



# Self-determination for the Afro-American Nation in the Black-belt South

A new upsurge of mass struggle is building up momentum in the Black-belt South. At the forefront of this movement today are the thousands of Black people in Northern Mississippi rural counties, who have stood up as one. Their demands are clear: *Justice for the racist killing of Blacks; End Klan terror; Affirmative action in jobs; Stop stealing the land of Black farmers.*

In this past period, many other struggles have grown in the Deep South, including the fight to free Gary Tyler, Joanne Little, Dessie Woods, the Dawson Five, Tommy Lee Hines and other Black men and women unjustly imprisoned; the struggle to unionize the South; to desegregate southern colleges and preserve Black schools; and many others.

These struggles involved Black people from different classes and strata, and encompass a broad range of demands. At very bottom lies the deeply

felt and common aspirations of Black people for full national freedom and self-determination.

These sentiments have historically been the essence of Black people's struggle in the South. Through the centuries of slavery and semi-slavery, Blacks were forged into an oppressed nation in the territory of the Black-belt South.

The Civil War ended outright slavery, but with the betrayal of Reconstruction, Blacks were thrown back onto the plantation as sharecroppers and tenant farmers, deprived of their land — their chief means of livelihood — and denied any political power.

The legacy of slavery and semi-slavery of the old South follows the Black masses to this day as the U.S. capitalist class continues to hold the Black nation in bondage. Black people live under the most wretched conditions and comprise the lowest

stratum of the work force. The Black Codes and Jim Crow laws have been formally stricken from the books, but in practice they are still in effect. Black people are still socially suppressed and denied political equality. The KKK still rides at night. Land continues to be a fundamental demand of Black farmers and sharecroppers.

Today nearly one half of all Blacks in the U.S. have been forcibly dispersed from their historical homeland in the Black-belt South, into ghetto concentrations in northern and western cities. There, Black people continue to face severe national oppression in all aspects of life.

This oppression has been and continues to be a pillar of U.S. imperialism. Black people can only be free if they have the right to possess and determine the political future of their historical homeland. This means that the oppressed Black nation in the territory of the Black-belt South must have the right to self-determination, up to and including secession from the U.S. if they choose. Black people outside the Black-belt must also have some form of regional autonomy and political power in their areas of concentration.

The struggle for self-determination in the Black-belt South is a component part of the U.S. socialist revolution. It is a powerful force aimed at the imperialist ruling class, the common enemy of Black people and the multi-national working class. It must be fully supported by workers and progressive people of all nationalities.