicted of killing a white police officer in Georgia. In its ruling on *McCleskey v. Kemp*, even the right-wing Rehnquist Supreme Court acknowledged the Baldus findings, only to decide these facts were "irrelevant"—i.e., that they were *all too relevant* to the workings of the capitalist "justice" system.

Exactly 130 years after the Supreme Court pronounced in the 1857 Dred Scott decision that black people "had no rights which the white man was bound to respect," Rehnquist & Co. examined overwhelming evidence of the racist application of the death penalty and proclaimed that this was an "inevitable part of our criminal justice system." The Court rejected McCleskey's claim because its premise "throws into serious question the principles that underlie our entire criminal justice system"—the most sacred "principle" of all being "the validity of capital punishment in our multiracial society."

From Lynch Law to "Legal" Lynching

That sanctified principle is embedded in the racist history of this country. In the colonial era, special "Negro courts" were set up for slaves who, in the words of a South Carolina statute, could expect to be tried "in the most summary and expeditious manner" and executed by means "most effectual to deter others from offending in the like manner" (Kenneth Stampp, *The Peculiar Institution* [1956]). The early Slave Codes defined the black slave as chattel—property—to be slaughtered with about the same "safeguards" as might befit a recalcitrant mule. Among the numerous "crimes" deemed capital

offenses for slaves in every Southern state before the Civil War were rebellion and attempted rebellion. In Louisiana, death was mandated for a slave who struck his overseer or any member of the slaveowner's family, or for a third conviction for striking any white person—a precursor to the "three strikes and you're out" laws being imposed around the country today. And in the legal prohibition on slaves learning to read and write can be seen the motivation behind the current drive to forever silence an articulate spokesman for the oppressed like Mumia Abu-Jamal.

It took a bloody Civil War, in which 200,000 black troops helped turn the tide, to smash the slave system. That social revolution ushered in the most democratic period in American history, Radical Reconstruction. But the promise of black freedom was betrayed by the Northern capitalists, who were not about to take any action which would threaten the dominance of private property, North or South. Even minimal land redistribution was stopped and the large plantations maintained, with the former slaves becoming impoverished sharecroppers and tenant farmers. Following the defeat of Reconstruction, formalized by the Compromise of 1877, the black freedmen were again disenfranchised under Jim Crow laws steeped in the spirit, and at times the letter, of the old Slave Codes. In the 1896 *Plessy* case, the Supreme Court codified "separate but equal" segregation as the law of the land.

At the heart of Jim Crow was lynch law terror. With the withdrawal of the last Union troops in 1877, KKK terror stalked the South unchallenged. From the late 1800s on, some 5,000 or more people were killed by lynch mobs. An anti-

lynching campaign initiated by black journalist Ida Wells did not even pretend to seek equal justice, but simply to get those blacks charged with crimes into a courtroom. To the extent this happened, "legal" lynchings largely supplanted the extra-legal ones. More than 1,600 people were executed during the 1930s alone. Between 1930 and 1967, black people accounted for more than two-thirds of all U.S. executions.

It was only as a result of social struggle—the civil rights movement and mass protest against the dirty, losing imperialist war in Vietnam—that the capitalist rulers felt compelled to put the death penalty on hold in 1967. Five years later, the Supreme Court ruled that the death penalty was "wanton and freakish" in its application and ordered the states to rewrite their laws. But by 1976, the protest marches had long since stopped, and the same Court now gave the executioners the green light to resume their barbaric deeds. We declared: "Stop Supreme Court Bloodbath of Blacks and Poor! Abolish the Death Penalty!" (WV No. 117, 9 July 1976).

With Rehnquist as head of the Supreme Court and a Republican majority in Congress, the liberals and black Democrats now place their hopes for "racial justice" in the Democratic Clinton White House. In fact, racist "law and order" was the centerpiece of Clinton's 1992 election campaign, which was marked by his personal supervision of the Arkansas execution of Rickey Ray Rector, a brain-damaged black man. Since taking office, Clinton has joined with the Republican Congress in pushing through one draconian "anti-crime" bill after another. The 1996 "Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act" vastly expanded the legal domain of capital punishment while gutting the right to federal *habeas corpus* appeals. In a recent column in the *Nation* (15 June), Alexander Cockburn wrote:

"In the fifties 'law enforcement' was primarily the local police, and the F.B.I. Today it has expanded into every government agency. The Army is being used domestically in drug enforcement and border control. Between 1990 and 1995 forty-five federal prisons were built, and at least five are under construction today. We have over 3,000 on death row, ever-expanding police powers, ever-diminishing civil liberties."

Two years ago, New York became the latest in a long line of states outside the Deep South to restore the death penalty, now on the books in 38 states. Last month, a New York City court meted out its first death sentence in over 30 years. Last year, 74 people were executed, the largest number since the 1930s! This



Der Spiegel

Miami cops round up black youth as part of racist "war on drugs."



Philadelphia Daily News



Philadelphia Tribune



Simon/SABA

Rogues' gallery of death, from left: Albert Sabo gave out more death sentences than any other sitting judge in U.S. Philly D.A. Lynne Abraham seeks death penalty more than any other D.A. Democrat Clinton oversaw execution of brain-damaged black man during 1992 election campaign.

year's roll call of death already includes the first woman executed since 1984—Karla Faye Tucker in Texas—in spite of a spectrum of opposition including the Pope and right-wing televangelist Pat Robertson. This was a statement, as we wrote at the time, “that the American ruling class will accept no constraints in implementing the ultimate weapon in its bloody arsenal of state repression” (WV No. 684, 13 February). Weeks later, Florida followed suit by executing Judy Buenoano.

As well, Paraguayan, Honduran and Mexican citizens who were convicted in violation of international law have been put to death. Among those executed in recent years were people whom even the courts acknowledged to be innocent of the charges for which they were strapped into an electric chair or slapped onto a gurney for lethal injection. In its blood-lust, the racist American ruling class is unimpressed and unimpeded by either the U.S. Constitution, the World Court or even the spectre of “divine intervention.”

Like the ideologues for the Southern slavocracy and Hitler's Nazis, hired “academics” churn out pseudoscientific tomes to portray the victims of state slaughter as less than human. When Illinois prepared for its first execution in 28 years in 1990, it hired Holocaust apologist Fred A. Leuchter to build the state's death machine. Graeme Newman, dean of criminal “justice” at the Albany campus of the State University of New York, proposes subjecting prisoners to “risky medical research” (*In These Times*, 19 August 1996). This idea has, of course, already been tried—not only in Dr. Mengele's torture chambers at Auschwitz but in the “medical” facilities at Pennsylvania's Holmesburg penitentiary, not to mention the infamous and inhuman Tuskegee

“experiment” beginning in the 1940s.

More than half of all death row inmates today are blacks, Hispanics or other minorities, sent there through a court system reminiscent of the colonial “Negro courts.” Eddie Lee Ross, a black man sentenced to death in Georgia, was assigned an “attorney” who had been KKK Imperial Wizard for 50 years and, not surprisingly, fell asleep during the trial. The constitutional rights to legal representation and a jury of one's peers have always been a fiction for minorities and the poor, and are no less so today—as Jamal's 1982 trial and countless others since demonstrate. Racist jury-rigging is systemic, as shown last year when a videotape instructing Philadelphia prosecutors in the “art” of excluding black jurors came to the surface.

COINTELPRO: Capitalist State Terror

All this and more was evident in Jamal's case. But it was not just the “normal” racist workings of the capitalist state which put Mumia on death row. He was specifically targeted because of his lifetime of struggle against this system of oppression. In the 1960s, FBI director J. Edgar Hoover warned: “The Negro youth and moderate[s] must be made to understand that if they succumb to revolutionary teachings, they will be dead revolutionaries.” The FBI's COINTELPRO (Counter-Intelligence Program) vendetta left 38 Black Panther Party activists dead and hundreds more imprisoned. Sundiata Acoli, Mondo we Langa and Ed Poindexter are just a few of those who remain behind bars. Geronimo ji Jaga (Pratt) was only released last year after 27 years in California prisons for a crime the government knew all along he didn't commit.

As some one thousand pages of FBI

files document, from the time Mumia emerged as a 15-year-old Panther spokesman in 1969, he was subjected to constant surveillance, harassment and frame-up attempts (see “Mumia Abu-Jamal: The COINTELPRO Files,” WV No. 624, 2 June 1995). The feds and cops never found Jamal to be engaged in anything other than public speaking and writing. Yet he remained in the cross hairs of the FBI and Frank Rizzo's kill-crazy Philadelphia cops—who were then gunning down unarmed “suspects” at a pace seven times greater than New York City police—as he went on to become an award-winning journalist widely known as the “voice of the voiceless.” When Jamal reported on the August 1978 cop siege of the MOVE organization's Powelton Village home and became a MOVE supporter himself, then-mayor Rizzo ranted, “They believe what you write, what you say. And it's got to stop.” Three years later, the cops and FBI saw their chance to stop Jamal, when he was found with a near-fatal bullet in his chest at the scene of the shooting of police officer Daniel Faulkner.

The fate the ruling class has in mind for Jamal has been meted out to untold numbers of other fighters for the rights of labor and the oppressed: the 1887 Haymarket martyrs, IWW militant Joe Hill, anarchists Sacco and Vanzetti in the 1920s, Cold War witchhunt victims Julius and Ethel Rosenberg. In fact, the origins of the COINTELPRO terror operation wielded against the Panthers can be traced back to the “red scare” launched in the wake of the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution. Thousands of labor radicals were imprisoned or deported in the Palmer Raids led by Hoover, who as a young Justice Department attorney cut his teeth in that anti-Communist witch-hunt. And, as Theodore Kornweibel Jr. writes in his book, *Seeing Red* (1998): “One of its victims would be the African American population. Aggressive advocacy of a civil rights agenda and demands for fundamental changes in the racial status quo would be defined as Bolshevik-inspired.”

In the hot summer of 1919, Hoover directed that “special attention should be given toward the Negro agitation which seems to be prevalent throughout the industrial centers of the country and every effort should be made to ascertain whether or not this agitation is due to the influence of the radical elements such as the IWW and Bolsheviks.” The Military Intelligence Division (MID) censured black newspapers like Socialist A. Philip Randolph's *Messenger* for its “vicious” attack on the KKK, which the MID



Black Union troops liberate North Carolina slaves during Civil War, 1865. Spartacist-initiated labor/black mobilization stopped the Klan from marching in Washington, D.C., November 1982.

Library of Congress

Washington Post



claimed was “merely” trying to prevent “the encroachment of the negroes in those neighborhoods populated by white people.” The *Chicago Defender* was condemned simply for promoting a day of prayer for victims of lynching.

Special attention was given to those like writer Claude McKay, who traveled to Moscow for meetings of the Communist International. The American political police feared that black Communists were returning with instructions from Bolshevik leader Leon Trotsky to set up a “colored Soviet.” Dispatches from the U.S. consulate in counterrevolutionary Latvia called attention to a speech by

American Communist John Reed at the Comintern’s Second Congress in 1920 focusing on the critical need for the young American Communist Party to champion the cause of the oppressed black population. Over the coming years, every perceived spokesman for black rights—from the “Back to Africa” Garveyites of the 1920s to Democratic Party liberals like Martin Luther King Jr. in the 1960s—was subjected to surveillance, harassment, provocation and outright terror.

At the pinnacle of the apparatus of state repression is the death penalty. This was made clear in the D.A.’s reply to

Jamal’s motion for a stay of execution in 1995: “The death penalty... is the highest exercise of the state’s authority; and it should not lightly be disturbed.” Yet despite its patently racist character, the death penalty is embraced by a slew of black Democrats and nationalists. Last year, Washington, D.C. mayor Marion Barry authored legislation calling for the death penalty for those convicted of killing policemen, firefighters and paramedics. And during his 1997 mayoral bid, New York’s Al Sharpton, a former FBI-fink whose demagoguery is sometimes mistaken for radicalism, demanded the death penalty for a white man accused of killing a Hispanic cop. As for the anti-woman, anti-gay and anti-Semitic bigot Louis Farrakhan, his 1993 tract, *A Torchlight for America*, likewise demands the death penalty for those who “transgress the law.”

What unites these black bourgeois politicians is that they bow to the “authority” of the capitalist state. Thus, they are an obstacle to the fight for black freedom. Black oppression is intrinsic to American capitalism. Black people constitute a race-color caste, integrated into the economy while forcibly segregated at the bottom of this society. Against both the separatists who abet the bourgeoisie in fomenting divisions among the multiracial proletariat and the liberals who preach reliance on the racist Democrats, the Spartacist League fights for the perspective of *revolutionary integrationism*. The historic struggle for black equality can only be realized through the full integration of blacks into an egalitarian socialist society. This requires a third American Revolution, a proletarian revolution which breaks the chains of wage slavery and finishes the tasks of the Civil War. As a strategic component of the American proletariat, black workers will play a key role in this socialist revolution and in the Trotskyist party needed to lead it to victory.

Leninist Party: Tribune of the People

Following the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union, the imperialist rulers act like they can get away with anything. In the calculations of the American bourgeoisie, the ghetto masses who used to provide a reservoir of unskilled labor for the auto plants and steel mills—a “reserve army” of the unemployed to be tapped when the economy needed them—are now deemed to be a “surplus” population. The cold-blooded policy of starving black welfare mothers and their kids is augmented by a racist “war on crime” which snatches

young men and women from the streets and throws them into prison hellholes. The "war on drugs" has subjected the ghettos and barrios to a virtual state of siege by the racist cops. And the ever more pervasive use of random drug-testing is designed to regiment and discipline the proletariat—a latter-day version of the blacklist aimed at victimizing labor militants.

Jails replace (non-existent) jobs, billy clubs are substituted for the blackboard. A couple of statistics sum it up. Over a million manufacturing jobs were lost in the U.S. in the 1980s, on top of the destruction of whole swaths of Midwest industry the decade before. Meanwhile, the prison population has tripled to more than 1.7 million. *For every place lost on the assembly lines, one has been added in the prisons.*

The parties of capital, Democrats and Republicans, join in intensifying capitalist repression as they aim to contain the explosive pressures generated by the growing gap between a handful of filthy rich and those at the bottom. Politicians vie over who can be "tougher on crime," eliminating educational and recreational programs in the prisons and bringing back Jim Crow horrors like the chain gang. The spectre of Jim Crow is also evident in the burgeoning, majority black prison population: one in seven black men are today disenfranchised because of felony convictions, effectively stripped of citizenship rights guaranteed under the 14th Amendment.

As spending on prisons has skyrocketed to \$30 billion a year—an almost eightfold increase over the past 20 years—and with it prison employment, this has created a powerful political lobby in its own right. Among the proliferation of firms specializing in private prisons is the Corrections Corporation of America, whose growth in stock value from \$50 million in 1986 to \$3.5 billion last year has placed it among the top five performers on the New York Stock Exchange. This has been accompanied by an enormous increase in "private security" strikebreaking outfits.

Simultaneously, the prisons have become repositories for slave labor rivaling the union-busting "workfare" schemes—and with the same purpose. Lockhart Technologies, Inc., a manufacturer of circuit boards, laid off 150 workers and replaced them with prisoners at its Texas "Renaissance and Work Facility." Speaking of his "captive work force," Lockhart executive Leonard Hill gloats: "They're here every day. Their cars don't break down, they're rarely ill, and they don't have family problems" (*In These Times*,

17 March 1997). And TWA used prison labor to break a 1986 flight attendants strike, putting its reservation clerks on the planes and using inmates to take calls. The airline is still using inmates at a juvenile facility in Ventura, California, paying \$5 an hour instead of the \$18 an hour unionized reservation clerks get.

Such facts alone underline the direct interest and need for the integrated labor movement to mobilize its social power against capitalist state repression and on behalf of all the oppressed and exploited. Instead, the pro-capitalist trade-union bureaucrats devote the bulk of their "organizing" efforts to bringing the armed guardians of capital—the cops and prison guards—into the labor movement, while increasingly acting as labor contractors for slave-labor "workfare" programs. Trampling on labor's hard-won gains, the AFL-CIO tops chain the trade unions to the capitalist Democrats and Republicans.

The mobilization of the proletariat in pursuit of its own class interests requires a political struggle against the pro-capitalist labor tops. The bourgeois state, with its cops and courts, is not some "neutral" agency which serves society as

a whole but rather—as Friedrich Engels put it over a century ago—"an organization for the protection of the possessing class against the non-possessing class." We aim to win workers to this Marxist understanding as part of our effort to bring the social power of the labor movement into the fight to free Mumia Abu-Jamal and abolish the racist death penalty.

Karl Marx captured a fundamental truth of American society when he wrote at the time of the Civil War: "Labor cannot emancipate itself in the white skin where in the black it is branded." The color bar remains a fundamental dividing line in American society, key to obscuring the irreconcilable class conflict between capital and labor. The Spartacist League fights to forge a multiracial revolutionary workers party, a Leninist tribune of the people. That is the key to sweeping away this system based on exploitation and oppression and putting a final halt to the grisly workings of capitalism's machinery of death—be they the guardians of death row or the cops who operate as "judge, jury and executioner" in gunning down minority youth on the streets. ■

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The Racist Frame-Up Machine That Sent Jamal to Death Row

Philly Cops' Reign of Terror

This August 8 marked the 20th anniversary of the massive police assault on the black MOVE commune in Philadelphia's Powelton Village neighborhood. Following a 15-month siege—which included the erection of an eight-foot-high fence sealing off a four-block area—at 6 a.m. on that August 1978 morning over 600 cops surrounded the MOVE compound. After bringing in a bulldozer to rip down a stockade fence around the house and using a crane as a battering ram to break down boarded windows, the cops used smoke bombs and water cannons to drive MOVE members and their children out of the house.

After a single gunshot was heard, the cops lacerated the house with thousands of rounds of ammunition. One of their own, James Ramp, long a central figure in the Philadelphia Police Department's "Stakeout" squad, was killed in the police crossfire. When the barrage of bullets stopped, MOVE member Delbert Africa crawled out of a basement window. Suffering from a bullet wound, shirtless, his hands above his head, Delbert Africa was attacked by heavily armed cops who repeatedly kicked and stomped on him while he lay helpless on the ground.

In August 1981, nine MOVE members were sentenced to prison terms of 30 to 100 years on false charges of killing Ramp. Four months later, prominent black Philly journalist Mumia Abu-Jamal, who had raised his eloquent voice in defense of MOVE, was arrested and framed up on false charges of killing another Philadelphia policeman, Daniel Faulkner. The following July, Mumia was sentenced to death. Then on 13 May 1985, the Philly cops—working together with the FBI and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms—came to finish the job they had started in 1978, dropping a bomb on MOVE's Osage Avenue home. Eleven black people—including five children—were killed, and an entire black neighborhood reduced to smoldering rubble.

Central to every one of these deadly racist assaults were the

Philadelphia Police Department's notorious "red squad"—the Civil Affairs (CA) unit—and the Stakeout unit, an urban death squad of police sharpshooters. CA inspector George Fencil issued the first warning in the August 1978 attack on the MOVE house, his voice booming over a cop bullhorn: "You have exactly two minutes in which to come out." Two to three dozen specially trained and heavily armed Stakeout cops who were positioned close to the MOVE home were then mobilized for the kill.

Seven years later, it was also Stakeout cops who drove MOVE members back into the inferno of their burning Osage Avenue home under a hail of gunfire. Among these cops were some of the self-described "veterans of '78," including those who had viciously beaten Delbert Africa. As Charles Bowser, a black former deputy mayor who headed the city's whitewash commission on the MOVE bombing, concluded in his book, *Let the Bunker Burn*: "The facts were that some

of the police had come to Osage Avenue to kill—to kill by bullets or to kill by fire, but to kill nevertheless."

On 9 December 1981, the first cops to arrive at the scene where Mumia Abu-Jamal lay critically wounded by a bullet from Faulkner's gun were Stakeout squad members Robert Shoemaker and James Forbes. The highest-ranking officer on the scene was Inspector Alfonse Giordano, a former Stakeout commander. A police report later that night shows that Fencil was also called into the investigation. These cops knew exactly who Mumia was; they had been trying to get him for years.

The Racist Cop Vendetta Against Jamal

Jamal had been in the crosshairs of the CA—formed in the mid-1960s as the Civil Defense (CD) squad—and Stakeout units since the age of 14, when he was brutally beaten and arrested by the cops for daring to protest a 1968 election campaign appearance in Philly by George "Segregation Forever" Wallace. At age 15, when Mumia became co-founder and Minister of Information of the Philadelphia chapter of the Black Panther Party (BPP), he was placed under daily surveillance by Fencil's CD unit, which closely collaborated with the FBI's "Counter-Intelligence Program" (COINTELPRO). Indeed, the Philly CD squad served as a model for the deadly COINTELPRO operation which resulted in the murder of 38 Panthers around the country and the frame-up of hundreds more. In the 800 pages of FBI documents obtained by Jamal in 1995, report after report list as their source unidentified officers from the CD unit.

The Stakeout squad, an elite unit largely made up of former military men, was put together by then-deputy police commissioner—later police commissioner and mayor—Frank Rizzo in response to the eruption of the city's black ghetto in 1964. It was formed as part of the drive by, bourgeois, state authorities to crush any expression of opposition—particularly by blacks—to vicious racism and police brutality.



Philadelphia Daily News
Member of sinister Stakeout squad brutalizing Delbert Africa in 1978 Philly cop siege of MOVE's Powelton Village home.

Philly's Stakeout squad was the model for SWAT teams later formed in cities across the United States. Rizzo himself became an icon of racist "law and order" among cops nationwide, particularly for his attacks against the Black Panther Party.

The Stakeout unit was prominent in the 1970 raids of three BPP offices. With Fencel's CD unit in the lead, 45 heavily armed Stakeout cops stripped the Panthers' Wallace Street office bare, even ripping the plumbing from the walls. Outside, Panther members were lined up against the wall and ordered to strip. In his book *Protectors of Privilege* (University of California Press [1990]), Frank Donner notes, "The fact that the raiders were specially chosen for their marksmanship and wore bullet-proof vests, and Rizzo's taunting of a number of Panthers as 'yellow' because they dropped their guns in response to a police order rather than engage in battle all suggest that the raids were planned as a pretext to provoke a shoot-out." In other words, the raids were a setup for a kill.

As we noted in "Mumia Abu-Jamal: The COINTELPRO Files" (WV No. 624, 2 June 1995):

"Mumia Abu-Jamal survived the rulers' onslaught against the Black Panther Party in the late '60s and early '70s. He was not assassinated in his sleep in the dead of night like Chicago Panthers Fred Hampton and Mark Clark. He was not then railroaded into a prison hellhole like Los Angeles Panther leader Geronimo ji Jaga (Pratt) who has spent the last 25 years of his life buried alive for a crime that the government knows he did not commit—because they had wiretaps proving his innocence. But the feds and the Philly cops did not call off their vendetta against Jamal with the demise of the Panther Party. They continued to hate him for his eloquent and impassioned defense of black rights, and particularly because he remained defiant and unbowed in the face of state repression and racist oppression."

Jamal's defense of MOVE in 1978 further whetted the cops' appetite to get him. The Stakeout police surrounding the Powelton Village house saw Jamal as he entered and left the compound to conduct radio interviews. They seethed with hatred for his sympathetic coverage of MOVE. Ramp was elevated to the pantheon of police heroes—to this day, the Philly police department rifle sharpshooting team gives out an annual "James Ramp award." At a press conference following the 1978 cop attack, Rizzo ominously looked straight at Jamal as he blamed Ramp's death on the "new breed of journalism." Rizzo warned: "You're going to have to be held responsible and accountable for what you do." He seized on the killing of Ramp to scream for restoration of the death penalty: "Put them

in the electric chair, and I'll pull the switch."

Jamal's sympathetic courtroom reports of the trial of the nine MOVE members charged with Ramp's killing enraged the police. He also covered the 1981 trial of three of the Stakeout cops who tortured Delbert, which resulted in the judge's acquittal of the cops on all charges. At that trial, a key witness for the defense was none other than CA head George Fencel. Perhaps most galling to the cops, Mumia was there to cover the celebration when MOVE founder and leader John Africa was acquitted of federal conspiracy and weapons charges in July 1981.

Only months later, the Stakeout cops who found Jamal bleeding at the corner of 13th and Locust Streets with a cop lying fatally wounded a few feet away finally saw the opportunity to frame him up. Giordano, described by Donner as "one of Rizzo's favorite officers," ordered that Jamal, who was near death, be taken to the Police Administrative Building for interrogation, finally relenting and allowing him to be taken to the hospital. Giordano was later the first to manufacture the claim that Mumia had confessed to killing Faulkner. In July 1982, Mumia was sentenced to death in a "trial" that in every respect was a travesty of justice. Ever since then, the Philadelphia Fraternal Order of Police (F.O.P.) has been screaming for the state's executioners to "pull the switch."

Philadelphia Police State

The sinister web of police surveillance, terror and frame-up that succeeded in entrapping Jamal is no aberration. Rather it demonstrates the very nature of the capitalist state, its cops and courts, which exist as the bourgeoisie's machinery for the repression of the working class and oppressed. As the gap between the haves and have-nots increasingly widens, the rulers clamp down even further against the exercise of the most basic democratic rights by the population, lest the spark of social protest ignite a conflagration. To keep the lid on an ever seething cauldron of discontent, more cops are poured onto the streets and their powers to act as a law unto themselves are increased. While the Philadelphia cops are hardly unique, they have long stood as perhaps the starkest expression of the rampant police bonapartism that is increasingly the trend throughout the U.S.

The city in which Mumia Abu-Jamal was "tried" and sentenced to die has a particularly pronounced racist history going back to well before the Civil War.

In 1862, black abolitionist leader Frederick Douglass wrote: "There is not perhaps anywhere to be found a city in which prejudice against color is more rampant than in Philadelphia." It was the most pro-South—and, segregated—city north of the Mason-Dixon line, reflecting the interests of Philadelphia's ruling class, which was heavily involved in cotton and the textile industry, in the maintenance of slavery.

Irish immigrants in Philadelphia were originally referred to as "white Negroes" and correspondingly consigned to the lowest orders. The divide which pitted native Protestant workers against Catholic immigrants, who were brought in to supply cheap labor for the mills and foundries, came to be supplanted by racial hatred pitting white against black. As described in Noel Ignatiev's book, *How the Irish Became White*, the Democratic Party served as the agency for assimilation of the Irish into "white" society, albeit at the bottom end. Democratic Party politicians promoted virulent racism against blacks as the glue to cement the immigrant laboring masses to the interests of the ruling elite.

With the mass migration of blacks to the North during World War I came forcible segregation into ghettos, enforced by racist thugs both in police uniforms and Klan robes. In the 1920s, Pennsylvania had the fourth-largest Klan concentration in the country; the Philadelphia area alone had 30,000 Klansmen. When the federal government ordered the hiring of eight black workers at the Philadelphia Transit Company during World War II, this was met by a racist "work stoppage" organized by the transit bosses. When Democratic president Franklin D. Roosevelt ordered the army in to enforce wartime no-strike laws, some Southern soldiers took the opportunity to try to impose Jim Crow segregation on city buses, provoking mass resistance from outraged black riders.

Philadelphia remains one of the most intensely racist cities in the United States. During the 1950s and '60s, the city was rigidly racially segregated, with the partial exception of the Powelton Village area in West Philly near the University of Pennsylvania. No less than in a city somewhere in the Deep South, a black person could get in trouble very fast with either the racist cops or a gang of local racists simply for being in the wrong neighborhood or on the streets at the wrong hour. With its 40 percent black population, Philadelphia has the largest concentration of black people in the very white state of Pennsylvania.

In this city—grotesquely referred to as the “City of Brotherly Love”—race is politics. Whether Democratic or Republican, capitalist politicians make a name for themselves on the racially polarized terrain of “Filthy-delphia.” This essential fact of life explains the rise to power of a fascistic racist pig like Frank Rizzo and the fanatical preoccupation by the city’s police department and prosecutors with the Black Panthers, MOVE and Mumia Abu-Jamal. In Philly, the name of the game is and always has been to keep black people “in their place” and in the ghettos. For the city’s white capitalist establishment, racial paranoia is as intense as it was for former FBI director J. Edgar Hoover, whose operational credo for the deadly COINTELPRO operations against the Black Panthers was that they constituted the “greatest threat to the internal security of the U.S.”

In this sense, the city of Philadelphia is a concentrated expression of the development of racist American capitalism, which is rooted in the segregation of blacks at the bottom of society and in which the color bar serves to obscure and reinforce the irreconcilable class divide between labor and capital. While Irish, Italians and Poles in Philadelphia remained divided in separate neighborhoods, the hatred of all was directed against the black population. Out of this cauldron of ethnic hostility and racial hatred emerged a bonapartist police force that operated like a gang of white racist ethnic thugs. This was personified by Rizzo, who once boasted he would “make Attila the Hun look like a faggot.”

Ethnic and racial hostilities were increasingly exacerbated with the devastation of heavy industry beginning in the 1970s, which reduced Philadelphia to a huge urban wasteland. In this context, the racist bonapartism of the Philadelphia police became even more pronounced as the cops were deployed to keep the lid on this pressure cooker of discontent. Again black radicals were a particular target. Following the decimation of the Black Panther Party by COINTELPRO, including stoking the murderous factional feuds resulting from the Panthers’ nationalist strategy, the Philly cops embarked on a 20-year vendetta against MOVE. Jamal, whose role in the BPP had already put him squarely in the cops’ sights, was a prominent target of this police vendetta.

A Conspiracy of Terror

The 1978 beating of Delbert Africa—captured in slow motion on television news cameras—had an impact on the

city which presaged the impact that the LAPD beating of black motorist Rodney King would have across the country some 13 years later as a symbol of racist cop brutality. This atrocity by the Philly cops came atop a wave of coldblooded street executions by police and growing exposure of systematic frame-up methods employed particularly by the Homicide Division.

An editorial in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* (20 August 1978) noted that for black elected officials and community leaders, who had no sympathy for MOVE, the beating of Delbert Africa, “brought to a head an accumulation of resentment of police violence and frustration that the city administration and the Police Department have held no one accountable for it.” The editorial expressed the city rulers’ concern “to prevent the resentments and frustrations which have been at work in the last week and more from growing into what could be dreadful and explosive proportions.” In 1979, the feds moved in to try to quell the growing outrage and shore up the cops’ authority, filing a civil rights suit against the city and the police department citing “widespread, arbitrary, and unreasonable physical abuse.”

In response, the cops went on a rampage. Four hundred off-duty cops besieged the offices of the *Inquirer* after it ran a series of chilling photographs of the attack on Delbert Africa. Two thousand cops jammed an F.O.P. lodge to demand the ouster of black cop Alphonso Deal—a 24-year police veteran and head of the North Philadelphia chapter of the NAACP—when he called for dismissing those cops responsible for the beating. When three Stakeout unit members were indicted for the beating of Delbert Africa, 500 cops marched on City Hall, and the head of the F.O.P. cried, “They should have killed all of them.”

The F.O.P. and an outfit called “Philadelphia Police Wives and Interested Citizens” went to the offices of the U.S. Attorney General to protest the suit against cop brutality. A leading representative of the cops’ wives reported that her group had been gathering evidence since the 1970s of a “conspiracy among revolutionaries and radicals to assassinate police.” The federal suit was soon dismissed for “lack of jurisdiction.”

Following Mumia’s frame-up, Faulkner’s widow, Maureen, has likewise been cynically paraded around by the F.O.P. to portray Jamal as a vicious and sadistic killer who had long been conspiring to “assassinate police.” At Jamal’s 1982 trial, prosecutor Joseph McGill pointed to

Mumia’s earlier reference to a quote from Mao Zedong—“Political power grows out of the barrel of a gun”—to argue that it “proved” Jamal’s intention to kill a cop. Thus, McGill argued that Mumia be sentenced to death—on the basis of his political beliefs. The F.O.P. and Philly D.A.’s office continue to peddle the lie that the prosecution’s case against Jamal was overwhelming. But an article on McGill in *Philadelphia Magazine* (May 1986) reports that “Jamal’s conviction was considered a miracle in law enforcement circles.” No doubt: it was a frame-up pure and simple!

Fencl, Giordano and the other cops who had been itching to get rid of Jamal for many years were involved in railroading him to death row. Marcus Cannon, an eyewitness on the scene the night of the shooting of Faulkner, has reported that he saw two white men who appeared to be part of a street scene jump into action with guns drawn and rush toward the site. This fits a description of the so-called “granny” squads of the Stakeout unit, who dressed up as elderly, infirm or homeless people in order to entrap and shake down “suspects” and were backed up by plainclothes cops in unmarked cars. The Center City area of Philadelphia, the scene of the 1981 shootings of Jamal and Faulkner, was one of the prime locations covered by these “granny” squads.

History is not a conspiracy, but there are conspiracies in history. We are not saying that the cops who were at the scene of 13th and Locust Streets the night of 9 December 1981 knew Jamal was going to be there. But they were there and had the chance they had long awaited to catch Mumia in their racist frame-up machine. This was the culmination of a political vendetta, extending back more than a decade, against a man whose impassioned defense of the victims of Philly cop brutality had earned him a special animus among these thugs in blue and their masters in the city and federal government.

As we wrote in “Mumia Abu-Jamal: The COINTELPRO Files”:

“The fight to save Jamal and to abolish the racist death penalty is part of the struggle for black equality in America. It will take a workers revolution to put the capitalist state’s machinery of death out of business once and for all and bring to justice the hired thugs who have committed untold crimes against the working class and minorities in the name of ‘law and order.’ Only then will the records of the government’s secret police agencies be opened for all to see. Free Mumia Abu-Jamal! Abolish the Racist Death Penalty!” ■

Racist Rulers Declare Open Season on Black People

Desperation, Segregation and the "Ebonics" Controversy

Free, Quality, Integrated Education for All!
Black Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!

The Oakland Board of Education resolution passed last month to make "Ebonics"—otherwise called "black English"—a second language in the city's classrooms has given vent to a storm of racist reaction. California talk shows were flooded with derisive imitations of "black speech" parroting every vile racist stereotype from Amos and Andy to "Little Black Sambo." An article in *Time* magazine filled with this racist crap featured the grotesque headline, "Ebonics According to Buckwheat." And the liberal *Village Voice* (14 January) joined in with a blatantly racist "Ebonics for Travelers" parody.

The Clinton White House, which has slashed welfare and is whipping up raw racial hatred against blacks and immigrants in order to ax any and every social program, rushed to announce that no money would be forthcoming for bilingual "Ebonics" programs. California governor Pete Wilson—having pushed through a referendum last November to abolish affirmative action programs, which provide some minimal access for blacks and minorities to higher education and government jobs—declared that he would not fund what his press secretary called a "ridiculous theory."

The Oakland school board cried that the resolution had been misunderstood, that they weren't looking for money but simply for a means to improve the education of the children in the overwhelmingly black Oakland school district. The school board's avowed concern for improving education is pure cynicism. Last year this same school board worked overtime to bust a teachers strike which had widespread community support, particularly for its demands aimed at reducing the desperate overcrowding of classrooms where children are simply warehoused, not taught.

The controversial resolution opens with a perfectly supportable call to



Alcock/Chicago Sun-Times

Run-down inner-city high school in Chicago. Capitalist rulers have slashed funding for education of ghetto youth.

"improve the English language acquisition and application skills of African-American students." In racist America, black children are faced with an all-sided contradiction which is a measure of the depth of the racial divide: They are stigmatized as "stupid" because they don't talk "white," while those blacks who do speak what is called "proper" English are seen by racists as "not staying in their place" and by their peers as putting on airs. Though not a separate language, "black English" is a very real dialect described by one linguist as "a standardized variant of English with distinctive grammatical rules." There *should* be programs that can provide a bridge in teaching these kids what is called "standard American English," without disparaging or demeaning their home dialect, for the simple reason that to get anywhere in this society you need to speak the

language of the political economy. But there's the rub.

The real problem is not the lack of recognition of black English as a distinct dialect, but the cruel and bitter reality that black ghetto youth are not wanted or needed by America's capitalist rulers. By the same token, the widespread and growing alienation among black youth is the product of more than two decades of hardening segregation in this country. The liberal-led civil rights movement of the 1950s and '60s was incapable of addressing the desperate conditions of the black inner cities of America. The "war on poverty" programs that were aimed at quelling the ghetto rebellions of the 1960s provided no amelioration, serving primarily as a ticket out of the ghettos for a thin layer of the black population. The divide between the ghetto masses and the black "middle class" deepened with the

deindustrialization of the 1980s, as virtually anyone who still had a job tried to move out of the inner cities.

Left behind was an increasingly deprived and destitute mass of the black population. The racist rulers' "maligned neglect" meant that any social infrastructure that existed in the inner cities—hospitals, community centers, parks, schools—eroded long ago. Often the only encounter that ghetto residents have with whites is with the welfare worker and, more often, the racist cop. The Oakland resolution tries to invent "Ebonics" as a separate language rooted in West Africa. But the issue here is not one of determining the various historical roots and influences which shape "black English."

"Ebonics" as spoken by the current generation of ghetto youth is the language of despair and defiance. Against a society they know doesn't give a damn about them, they have developed a way of speaking that is increasingly incomprehensible to outsiders. Why speak otherwise? There are no jobs. Their parents are being cut off welfare. The most likely "future" is jail, or an early death at the hands of one's peers or perhaps of a racist cop, or from AIDS or the various diseases of poverty which have made a resurgence in recent years. While slashing funds for education to the bone, *billions* are poured into the prison system. Nationally, almost 1.7 million people are behind bars while in California some 40 percent of black men in their twenties are in the clutches of the criminal "justice" system. The desperate fatalism, and reactive glorification of lumpenism, of this generation is captured in the name of a top rap recording company—"Death Row Records."

In order to change the systematic denigration and degradation of black kids trapped in ever more hellish conditions, their labor power and their thinking power has to be truly valued. To achieve

that requires shattering the entire system of racist American capitalism, in which is rooted the forcible subjugation and segregation of the black population as an oppressed race-color caste, overwhelmingly concentrated at the bottom of this society. As communists, our views on the "Ebonics" controversy derive from the standpoint of the fight for an egalitarian socialist society which will eradicate the material basis for all discrimination based on race, class and sex.

Oakland Schools— Flunking Out in the Former "Education State"

A recently released study of the state of education in America gave a grade of C to the country as a whole. But California was rated as among the worst of the worst with a score of D minus. The study points to California's Proposition 13 as the "weapon of destruction." Passed in 1978, Prop. 13 was a tax revolt spearheaded by older white middle-class property owners who didn't want their "tax dollars" going to fund government programs seen as benefiting the ghetto and barrio poor. Today, the Oakland school district, the only majority black district in the state, is in a dead heat with Washington, D.C. for *the worst* in the U.S.

Much of the black population of Oakland migrated from the rural South during World War II, finding work in the ports, the shipyards and a growing base of food manufacturing and distribution in the Bay Area. Faced with a labor shortage in the booming war industries, shipyard owners recruited often semiliterate and untrained black youth. In little more than three months, they were taught to read and write, and became skilled apprentices.

But the capitalist rulers invest only as much as they can realize back in profit when it comes to the education of those they exploit. As we wrote in "Education



Gordon Parks

During World War II, blacks were drawn into strategic industries and trained as skilled workers.

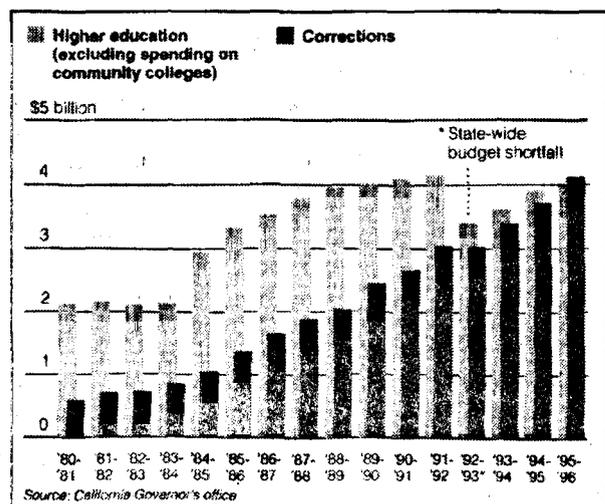
U.S.A.—Separate and Unequal" (WV No. 544, 7 February 1992):

"Having taken the wrecking ball to the auto factories, gutted the steel mills and closed many of the mines, there are few jobs left for which to train the children of the working class and poor. And if educating the sons and daughters of white workers has increasingly become an expendable overhead for decaying American capitalism, the children of black workers and poor are deemed *an expendable population*. Once a reserve army of labor to be maintained, albeit minimally, today for the racist rulers the black ghetto poor are not worth 'wasting' money on even to keep alive, much less educate."

In Oakland, the modernized container freight port employs a fraction of the workers it did in the past, shipbuilding is a forgotten memory, and miles of factories have been replaced by vacant lots. Downtown Oakland has the feel of a ghost town. New office buildings stand mostly empty next to boarded-up storefronts. Rampant unemployment is matched by public schools that are in an advanced state of decay. Nearly half of all kids in the Oakland public schools have parents who get Aid to Families with Dependent Children.

Our article "Victory to the Oakland Teachers Strike!" (WV No. 640, 1 March 1996) spoke to the "quality" of education in this predominantly black city:

"With not enough money for supplies, Oakland teachers routinely spend hundreds of dollars of their own money to buy books and other vital teaching material. Classrooms are grossly overcrowded. An English teacher told *Workers Vanguard* of having 51 students in



New York Times graph

**California:
Funding for prisons
skyrockets as
education expen-
ditures are slashed.**

her high school freshman class. School buildings are falling apart. Last year parents at Lazear Elementary School, who are overwhelmingly Latino, kept their kids out for three weeks in protest over the 40-year-old 'portable' classrooms with no windows, poor ventilation, leaking roof and rats."

It was in this context that the demands of striking Oakland teachers found wide resonance among parents, students and the community at large. The potential impact of this strike was not lost on the Oakland school board, which went into high gear in trying to portray the strike as a mugging of the black community by an allegedly "white" union. While weeping crocodile tears for "the children" and trying to prey on the despair of the ghetto poor against the "greedy" teachers, the bloated Oakland schools administration didn't give a damn about smaller class sizes, funding for current textbooks or any other measures that would go in the direction of providing a decent education for children of the black poor. On the contrary, they saw any outlay for improving school conditions as a challenge to the administration's share at the public trough.

"Ebonics": School Board's Alibi for Failure

Today, this same venal school board is putting forward "Ebonics" as an alibi for the desperate conditions in the Oakland schools. In the face of the racist backlash against their resolution, school board members scrambled to deny that they were out to get a piece of the paltry federal funding that goes to bilingual education. Yet the resolution was unambiguous on this score, noting that "general funds for bilingual education" were provided for "Asian-American, Latino-American, Native American" and other language groups and arguing that "African-American pupils are equally entitled" to such funds.

Such a scramble for money speaks to the grotesque, built-in inequality in the way public schools are funded in this country, which is primarily through local property taxes. Indeed, even the term "public education" is an oxymoron where there are two "publics"—those who've got property and those who don't. Per capita spending for education in better-off white suburbs is many times that in the black and Hispanic inner cities. It is necessary to call for full and vastly increased funding by the federal government for all schools. But even such a just and basic demand as quality, integrated education for all runs up against a capitalist class which controls the means of production, distribution and finance and



WV Photo

Spartacist League fought for labor/black mobilization to stop racist attacks on busing for school integration, Boston 1974.

which sees little reason for providing a decent education to most children.

The slashing of funds for public schools in the ghettos and barrios reinforces the enormous educational and cultural advantages inherited by white middle-class youth whose college-educated parents can help them with their homework and studies, supplementing their teachers in this regard. They can afford personal computers with CD-ROMs, along with encyclopedias, dictionaries, etc. Thus the massive racial inequalities in education are not simply a matter of recent government policies and budget cuts but are inherent in this class society.

The Oakland school board's appeal for "bilingual" funding for "Ebonics" is also a thinly veiled expression of their resentment against the pathetic amount of funds that go toward such programs for Latino kids. According to a longtime Oakland teacher, even in existing bilingual English-Spanish programs, teachers have had to fight to get the additional annual stipends due them. Moreover, what bilingual programs do exist have largely served not as a bridge to learning English but rather as a means of keeping children, especially Latinos, tracked into education ghettos. And the same racists who deride the way black children speak as "ignorant" are the driving force behind chauvinist "English only" resolutions which would deny immigrants any bilingual education, i.e., the opportunity to *learn English*.

Although blacks, Latinos and Asians are all oppressed in various ways, the controversy over "Ebonics" demonstrates again that the reformist refrain that "the people united will never be defeated" is hardly a preordained outcome. On the

contrary, under the conditions of decaying American capitalism each is pitted against all in the struggle for an ever-shrinking piece of the pie. Symptomatic of this is the squalid scramble that has been going on in Dallas—where the overwhelming bulk of the student population is pretty evenly divided between blacks and Hispanics—as Hispanic school board members line up with white racists against black members of the board.

Hispanic, Asian and other immigrants are taught to believe that blacks themselves are responsible for the horrendous conditions of life in the ghettos—supposedly reflecting a lack of sufficient value being placed on family, education and advancement. At the same time, ghetto blacks are led to believe that immigrants are "getting ahead" at blacks' expense. This sentiment was wielded by some black Democrats and nationalists to whip up support among the black population for California's Proposition 187, which denies all health, education and other social benefits to "illegal" immigrants.

Last year's strike by the Oakland Education Association (OEA) had the potential to mobilize the integrated unions in and around Oakland together with parents and students and all the black and Latino poor in a real struggle against the gutting of public education. But that potential was betrayed by the OEA leadership, which accepted the "there is no money" framework of the school board. An even more treacherous role was played by the Alameda Central Labor Council, which not only refused to sanction the strike but encouraged the members of their affiliated unions to *scab*.

The refusal of the misleaders of organized labor to wage any struggle on behalf

of the ghetto and barrio poor has contributed not only to the increased destitution and despair in the inner cities but also to the decimation of the trade unions. The former "Motor City" is an object lesson. Once the engine of industrial America with a heavily black working class, Detroit is now overwhelmingly a ghetto wasteland populated by the families of those who were the first victims of the giveback contracts and other sellouts by the trade-union bureaucrats.

What was visited first on the black population is now becoming an increasing reality for most white workers in America. The situation cries out for a class-struggle fight for *all* workers and the poor, a fight that can link the power of labor to the anger of the ghettos. The key to realizing this perspective lies in a sharp political struggle against the labor misleaders, whose first loyalty is not to the multiracial working class but to the racist capitalist exploiters.

Race, Class and Language

The "Ebonics" resolution passed by the Oakland school board posits that blacks in America "are not native speakers of a black dialect or any other dialect of English" but rather speak an entirely separate language based on "a West and Niger-Congo African linguistic structure." There are dialects which developed in America that demonstrate very real West African influences. The Sea Islands off South Carolina and the Georgia coast are a case in point. Living in isolated communities of direct descendants of black African slaves who were brought to this country in chains over 200 years ago, they still speak a creole that is known as Gullah. Gullah is said to contain as many as 6,000 Africanisms, and is considered to be closer than any other variant of black English to the "pidgin" that was spoken on the slave ships. But the average Oakland ghetto kid would find Gullah just as incomprehensible as any other English speaker. And anyone who thinks that "Ebonics" is really an African language should try speaking it in West Africa!

To portray black ghetto English as a separate language is to alibi the racist status quo. Grottesquely, the Oakland school board resolution borrowed language more commonly associated with racist "theories" of the innate "inferiority" of blacks, like that laid out in *The Bell Curve*, arguing that black English is "genetically-based." The school board later backed off this characterization by trying to redefine the word "genetic," but its attempt to declare "Ebonics" a separate language reflects an acceptance of the increasing segregation of black people in this society.

The problem is not that black kids are incapable of learning "standard American English." Children who move to a new country will learn even a radically different language easily and naturally, becoming completely bilingual in a relatively short period of time. Unlearning a first language or dialect to become fluent in a second is not necessary and can even be counterproductive, especially if children are told that their mother tongue is "wrong" or "bad."

Stigmas against different dialects of the English language are not simply a question of race but also of class. In Britain, one of the most self-consciously class-stratified of all the imperialist countries, those who do not speak the "Queen's English" are made to feel ignorant and of the "lower orders." This was captured in a 1979 *New York Times* Op-Ed piece by James Baldwin titled, "If Black English Isn't a Language, Then Tell Me, What Is?":

"The range (and reign) of accents on that damp little island make England coherent for the English and totally incomprehensible for everyone else. To open your mouth in England is (if I may use black English) to 'put your business in the street'; You have confessed your parents, your youth, your school, your salary, your self-esteem, and, alas, your future."

Baldwin argues that it is "patronizing" to call black English a dialect, but in fact, what's patronizing is to call it a separate language. To insist that the current black dialect is the direct linguistic continuator of languages spoken in West Africa implicitly (and in some cases explicitly) denies the brutal legacy of slavery—particularly in the American South. Unlike in the Caribbean, where the black slaves maintained a great deal of their culture, religion and language, the American slaveholders very consciously sought to wipe out any connection black Africans had with the societies they came from. This was a means to atomize the slave population and to quell any possibility of revolt on the plantations.

In contrast, there developed in the Caribbean more cohered language mixtures known as creoles. In Jamaica, for example, a creole is commonly spoken in the home and community, while children are taught English—which is the language of general commerce—at school, and switch fluidly between the two. A teacher of community college students in New York City noted that most of her black students from the Caribbean are better educated than either white or black American students. But engulfed by the profound and pervasive racism of American society—where you are permanently branded by the color of your skin—

Caribbean students tend to regress after several years here.

The capitalist rulers of this country argue that blacks themselves are responsible for the desperate conditions of life in the ghettos. They hypocritically point to the assimilation of previous generations of immigrants into the so-called American "melting pot" as supposed evidence of the ability of everyone to advance up the economic ladder in "the land of the free." But comparisons between blacks



Sygma

Renowned author, James Baldwin.

who migrated to the ghettos of New York, Philadelphia and Chicago in the 1950s-'60s and the Irish, Italians and East Europeans who migrated to these cities half a century earlier ignore the historically derived anti-black racism of American society and are meaningless since economic conditions and opportunities were totally different in the two periods. Meanwhile, the large numbers of immigrants who have come here from Latin America and Asia in the last two decades face a rising tide of anti-immigrant racism and, in many cases, a level of poverty comparable to or even worse than that of blacks.

For Revolutionary Integrationism!

The Oakland school board's position on "Ebonics" reflects the program of black "cultural nationalism," a reactionary response in the absence of integrated social struggle to the all-sided racism permeating American society. The identification of ghetto English as a separate language dovetails with the utopian calls pushed by Louis Farrakhan and the like



E. P. Dutton

Bolsheviks conducted literacy campaign among oppressed Central Asian women following 1917 Russian Revolution.

for "black capitalism." Both are predicated on the continued segregation of the black ghetto poor. But far from demonstrating that blacks are a nation, the dialect spoken by black ghetto youth today testifies to the forcible and intensifying compaction of the majority of the black population at the bottom of this society as an oppressed *race-color caste*.

There is a symbiosis between black nationalism and white racism: both conjure up a black language and culture that is supposedly "alien" to America. Yet not only are blacks more "American" than most Americans, what is unique to American culture is largely an expression of black influences. In his seminal Marxist analysis of the black question, "The Negro Struggle and the Proletarian Revolution" (1954), Trotskyist Richard Fraser noted that the blacks enslaved on the Southern plantations "developed a powerful folk culture." Fraser continued:

"But this culture did not take the road of an independent national development. Because it was virtually the only real American folk culture, the slaves' music, 'accent,' folklore and religion filled a cultural need for the American people as a whole. First the slave culture inundated the original Anglo-Saxon culture of the South, virtually destroying it. From there it went on to fuse with the whole national culture until today those aspects of the national culture which are considered to be 'typically' American are largely the result of Negro influence."

Under the Southern slavocracy, teaching blacks to read or write (English) was a crime often punishable by death. The black troops who turned the tide in the Civil War against the slaveowners went into battle with their spelling primers strapped to their cartridge belts. Knowledge—and a good rifle—were recognized as the artillery needed to combat servitude and enforced illiteracy. Escape from slavery and integration into society on an

egalitarian basis, not a return to their African roots, was the goal. The promise of black equality was betrayed by the Northern capitalists who, under the Compromise of 1877, withdrew the last Union Army troops from the South and brought to an end the tumultuous and radical bourgeois-democratic period of Reconstruction. A new form of white supremacy in the South—Jim Crow segregation—was ushered in.

Before World War II, the majority of blacks continued to live in the rural South as a deeply exploited American peasantry, overwhelmingly sharecroppers and tenant farmers. The black workers who flooded into the Northern cities during World War II formed the core of the Northern black communities and became a key component of the labor movement. Integrated into the workforce at the lower levels, blacks were also segregated in the inner-city ghettos. The black ghetto poor supplied for the American capitalists what Karl Marx called "a reserve army of labor" to be brought in during periods of rapid economic expansion. The color bar was and is a fundamental dividing line in American society, a key means for obscuring the class divide between labor and capital.

Today for American capitalism, the black poor have become, simply, a *surplus* population. The elimination of welfare by the Clinton White House and the Republican Congress will bring about the deaths of untold thousands of poor people from hunger, untreated contagious diseases and homelessness. With the impulse to genocide currently driving American bourgeois politics, a considerable section of the ruling class could care less if blacks did develop their own language or creole.

Black Democrat Jesse Jackson originally denounced the Oakland "Ebonics"

resolution as "garbage." Subsequently, he reversed his position and is plugging the program as an opportunity for poor blacks to find a bridge to "make it" in American society. Paying homage to the civil rights movement for supposedly bringing about a fundamental improvement in the conditions of blacks, Jackson preaches that black people can gain real equality in racist America if they "pull themselves up by the bootstraps."

The civil rights movement originated as a mass struggle for school integration, access to public facilities and voting rights against legalized Jim Crow segregation in the South. However, by its very nature this movement based on a program of liberal-democratic reform did not confront the underlying oppression and exploitation of blacks. The social conditions imprisoning the impoverished black masses in the ghettos—with their mean streets, rat-infested housing, lousy schools and rampant police terror—could not be solved by legislative reforms. These conditions are materially rooted in the whole system of American capitalism.

Although racist segregation has intensified and hardened in recent years, blacks continue to have enormous potential economic and political power as a strategic component of the American working class. While many industrial unions have been gutted over the past couple of decades, black workers remain an important component in such basic services as health care, urban transit and longshore. These black proletarians can serve as a bridge between the ghetto poor and the organized labor movement.

For the power of black workers to be mobilized requires the leadership of a Marxist vanguard party committed to the perspective of revolutionary integrationism—the shattering of the chains of racist American capitalism by the multi-racial working class, which will lay the basis for the full integration of blacks in an egalitarian socialist society. As we wrote in the introduction to *Marxist Bulletin* No. 5 (Revised), "What Strategy for Black Liberation? Trotskyism vs. Black Nationalism":

"Any organization which claims a revolutionary perspective for the United States must confront the *special oppression* of black people—the forced segregation of blacks at the bottom of capitalist society and the poisonous racism which divides the working class and cripples its struggles. There will be no social revolution in this country without the united struggle of black and white workers led by their multiracial vanguard party. Moreover, there is no other road to eliminating the special oppression of black people than the victorious conquest of power by the U.S. proletariat." ■

No to California Proposition 227!

Down With "English Only" Racism!

For Free, Quality Education for All Children!

In a frontal assault on immigrants, a referendum for the California state elections in June called the "English for the Children" initiative would ban bilingual education in public schools and eliminate the pitiful amount spent each year for special language programs. The "English-only" bigots behind Proposition 227 are riding the wave of anti-immigrant frenzy pushed by America's racist capitalist rulers who have massively increased state repression against legal and undocumented immigrants, militarized the border with Mexico and condemned millions to starvation through axing welfare benefits.

Prop. 227 directly targets the estimated 1.4 million students in California—one-quarter of the student population—who have limited capacity in English. Although the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in 1974 that schools must provide some instruction in a child's primary language, "English only" has more and more become a reality in California schools. In 1986, English was made the "official" language by a state constitutional amendment, and last year, at the urging of Republican governor Pete Wilson, California officials mandated that statewide academic standardization tests be given only in English.

Individual school districts have long been able to opt out of bilingual programs, and just last month, the state Board of Education made it even easier for school districts to choose to teach solely in English. Several districts in Southern California, including Westminster with its large Vietnamese population,



Rios/Photo Researchers



WV Photo

Bilingual first-grade classroom in New York City. Spartacist protest in San Francisco in defense of immigrant rights, 1993.

have already ended bilingual programs. Today in California, which has the largest proportion of immigrants of any state in the country, some 36 percent of students speak a language other than English at home, but only one-third of those with limited English capacity are in bilingual classes.

This latest referendum comes hard on the heels of Proposition 187, passed in 1994, which banned undocumented immigrants in the state from attending public schools and receiving non-emergency medical care. While a recent ruling by the federal courts declared Prop. 187 unconstitutional, the referendum had its intended effect: opening the floodgates of racist reaction against all immigrants and setting the stage for renewed attacks on the black ghetto poor. In 1996, voters approved Proposition 209, which eliminated affirmative action programs in public education and gov-

ernment hiring and contracting. Black, Latino and Native American admissions to the University of California system, which had earlier abolished such programs, have been decimated—dropping over 60 percent at UC Berkeley and 36 percent at UCLA for 1998.

The Spartacist League calls to **vote no on Proposition 227!** But we warn that the bourgeoisie's assault on those at the bottom of this society will not be stopped at the polls. A barrage of racist attacks against immigrants and blacks has been unleashed by the capitalist ruling class as the front line of an offensive against the working class as a whole. Intent on ratcheting up the rate of exploitation to better compete with its imperialist rivals, the U.S. bourgeoisie seeks to eliminate the costs of social services, to break the back of the unions and to keep workers divided along racial and ethnic lines. The multiracial working class must be

actively mobilized against Proposition 227 and all forms of anti-immigrant chauvinism. *For full citizenship rights for all immigrants!*

As Marxists, we oppose all attempts to impose English as an "official" language. We stand in the tradition of V. I. Lenin, the leader of the 1917 Russian Revolution, who wrote: "The national programme of working-class democracy is: absolutely no privileges for any one nation or any one language." At the same time, we understand that it is vital for those who live here to be able to learn English—the only means for incorporation into an English-speaking industrial society that requires a common language for production and commerce.

The problem is *not* the ability or desire of immigrants to learn English but the cruel reality that poor and dark-skinned immigrants are segregated into ghettos which lie outside the economy of this society. This makes learning English a fairly tenuous prospect. In the so-called "post-industrial" economy of decaying American capitalism, the racist rulers will not spend money to educate or provide other social services to those they deem just a surplus population. In the barrios and vast black inner-city ghettos, funds for education have been slashed to the bone. Meanwhile, billions are poured into the prison system where black and Hispanic youth are incarcerated way out of proportion to their numbers in this country.

We advocate free, quality bilingual programs as a rational approach to providing a bridge for students from their primary language to standard English. Learning a new language can be done through immersion, but that's pretty brutal, especially for young people as they simultaneously seek a basic general education. Knowledge of two languages, which is common in many industrial countries outside the insular North American continent, is an asset. In wealthy school districts outside Washington, D.C. and in San Francisco, the *public* school system offers "immersion" schools in French and a number of Asian languages—the rich and powerful know how to give *their* children an edge.

We fight for free, quality, integrated education for *all* children. But even such a just and basic demand runs up against the capitalist economic system of production for profit, with its inherent inequalities, ruled by an exploiting class which controls the means of production, distribution and finance. What is necessary is to *break the power of the bourgeoisie* through a *social revolution*. This requires the forging of a revolutionary

workers party to fight for an egalitarian socialist society, which will eradicate the material basis for all discrimination based on race and ethnicity.

Education U.S.A.— Separate and Unequal

Proposition 227 is the brainchild of one Ron Unz, a Silicon Valley businessman and former Republican candidate for governor, and Gloria Matta Tuchman, a former Orange County school board president who has actively campaigned against bilingual education since 1985. The initiative would require that all public school instruction be conducted in English, replacing current bilingual programs with "English immersion" classes. Children under ten with little English capacity would be grouped together by English proficiency regardless of age or native language. After one year, the kids would be transferred to mainstream English-only classes. Those who don't manage to pick up enough English would be tracked into classes where "underperforming" children are warehoused, branded as incompetent, stupid or worse.

The racist measure includes a "waiver" allowing children to be taught in a bilingual setting, but only in very limited cases, e.g., older children deemed to have "special physical, emotional, psychological, or educational needs." Even then, among other restrictions, there would have to be 20 or more such children in a given grade level in the school. The proposition would also allocate \$50 million for each of the next ten years to fund English language instruction for parents and others who "pledge to provide personal English language tutoring to California school children." In other words, trained—and unionized—bilingual educators are to be replaced by a kid's relative who is supposed to teach English while looking for a job or after putting in 12 hours of backbreaking labor.

According to a recent poll, Prop. 227 has the support of two-thirds of California voters, including among Asians, and is backed by a significant (but diminishing) number of Latinos. Its claim that "public schools of California currently do a poor job of educating immigrant children" is a truism that echoes widely among parents who know that their kids will never make it without fluent English and a real education. A recent major study noted that in the U.S. "40 percent of minority children attend urban schools, where more than half of the students are poor and fail to reach even 'basic' achievement levels" (*San Francisco Examiner*, 1 March). Indeed, an international comparison of high-school seniors has found the perfor-

mance of American youth at the bottom of all industrial nations considered in the study.

The nationwide decline in education has been exacerbated in California by the effects of Proposition 13—a 1978 measure which substantially cut the property taxes that fund many of the social programs in the state. Prop. 13 was a "tax revolt" by older, white, middle-class property owners who didn't want their "tax dollars" going to programs perceived as benefiting blacks and Latinos. Thus, in the last decade the state budget has largely remained the same, while the school-age population has seen huge increases. California's school system rated last year as one of the very worst in the country. Although all poor and working-class kids suffer, the hardest hit have been in the inner-city schools. A couple of years ago, the mainly Latino parents of children attending Oakland's Lazear Elementary School led a three-week boycott in protest against its 40-year-old "portable" classrooms with no windows, poor ventilation, leaking roofs and rats.

Given the drastic cuts in education funding, it's no surprise that there is a dearth of bilingual education teachers. In a majority of school districts, many if not most classes are taught by a teacher-in-training or an English-only teacher aided by a bilingual assistant. According to one longtime Oakland teacher, even with existing bilingual programs, teachers have to fight to get the additional stipends due them—\$2,200 a year—much of which they use for necessary materials. In many school districts, they receive no extra pay. Meanwhile, the grossly overworked teaching assistants, largely minority men and women working their way through college, receive no benefits and will face massive layoffs if the proposition passes.

Functionally, today, bilingual education does not exist. Seventy percent of Latino students attend segregated schools, isolated from English-speakers for the better part of their elementary school years. One fourth-grade bilingual education teacher in San Jose described to *WV* how half of his class enters with reading skills below grade level, some as low as first grade. A third-grade bilingual education teacher in Oakland noted the absence of any curriculum, program or teaching aids. Furthermore, segregation often takes place within the school itself. A former bilingual student who grew up in Southern California in the 1980s described the degrading treatment of non-English-speaking students:

"When I was in high school, the recent immigrants were physically segregated



Sebastião Salgado



Butow/SABA

U.S. rulers' anti-immigrant drive means increased terror along border with Mexico, feeds racist mobilizations like Los Angeles demonstration against "illegal" immigrants.

to one little section of the school. The bus loading zone was 20 yards from their classroom, so they basically came and went without anyone even noticing them. If they ate in the cafeteria, they were guided in separately by their teacher so they never ate with the rest of the students."

For Latinos, the results of these policies are staggering. Latinos score one to two grade levels below the national norm in academic tests for reading, math and science. High-school dropout rates are as high as 40 percent, while 56 percent of students are functionally illiterate. An illustration of the utterly racist character of this system of public education is that black children and American-born Hispanics who speak only English are often dumped into bilingual education classes as "filler." As in the days of strict Jim Crow segregation in the South, today's public schools are "separate and unequal": the bourgeoisie ensures that a small minority get the requisite technical training to become the future administrators and skilled workers capitalism needs; the rest are recipients of society's "malign neglect."

Bilingual Education and Anti-immigrant Chauvinism

There were times in the past when the capitalist rulers saw a need to teach immigrants English. The long history of bilingual education in this country dates from the middle of the 19th century, when an open-door immigration policy brought some 15 million new immigrants into the U.S. Beginning in 1839 in Ohio, laws were passed in various states authorizing bilingual public education in areas with significant numbers of newly arrived European immigrants. Thus, by the turn of the century, there were at least 600,000

children—4 percent of elementary school enrollment—receiving part or all of their education in the German language.

However, in the age of imperialism and war beginning around the turn of the last century, immigration and all its derivative aspects have been subject not only to capitalist economic crises but also to the political exigencies of bourgeois rule. With the onset of World War I, Theodore Roosevelt's cry that "a hyphenated American is not an American at all" exemplified the anti-immigrant xenophobic wave which saw the end of all bilingual education. During this time, 15 states designated English as the sole language of instruction in all schools. German-Americans were denounced as being agents of the Kaiser, German-owned businesses were burnt out and vigilantes aided government authorities in shutting down any and all German-language institutions.

In states like California and Texas, anti-immigrant racism goes back to the period when these territories were seized from their Mexican-Spanish settlers, as codified by the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. The *Tejanos* and *Californios*, seen as the "issue of Spanish and Indian blood," were the subject of both linguistic and ethnic discrimination. *Tejanos* were harassed for refusing to learn English while at the same time being segregated into Spanish-only schools. The racist logic behind these policies was expressed by an agricultural boss in Texas: "The illiterates make the best farm labor" (*Hold Your Tongue: Bilingualism and the Politics of "English Only,"* James Crawford [1982]).

In California, while the proceedings of the 1849 constitutional convention were published in Spanish and English, anti-

Mexican laws were promulgated shortly thereafter. Beginning in the 1860s, black, Asian and Native American children were banned from California public schools for two decades. And in 1879, three years before the federal government adopted a law barring Chinese immigration and in the context of racist riots by nativist whites, the anti-Chinese Workingmen's Party succeeded in getting the state's first "English only" statute adopted.

This gives the historic dimension to the current anti-immigrant frenzy in the U.S. which is being promoted by the capitalist ruling class in order to split the proletariat and derail any possibility of united *class* struggle. It's no accident that the base for those pushing Prop. 227 is Orange County. The area has long been synonymous with white, right-wing conservatism. But now in one jurisdiction, the Orange Unified School District, one-quarter of its 30,000 students speak limited English. Moreover, the area is adjacent to the state's southern metropolitan center, Los Angeles, which is now 40 percent Latino (about the same proportion as whites).

The New Social Darwinism

Proposition 227 really has nothing to do with the utter failure of what passes for public education in this country, and everything to do with racist reaction. Proposition sponsor Gloria Tushman is a former board member of the nativist "U.S. English" organization, whose founder, John Tanton, denounces the "great storm from the Third World" threatening America. The *Arizona Republic* published a memo by Tanton in 1988 which lays out the vile racism behind "U.S. English": "Will the present majority peaceably hand over its political

power to a group that is simply more fertile?... As Whites see their power and control over their lives declining, will they simply go quietly into the night?"

The other leading light behind Prop. 227 is Ron Unz, who likes to posture as a friend of immigrants. (He was even featured as a speaker at a 100,000-strong demonstration against Prop. 187 in Los Angeles in 1994 organized by liberal Democrats and supported by the bulk of the reformist "left"!)

To deflect accusations of anti-immigrant bias, he has recruited Jaime Escalante, the Bolivian-born Los Angeles teacher celebrated in the movie *Stand and Deliver*, to co-chair the Prop. 227 campaign vehicle, *One Nation/One California*.

In pushing the initiative, Unz rails that "several of California's most important industries, including agriculture and tourism, rely heavily on undocumented labor. What if that pool suddenly became unavailable?... How many business executives would feel comfortable if they knew that their offices were cleaned each night by native-born Americans with a long history of drug addiction and imprisonment?" (*Los Angeles Times*, 21 May 1995). In spewing these racist code words for blacks, Unz sets out his real program: a political alliance of conservatives and "family-oriented, and socially conservative" Hispanics and Asians with a "small-business background" against blacks and other "undesirables." While Unz is positioned on the right of the political spectrum, his program has largely been implemented by Democrats and Republicans across the country, from eliminating welfare benefits and savagely attacking immigrant rights to destroying affirmative action in the schools.

Unz reflects his base in California's Silicon Valley, which, in the minds of its denizens, is a gilded Horatio Alger utopia, flush with the proceeds of a giddy stock market, where new billionaires are made every day without anyone getting their hands dirty in messy factories. Nonetheless, last month the CEOs of some of the biggest computer firms in the Valley went to Washington, where they demanded an increase in the number of visas allowed for high-skilled foreign workers. Looking to reduce labor costs in the short run, Silicon Valley wants to use the "best and the brightest" among immigrants. At the same time, efforts such as Clinton's much-ballyhooed "educational reform" reflect a concern on the part of the ruling class that the U.S. is not producing sufficiently educated people to keep a competitive edge against its imperialist rivals.

In Unz's world, new immigrants are to

be culled, sorted out and tested in straight "survival of the fittest" manner. Those with the ability to become bilingual on their own due to privileged circumstances—e.g., those with access to private tutoring, or who come from educated households—are deemed to be an asset to the country. The rest, often from impoverished, rural families where no one is literate in any language, are to be used as superexploited, terrorized and preferably illiterate unskilled labor—nannies, janitors, farm laborers, electronics assembly line workers. In this neo-Social Darwinian nightmare, blacks are simply given up for lost, the unsuitable issue of decades of liberal largesse.

Most every major politician in California has joined the anti-immigrant chorus, championing measures to increase the militarization of the border, establish a national ID system and the like. But the capitalist exploiters have never wanted the complete closure of borders. Rather, immigration has historically been turned on and off like a faucet, with restrictions lowered when the demand for cheap labor is high and raised when the economy cannot further absorb an immigrant workforce. Anti-immigrant repression, exemplified by Clinton's draconian 1996 immigration "reform" which has already led to a massive increase in deportations, also serves to cow immigrant workers in fields and sweatshops across the country, who are scared to seek medical treatment or send their children to school—much less join a union—lest they be targeted for deportation.

Black Oppression: Bedrock of American Capitalism

Prop. 227 follows the U.S. rulers' time-tested divide-and-rule policy, pitting different sectors of the oppressed against each other, the better to exploit the whole working class. In a viciously racist diatribe published in "Immigration or the Welfare State" (*Policy Review*, Fall 1994), Unz railed against "the rise of black xenophobia and the criminal pathology in many black neighborhoods," claiming that "black-Hispanic tensions in California have risen enormously since the Los Angeles riots, during which Hispanic families with small children were attacked and brutalized by black mobs."

In fact, the 1992 L.A. rebellion following the acquittal of the racist cops who beat Rodney King was remarkable for its multiracial character, as poor black and Latino youth took to the streets in outrage over racist cop terror and savage social inequality. This unity of the oppressed terrified the ruling class, which lately has sought to pit the

ghetto against the barrio by arguing that the large influx of immigrants from Latin America and the Far East has led to greater black impoverishment.

Lending their hand to the racist capitalist ruling class have been black Democrats and nationalists, who helped whip up support among the black population for Proposition 187. Tensions between blacks and immigrants were also evident last year when the Oakland school board sought "bilingual funding" to teach "Ebonics" in its overwhelmingly black schools—a thinly veiled expression of their resentment against the funds, however pitiful, that go toward such programs for Latinos (see "Desperation, Segregation and the 'Ebonics' Controversy," *WV* No. 660, 24 January 1997). The United Teachers of Los Angeles (UTLA) has voted to oppose Proposition 227, but only by a very slim margin, with black teachers overwhelmingly opposed to continued bilingual education. At the same time, immigrants are taught to believe that blacks are responsible for the miserable conditions of life in the ghettos. Faced with Prop. 209's attack on affirmative action, many immigrants bought the line that either they get education and jobs or blacks do, but not both. Thus, blacks, Latinos and Asians are turned against each other for the benefit of the racist rulers.

The subjugation and segregation of much of the black population at the bottom of this society is an essential foundation stone of American capitalism. Blacks in the U.S. form a race-color caste which has historically been used as a "reserve army" of the unemployed, to be hired only during labor shortages. Today, the ghettos have simply been cut

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—MARXIST LITERATURE—

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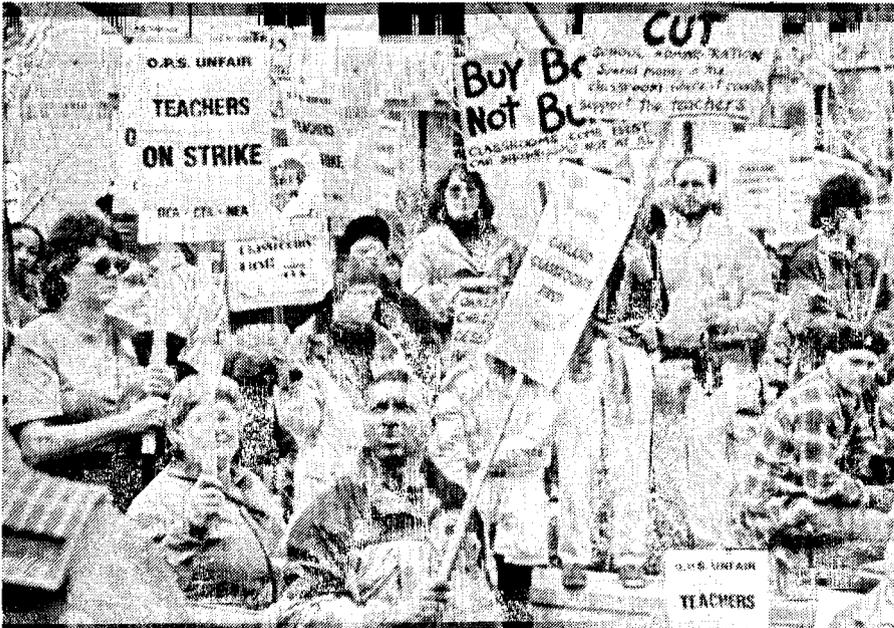
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WV Photo

1996 Oakland teachers strike won widespread support from workers, minorities in fight for more pay and against dismal conditions in schools.

off. Immigrants are dropped right in the middle of the American racial divide. Upon arrival, they are left to eke out a meager subsistence with a standard of living often worse than blacks. Light-skinned immigrants tend to assimilate after a generation or two, with the possibility of advancement. Those with dark skin remain mired in poverty, trapped behind the color bar which is fundamental to capitalist rule in this country.

Unchain Labor's Power!

The question of education particularly resonates among workers, who know that their children are not receiving even the level of education and skills training that they themselves struggled to attain. But as long as the fight for the right to quality education remains within the framework of the capitalist profit system, it will only boil down to a squabble over the reallocation of scarcity, in which the children of both blacks and immigrants lose.

This is precisely the strategy offered by the bourgeois-liberal opposition to Prop. 227, notably the Mexican American Legal Defense Fund—which advocates rights for *legal* immigrants only—and the National Association for Bilingual Education. These groups are reduced to arguing that bilingual education “costs no more and often considerably less than English-only alternatives” and bemoaning that the Unz initiative would “violate the principle of local control.” A host of reformist “socialist” groups tail after the liberals, despairing of the ability to mobilize the working class around a program of revolutionary change. Seeking to pres-

sure the capitalist rulers to shift some money into education and other social programs, these outfits are in effect calling for a defense of the racist status quo.

To win the right to free, equal educational opportunity for all requires a socialist revolution which rips the wealth of society out of the hands of the tiny class of capitalist exploiters and creates a planned economy where production is based on the needs of all. Those who labor must rule! The only force that can achieve this is the multiracial working class, which derives its power from its place in production. In freeing itself from exploitation, the proletariat will also liberate all sections of society from the manifold forms of oppression rooted in class divisions.

Thousands of students went out on the streets to protest Propositions 187 and 209, but their struggles were contained within the realm of electoralist pressure politics. The AFL-CIO union tops and liberal groups leading these demonstrations sought to channel opposition into votes for the capitalist Democratic Party, which has presided over the all-sided attack on workers and the poor. The same union tops who have allowed the introduction of two-tier wages and the massive expansion of part-time labor without a fight have not lifted a finger against the destruction of social welfare programs that has condemned millions of blacks and immigrants to starvation, disease and death. Many AFL-CIO officials openly support anti-immigration laws and appeal to anti-Asian racism in the name of “protectionism.” The labor

tops share the fundamental outlook of the racist capitalist rulers, embracing the aims of U.S. imperialism.

The California Teachers Association, representing 280,000 teachers throughout the state, remained neutral on the question of Prop. 227 until four months ago and has since offered only token opposition. For its part, the National Education Association issued a statement in March 1996 which “defends” bilingual education with an appeal to the interests of capitalist law and order:

“Language restrictions also would make it more difficult for law enforcement officials to gather information from informants or victims who do not speak English.... (CIA operatives could not speak with foreign informants in their native tongue)”!

Last year's successful UPS Teamsters strike gave a taste of the potential to link the power of labor to the anger of the ghettos and barrios, as tens of thousands of black, Hispanic and immigrant workers manned picket lines which brought the wheels of profit to a halt. Translating that potential into a conscious, fighting labor movement requires a political struggle against the trade-union misleadership which keeps the working class tied to the capitalist rulers. The key to unlocking the chains that bind labor to its exploiters is the creation of a revolutionary party of the working class which seeks to mobilize labor in defense of blacks and immigrants against racial oppression, combatting the false consciousness that the bourgeoisie uses to keep the workers passive and divided along racial and ethnic lines. The multiracial working class must be won to the understanding that the source of exploitation and oppression is the capitalist system, whether administered by Democrats or Republicans. The state—the courts, cops and army—exists to keep the ruling class in power.

Doubly oppressed black workers, who are integrated into strategic sections of the proletariat, can and must play a leading role in the fight for proletarian revolution in the U.S. Latino immigrant workers often bring with them a tradition of militant class struggle, which has already enriched labor battles of drywall workers and janitors in Southern California. Immigrant workers are, in turn, a living bridge to the proletariat of Mexico, Latin America and Asia. We in the Spartacist League/U.S., then, take up the fight against Proposition 227 not least because we want to arm workers and the oppressed with the educational and linguistic tools necessary for them to become members and leaders of an internationalist, revolutionary party of the working class. ■

Coleman Young: From CIO Union Organizer to Overseer for Auto Bosses

When Coleman Young died last November, he was eulogized as the “hope” of black Detroit from the rundown streets of that city’s black ghettos to the posh editorial offices of the *New York Times*. Young was the most eminent of a number of black mayors elected in cities across the country in the wake of the ghetto upheavals of the late 1960s, as the bourgeoisie co-opted a layer of former black activists to serve as front men for racist capitalist rule. Like Young, Chicago’s Harold Washington, Atlanta’s Maynard Jackson and others were placed in office to fire municipal workers, close inner-city hospitals, slash funds to social programs and bolster racist “law and order.” As New York City’s former black Democratic mayor, David Dinkins, boasted at the time of his election in 1989: “They’ll take it from me.”

What made Coleman Young different from these other black Democrats was his background as a “red.” Unlike the current crop of nationalist demagogues of the Farrakhan ilk and cynical liberal hustlers like Jesse Jackson, Young, part of a vanishing breed of black political figures, got his start as a working-class activist with a base of support among Detroit’s black proletariat.

His political career, spanning five decades, took him from the orbit of the Communist Party (CP) on the eve of World War II to a position of prominence in the capitalist Democratic Party. There was nothing incongruous about this seeming shift in class allegiance. Thousands of militant black workers and intellectuals were drawn to the banner of Communism in the turbulent ‘30s, seeing in it a revolutionary challenge to the racism and exploitation of American capitalist society. But by then the CP had long since abandoned the revolutionary and internationalist program of the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution in favor of a futile, reformist strategy aimed at pressuring a supposedly “progressive” wing of racist U.S. imperialism.



City of Detroit

Detroit mayor Coleman Young with banking magnate David Rockefeller and Henry Ford II. Young won office with reputation as labor and anti-racist militant only to oversee decimation of black Detroit in 1970s and ‘80s.

Beginning in the mid-1930s, with its support to President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s “New Deal coalition,” the CP embraced the Democratic Party of racism, strikebreaking and imperialist war. Even as he fought to organize trade unions and combat racist oppression in his earlier years, Young was being educated in the Stalinist school of class collaboration, preparation for his future role as a capitalist politician and an overseer for the Big Three auto bosses.

Indeed, it was Young’s history as a black and labor activist which helped catapult him into the Detroit mayor’s office. The “Motor City” was not only the center of American capitalism’s principal industry, but also the bastion of a powerful and combative black proletariat. When Young was elected mayor in 1973, Detroit had experienced years of labor ferment and social struggle—from the 1967 ghetto upheaval to a wave of wild-cat strikes. Young was installed in office precisely in order to put a lid on the city’s

rebellious black population and to quell the multiracial workforce in auto, as the bosses moved to dismantle and decimate the plants which had once provided a livelihood for tens of thousands of unionized workers. By the time he left City Hall in 1993, Detroit had been transformed into a crumbling shell, emblem of the Midwest “Rust Bowl” devastated by plant closures and runaway shops.

FDR’s “New Deal”: Racist, Anti-Worker

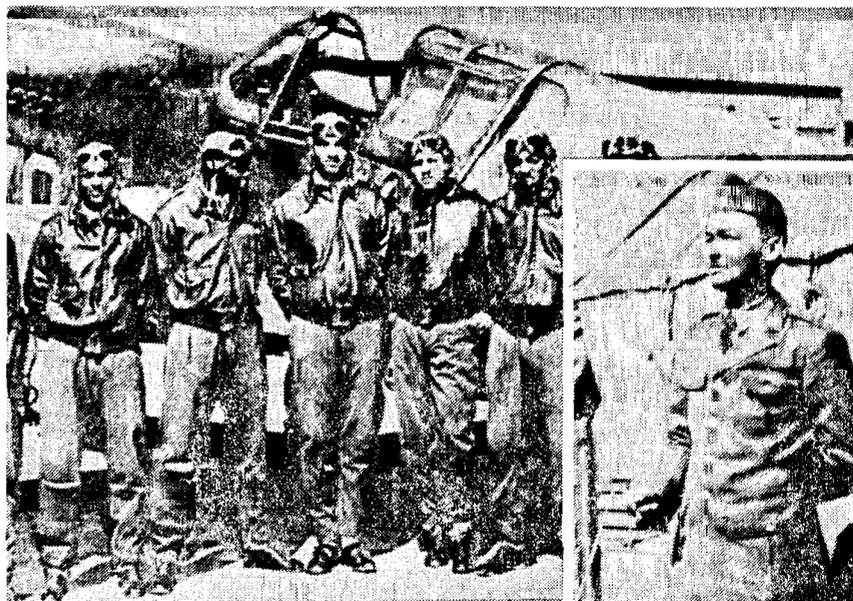
The Great Depression of the 1930s brought with it a marked radicalization of the American proletariat. The mass industrial unions of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) arose out of three citywide general strikes in 1934 in Minneapolis, Toledo and San Francisco. The first two were led by the Trotskyists and the A. J. Muste organization with which they fused later that year to form the Workers Party. The third was led by the CP, which quickly became a

leading force in the CIO's organizing drive. With its campaign to save the Scottsboro Boys and its organizing of unemployed leagues, black sharecroppers in the South and tenants groups in the Northern ghettos, the CP also won the support of many thousands of black workers around the country.

But the Stalinists channeled these militant fighters straight into the arms of the racist capitalist Democrats. In 1935, Stalin's Communist International promulgated the "People's Front" policy, ordering the mass Communist parties of West Europe to support or enter into *capitalist* governments with "anti-fascist" or "progressive" bourgeois parties. Implementing this policy in the U.S., the relatively small American CP became a critical prop of FDR's New Deal coalition, whose central purpose was to contain the labor upsurge and ward off the spectre of workers revolution.

Where the Trotskyists fought to give the burgeoning labor radicalization political expression, calling for a workers party based on revolutionary opposition to the partner parties of capital and the whole profit system, the CP joined forces with social democrats and other pro-capitalist union bureaucrats to tie the CIO to Roosevelt's Democrats. Writing just before his assassination in 1940, Leon Trotsky noted that "the new 'leftist' trade union organization was no sooner founded than it fell into the steel embrace of the imperialist state. The struggle among the tops between the old federation and the new is reducible in large measure to the struggle for the sympathy and support of Roosevelt and his cabinet" ("Trade Unions in the Epoch of Imperialist Decay").

It was in the course of these historic battles—which shaped, and misshaped, the labor movement for decades to come—that Coleman Young served his political apprenticeship. Born in Tuscaloosa, Alabama in 1918, Young was still a small child when his family moved to Detroit to escape from KKK terror, only to find that Michigan was then home to tens of thousands of Klansmen. After being admitted to the University of Michigan but denied financial aid because he was black, Young qualified as an electrical apprentice at Ford's mammoth River Rouge complex in 1937. Here, too, he was subjected to racist discrimination, sent to work instead on the assembly line. Already drawn to radical politics as a teenager, he became an organizer for the nascent United Auto Workers (UAW). He was soon fired after decking one of Harry Bennet's "servicemen"—the notorious thugs hired by Ford's per-



Washington Post

Young (right) served as bombardier in World War II after being driven out as a pilot in all-black Tuskegee Airmen by FBI. He was later jailed for fighting segregation on army bases.



Bernice Grier

sonnel director to keep out the union.

Black CP supporters like Young were key in breaking down the racial barriers to unionizing workers at Ford, which kept the UAW out until 1941 through sheer terror and racist "divide and rule." Young went on to become secretary of the Detroit branch of the National Negro Congress (NNC), a self-styled "united front" organization which aided CIO organizing drives in the heavily black steel and meatpacking industries. However, as we wrote in "How CP's Popular Front Betrayed Black Masses" (*Young Spartacus* No. 26, November 1974), the CP made the NNC and other front groups into "auxiliaries of the Roosevelt machine."

In his autobiography, *Hard Stuff* (1994), Young retailed the popular-frontist lie that "the only ones who gave a damn" about blacks "were the Communists and Franklin D. Roosevelt." In fact, with diehard segregationist Southern Dixiecrats a key component of this "progressive" coalition, Roosevelt's New Deal was racist to the core, excluding the majority of Southern black workers from programs like Social Security and the minimum wage.

CP: "Negro People, Be Ready to Sacrifice"

After briefly opposing the Roosevelt administration during the period of Stalin's "non-aggression" pact with Nazi Germany between August 1939 and June 1941, the CP came out as among the most

ardent defenders of U.S. imperialism, hailing the American bourgeoisie's entry into World War II in December 1941. The CP worked overtime to enforce the AFL and CIO misleaders' no-strike pledge—denouncing United Mine Workers bureaucrat John L. Lewis as "treasonable" when he led a strike in 1943—and demanded that the black masses forsake their struggle for equality in the interests of the "war effort." The racist chauvinism promoted by the Stalinists on behalf of U.S. imperialism knew no bounds: the CP disowned its own members of Japanese origin as they were shipped off to concentration camps and rejoiced over the horrendous A-bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945.

The CP cheered when 18 leaders of the Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and the Minneapolis Teamsters were imprisoned under the newly passed "anti-subversive" Smith Act for opposing the imperialist war. While extending unconditional military defense to the Soviet Union—which remained a workers state despite Stalinist degeneration—the Trotskyists advocated *revolutionary defeatism* toward all the imperialist powers, calling, as Lenin did during World War I, to "turn the imperialist war into a civil war." The SWP opposed the no-strike pledge and championed the fight for black freedom, calling for armed black self-defense against racist terror.

In the armed forces as in industry, blacks were rigidly segregated and assigned to menial positions. As the U.S.

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Statement Of National Committee, Socialist Workers Party

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Japanese Planes U.S. Declaration of War C.P. National Committee Bomb Hawaii New Matter of Hours Vows Support in Crisis



Culver

1943 racist rampage in Detroit. Trotskyist SWP called for union action to stop lynch-mob terror while CP Stalinists betrayed struggle for black rights, pushed no-strike pledge in support of U.S. imperialists.

prepared for war in the fall of 1940, Roosevelt reiterated that the War Department's policy "is not to intermingle colored and white enlisted personnel in the same regimental organizations." Echoing the imperialist rulers, black CP leader Ben Davis grotesquely urged the "Negro people to be ready to sacrifice," lecturing that "We cannot temporarily stop the war until all questions of discrimination are ironed out" (quoted in Philip Foner, *Organized Labor and the Black Worker, 1619-1981* [1981]). The CP's *Daily Worker* vilified Harlem residents as "fifth columnists and pro-fascists" when they exploded in anger in 1943 following the police shooting of a black soldier.

That same year, Detroit was hit by one of the bloodiest racist rampages in American history, as cops gunned down 17

black people and lynch mobs killed eight more. Provoked by fierce competition over scarce housing, white workers who had recently migrated from the South staged racist strikes at Packard and other auto plants against the hiring or promotion of black workers. The mass lynchings elicited little more from the UAW tops than a pious call to end racial discrimination and a self-congratulatory pat on the back that the bloodshed had not entered the plants. In contrast, the SWP's *Militant* (3 July 1943) called on the unions to

"take determined and organized action against the instigators and organizers of these lynch mobs. The unions of Detroit could have repulsed this threat to their very existence as they repulsed General Motors in 1937 and Ford in 1941. Detroit would be far different today and

the native fascists would be cowering in their holes, demoralized instead of triumphant, had the union leaders called out the veteran flying squadrons to defend the Negro people."

Hundreds of black workers in Detroit joined the SWP during this period, though many of them left in the face of the Cold War witchhunt.

For his part, Young remained wedded to the CP's class-collaborationist politics, though he personally refused to acquiesce to the Stalinists' utter abandonment of the struggle against racism during the war. Drafted in February 1942, Young was assigned to the 370th Infantry Regiment, part of the famed black "Buffalo Division." He joined the famed "Tuskegee Airmen," the segregated unit of black Army pilots, but the FBI targeted him as a "red" to get him washed out as a pilot and shipped off for bombardier training instead. Wherever he was stationed, Young fought to integrate the officer clubs. In 1945, he and 100 other black officers at Indiana's Freeman Air Field were arrested and imprisoned for refusing to accept segregated facilities. Young recalled that their arrest prompted "nearly a full-scale mutiny on the base." Weeks later, Young and the other protesters were released.

"You Have Me Mixed Up with a Stool Pigeon"

After the war, Young plunged back into CIO activity. As a result of the wartime migration to Northern industrial centers, Detroit's black population now numbered over 200,000. When 2,000 robed and hooded Klansmen attacked the homes of two black families who had moved into the Corktown neighborhood near Briggs

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(Tiger) Stadium, Young and other armed union members succeeded in turning back the racist mob. During this period, he was also involved in the leadership of a militant sanitation strike. The union ringed City Hall with dozens of trucks piled high with garbage, and the drivers then threw the truck keys away and walked off. As mayor, Young later broke the strikes of Detroit sanitation workers.

The war's end brought the greatest strike wave in American history. So ingrained was the CP's support to U.S. imperialism that it initially argued for continuing the no-strike pledge and tried to sabotage the 113-day 1946 GM strike. But the American bourgeoisie was now gearing up for Cold War against the Soviet Union and war against the trade unions at home. As General Electric head C. E. Wilson put it, "The problems of the United States can be captiously summed up in two words: Russia abroad, Labor at home." With its ties to the Kremlin bureaucracy and its influential position in the CIO, the CP became the chief target of the witchhunt. The CP's class betrayals during the war had helped lay the basis for its isolation among union militants when the Cold War purge was launched.

Within the labor bureaucracy, social democrats like the UAW's Walter Reuther served as the spearhead of Cold War repression. Reuther had led the fight to ban communists from elected union office as far back as 1941, and supported the breaking of a CP-led strike against North American Aviation in June 1941 (see "How the Reuthers Tamed the UAW," WV No. 128, 8 October 1976). Though no less craven in enforcing the

no-strike pledge, Reuther garnered support after the war with his call for "wage increases without price increases."

In September 1948, Reuther moved to purge Young and other CP supporters from the Wayne County CIO. Two years later, he seized on the outbreak of the Korean War to drive out of the UAW all those "found guilty" of not supporting U.S. imperialism's onslaught against the North Korean and Chinese bureaucratically deformed workers states. As the witchhunt escalated in Detroit, Communist workers were beaten up, teachers fired and attempts were even made to evict "reds" from public housing. Particularly in labor/black Detroit, the anti-red hysteria was shot through with racism. The CP supporters who were victimized were preponderantly black. A front-page headline in the *Militant* (17 March 1952) read, "Detroit Witch-Hunt Hearings Create a Lynch Atmosphere," and the article reported: "Even the hangman's rope, symbol of Southern Ku Klux Klan lynch terror, was in evidence in Detroit auto plants."

Reuther & Co. worked hand in hand with the notorious House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC). Among their targets was the National Negro Labor Council set up by the CP in 1951, in which Young was active. In 1952, Young was ordered to appear at the Detroit HUAC hearings. Denouncing the racist union-busters, Young turned the hearings into a forum against lynch-rope terror in the home states of the Southern Congressmen trying to grill him. Refusing to name names, Young declared, "You have me mixed up with a stool pigeon, sir." The tape recording of Young's testi-

mony was played over and over in black working-class Detroit, enhancing his reputation for years.

Today, apologists for the "new" AFL-CIO of John Sweeney hark back to the "progressive" Reuther as their inspiration. In his book, *The Most Dangerous Man In Detroit*, social democrat Nelson Lichtenstein writes, "Reuther was at heart a moralist whose chest still burned with a passion for social justice." In fact, Reuther's "passion" was to clean up the image of racist U.S. imperialism in order to more effectively pursue the drive to destroy the Soviet Union. In his review of Lichtenstein's apologia, labor historian Michael Goldfield debunks the image of Reuther as an advocate of black rights, noting that he "consciously allied himself with the most racist forces in the union," including "the racist and FBI-linked Association of Catholic Trade Unionists" (*Against the Current*, March/April 1997).

A City on the Boil

After a number of unsuccessful electoral campaigns, Young won a seat as a Democrat in the state Senate in 1964. But it was the Detroit ghetto upheaval of July 1967 that set the stage for Young's ascent to City Hall. Thousands of National Guardsmen and federal troops were poured into Detroit; as tanks rumbled down the streets, the inner city was turned into a war zone. Young joined his former antagonist Reuther in calling on President Johnson to send in federal troops. By the time the rebellion was suppressed, 43 blacks had been killed, hundreds injured and over 7,000 arrested. Young then joined Reuther in the bourgeoisie's "New Detroit Committee," aimed at saving the Motor City for the Big Three.

The conflagration of July 1967 was the bloodiest, and one of the last, of a series of anti-cop ghetto rebellions—from Harlem in 1964 and Watts in 1965 to Newark and Detroit two years later—that buried the liberal illusions of the civil rights movement. In the South, with its rigid Jim Crow segregation, the civil rights movement led by liberal preachers like Martin Luther King Jr. managed to achieve some token reforms granting black people formal equality before the law. But when the movement came North, it collided head-on with the reality that black oppression in America is rooted in the very foundations of American capitalism.

This was palpable in Detroit. The tens of thousands of black workers who had been hired into the auto plants were excluded from the skilled trades and remained trapped in the dirtiest, most



UPI

1967: U.S. military occupies black Detroit. Over 7,000 were arrested and 43 killed in bloody suppression of ghetto upheaval.

arduous and dangerous jobs in the foundries and on the assembly lines. Many thousands more were jobless: in 1961, the unemployment rate for blacks in Detroit was 39 percent, and 78 percent for black youth. Meanwhile, the Reutherite UAW bureaucracy was virtually lily-white and manifestly hostile to any action in defense of the union's growing black membership. As the 1967 explosion made clear, Detroit was a seething cauldron of race and class tensions.

This was reflected in the rapid growth of the League of Revolutionary Black Workers (LRBW), based on factory formations like the Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement (DRUM). The young black auto workers hired into the plants in the late 1960s scorned the sort of one-sided appeals for "nonviolence" pushed by King, which he accompanied with calls for "as powerful a police force as possible" to be deployed against the rebellious ghetto masses in Watts and elsewhere. Nor was the petty-bourgeois nationalist orientation to lumpen ghetto youth pushed by the Black Panther Party seen as an answer in a city where 60,000 militant blacks worked in the strategic center of American industry. While no less nationalist, the LRBW had some sense of the social power of the black proletariat—and tapped into it. Only weeks after it first appeared, DRUM led a three-day wildcat which shut down Dodge Main and drew 3,000 workers to a rally outside the plant (see "Soul Power or Workers Power? The Rise and Fall of

the League of Revolutionary Black Workers," *Marxist Bulletin* No. 5 [Revised], "What Strategy for Black Liberation?").

Joining forces with the racist Big Three management, UAW Secretary Treasurer Emil Mazey vilified DRUM as "black fascists" and a "black peril" more dangerous than the "red peril" of Communism. But the LRBW's nationalist outlook rendered it incapable of taking on the racist, pro-capitalist UAW bureaucracy. Hostile to integrated class struggle, the LRBW actively discouraged white workers from joining wildcat strikes and soon succumbed to its own contradictions, preparing the way for a layer of slicker, more left-talking union bureaucrats and "radical" Democratic Party politicians.

As opposed to the liberal integrationism of King & Co., and the nationalism of the LRBW and Panthers, the Spartacist League fights for the perspective of revolutionary integrationism, the understanding that the historic struggle for black equality can only end in victory if it culminates in the revolutionary overthrow of the capitalist system and the integration of the black masses into an egalitarian socialist society. In a 1966 founding document of the SL, "Black and Red—Class Struggle Road to Negro Freedom," we wrote:

"From their arrival in this country, the Negro people have been *an integral part* of American class society while at the same time *forcibly segregated* at the bottom of this society....

"The Negro people are an oppressed

race-color caste, in the main comprising the most exploited layer of the American working class. Because of the generations of exceptional oppression, degradation and humiliation, Black people as a group have special needs and problems necessitating additional and special forms of struggle. It is this part of the struggle which has begun today, and from which the most active and militant sections of Black people will gain a deep education and experience in the lessons of struggle. Because of their position as both the most oppressed and also the most conscious and experienced section, revolutionary black workers are slated to play an exceptional role in the coming American revolution."

The fight against the special oppression of blacks is inseparable from the struggle to emancipate all of the working people from capitalist exploitation. We fight to forge a multiracial Leninist vanguard party to lead that struggle to victory. For black liberation through socialist revolution!

The Devastation of Detroit

The 1967 ghetto rebellion and the explosive rise of black working-class militancy shook the racist rulers, leading to one attempt after another to clamp down on struggle until they finally decided to move much of the auto industry out of Detroit entirely. In an attempt to foment further divisions within the workforce, the auto companies set up special recruiting offices in the Near East, bringing over large numbers of Arab workers. But these workers soon demonstrated their own militancy by staging a wildcat protest against the UAW bureaucracy's purchase of Israeli bonds.

At the same time, there was a massive intensification of police repression. Notoriously racist police commissioner John Nichols set up a special "decoy unit" called STRESS which gunned down 21 blacks between 1969 and 1972. In 1972, Nichols personally led a squad of cops into Chrysler's Mack Avenue Stamping Plant to arrest the leaders of a sitdown strike there.

Amid sharp polarization, the 1973 mayoral election pitted Young against Nichols. While campaigning against STRESS and denouncing racist cop terror, Young joined Nichols in calling for putting more of these armed thugs on the streets. Nonetheless, the CP, a host of other reformist "socialists" and remnants of the LRBW gave open or backhanded support to the black Democrat. Against such opportunists, the SL wrote: "Far from being a working-class victory, the victory of a 'responsible' black 'progressive' fits in nicely with the liberal bourgeoisie's current game plan for siphoning off racial tensions by giving the



WV Photo

Ford River Rouge workers join 1976 nationwide auto strike. Detroit was center of black proletarian militancy until Big Three auto bosses gutted industry in league with pro-capitalist UAW tops.



WV Photos



Spartacists raise class-struggle program at July 1979 protest against auto plant closure. Four months later, 500 mostly black auto workers joined SL-initiated demonstration which defied arrest threat by Young and stopped planned KKK march in downtown Detroit.

oppressed minorities the illusion of political power" (WV No. 33, 23 November 1973).

Cynically expressing the outlook of Detroit's capitalist establishment, department store magnate Joseph Hudson remarked: "The black man has the feeling he is about to take power in the city. But he is going to be left with an empty bag." Having won the election, Young oversaw the decimation of Detroit—200,000 auto workers lost their jobs as the Big Three moved their operations to the low-wage, non-union South. In 1974-75, Young laid off city workers by the thousands. Services were slashed, museums closed, school funding cut and the streets

flooded with cops. He opposed a proposed ordinance to disband the Detroit "red squad" and busted a 1980 strike by city workers in order to make the Motor City "safe" for the Republican Party convention.

A measure of how far Young's political journey had taken him over the years was expressed in his attempt to ban a march against the KKK in Detroit in 1979. Young threatened to arrest militant auto workers who joined an SL-initiated labor/black mobilization to stop the KKK from coming to Detroit to "celebrate" the fascist massacre of five leftists and union organizers in Greensboro, North Carolina. An SL leaflet declared: "Mayor

Coleman Young said we who oppose the Klan have no more rights than the KKK killers, that we should not show our faces on fear of arrest. We say no to Coleman Young... and Coleman Young better think about it." The mobilization went ahead, and as a special WV supplement (16 November 1979) reported: "500 at Detroit Labor/Black Rally Say: The Klan Won't Ride in the Motor City!" Addressing the rally, SL spokesman Don Alexander said:

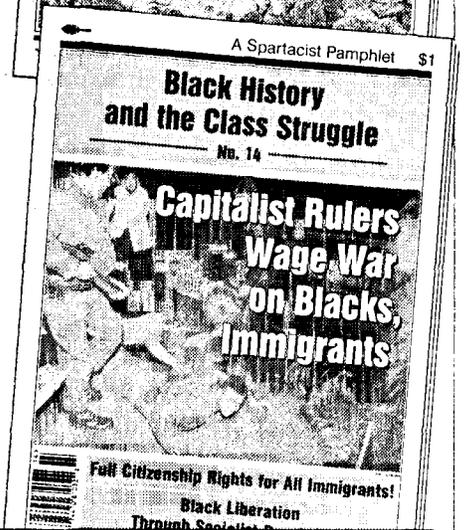
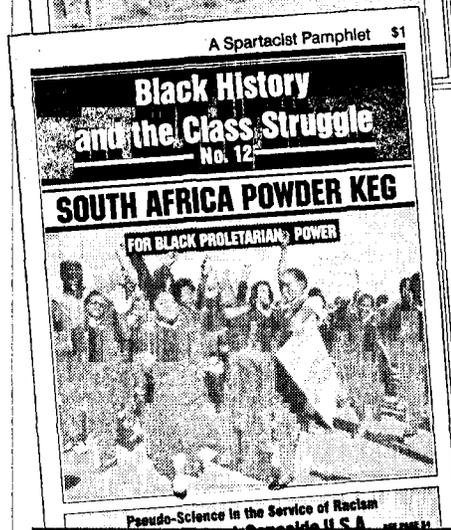
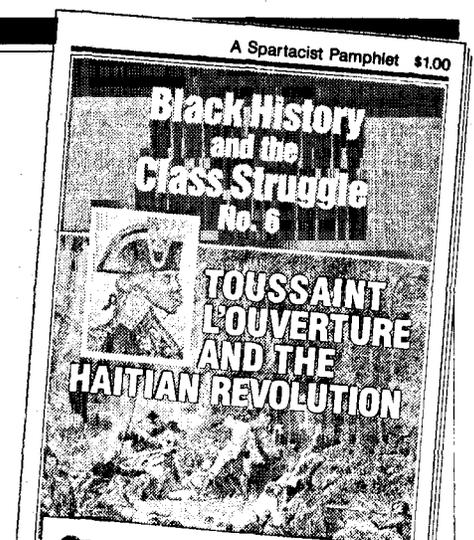
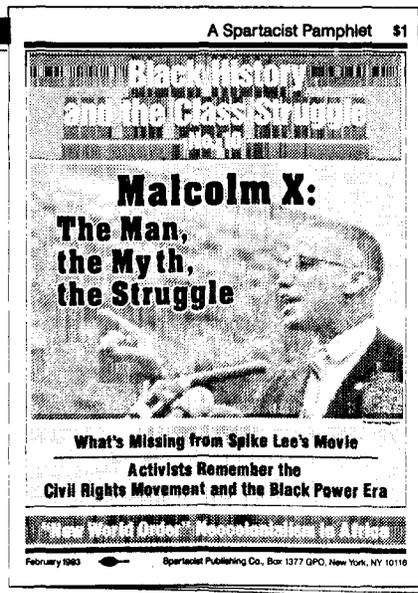
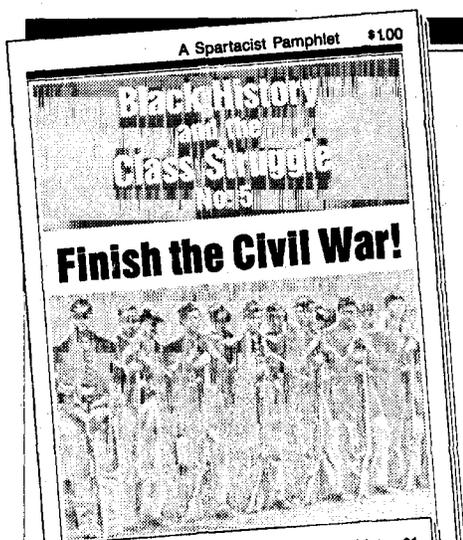
"You know what Coleman Young is—the awful example of what selling your black political soul to the Democratic Party means. You sort of go morally and politically blind. After a while you can't tell the difference between the guys in white sheets and the guys on the other side."

By the early 1980s, what was once the heart of the black proletariat and the strategic center of American industry was a rusting hulk. As Young's capitalist masters hoped, all this was carried out without any major protest. That is why Coleman Young's death was mourned by mouthpieces for the bourgeoisie like the *New York Times*.

Uniquely on the left, the SL advanced a class-struggle program to defeat the bourgeoisie's savage attacks on the Detroit proletariat. Against the UAW bureaucracy's appeals for government subsidies to salvage Chrysler in 1979, setting the stage for mass layoffs and the gutting of union benefits, we called for workers to seize the plants, auction off the assets and keep the proceeds. Three years later, as Chrysler workers faced further attacks and teachers walked out against Young's demand for an 8 percent pay cut, we called for labor to "Shut Down Detroit!" (WV No. 313, 17 September 1982). Emphasizing the need for a political struggle against the pro-capitalist union tops to break workers and minorities from the Democrats, we declared:

"There is no way out within the capitalist system. What is needed is a workers party to fight for a workers government which will rip the productive wealth of this country out of the hands of the capitalist class."

This task remains all the more urgent today, in the face of all-sided attacks on the working class and the ghetto and barrio masses—the devastation of welfare and other social programs, the massive cut in real wages, the ongoing assault on union rights, the enormous increase in police terror and the racist speedup on death row. We fight for a multiracial vanguard party—like Lenin's Bolsheviks, a tribune of all the oppressed—to lead the fight for a socialist future. ■



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