

## No Choice for Workers in 2004 Elections



Janoski/Getty



### U.S. Out of Iraq Now!



Russell/Getty

Iraqi civilians in Baghdad flee scene of carnage after U.S. helicopters fired missiles into a crowd gathering around a destroyed U.S. armored vehicle, September 12.

# Break with the Democrats! For a Workers Party!

With a peculiarly war-crazed and oddly demented administration sitting in the White House, there is a strong sentiment among many working people, minorities and young activists to vote for "Anybody but Bush." It is not so much that people want to vote for Democrat John Kerry, but that they want to vote *against* Bush. While wanting to see Bush ousted is a wholly understandable sentiment, to throw one's vote to another competing capitalist politician runs counter to fighting to defend the interests of working people and the oppressed. The policies pursued by the Bush regime that rightly elicit opposition and indignation (like the Iraq war and occupation, the "war on terror" and evisceration of democratic rights, the attacks on the rights of black people, immigrants and women, etc.) are not simply the product of a particularly vicious administration. War, racism and repression are endemic to the oppressive capitalist system under which we live. To defend and pursue the interests of working people and the oppressed, what is required first and foremost is a break with all capitalist parties—beginning with the Democrats, the other party of war and racism—and the forging of a revolutionary workers party that fights to get rid of the capitalist system through workers revolution.

While the country is becoming ever

more sharply polarized as the elections approach, the differences between the two candidates are ever narrowing. This could be easily gleaned from the recent Democratic and Republican conventions, both of which were unabashed displays of patriotism and militarism (as well as police repression against protesters—see article on RNC protests on page 6). Bush launched the Iraq war; Kerry voted for the war and says he would vote for it now even after the exposés of the grand lies the administration used to invade Iraq. Bush is for maintaining the bloody occupation; Kerry is for maintaining the bloody occupation. Bush wants to continue waging the "war on terror"; Kerry promotes himself as a more *effective* fighter in this sordid "war," which is a war against immigrants, black and working people, and a means by which the capitalists try to deny the population its democratic rights and civil liberties. Even on those issues where the candidates disagree, like abortion rights, Kerry proclaimed that he would have no problem appointing an anti-abortion judge to the Supreme Court.

It's not simply that the policies of Bush and Kerry are so alike, but that the two parties of American capitalism are so alike. Both parties represent the interests of the capitalist ruling class. In a "state of the union" speech 32 years ago, America's great essayist and novelist Gore Vidal aptly noted, "We have only one political party in the United States, the Property Party, with two right wings, Republican and Democrat." Today, Vidal adds, "Although the secret core to each presidential election is who can express his hatred of African-Americans most

subtly (to which today can be added Latinos and 'elite liberals,' a fantasy category associated with working film actors who have won Academy Awards), and, of course, this season it's the marriage-minded so-called gays. So-called because there is no such human or mammal category (sex is a continuum) except in the great hollow pumpkin head of that gambling dude who has anointed himself the nation's moralist-in-chief, William 'Bell Fruit' Bennett" (*Nation*, 13 September).

In 1948, American Trotskyist leader James P. Cannon explained how Marxists define the class character of a party:

"It is not determined by the class which supports the party at the moment, but rather by the class which the party supports; that is to say, by its program. That is the basic meaning of a political pro-

gram, the support of one class rule or another. The class character of a party is also determined by its actual practice.... Another factor to be considered is the composition of a party. A bourgeois party of the classical type is easily recognized because it has all three of these qualities—it is bourgeois in program, in practice, and in composition."

—"Election Policy in 1948," printed in "Aspects of Socialist Election Policy," *Education for Socialists* (March 1971)

To move forward and to effectively fight for their rights and interests, working people and leftist youth must begin with the understanding that American society, like all capitalist societies, is divided between two fundamental classes: the capitalist class and the working class.

*continued on page 10*

### Women and Revolution



## Japan: The Struggle Against Women's Oppression

See Page 4



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# The IG and Iraq Occupation

22 August 2004

Dear Workers Vanguard,

I would like to add to the polemic against the pseudo-revolutionary Internationalist Group in *Workers Vanguard* No. 830 in the article entitled "The Left and the 'Iraqi Resistance': U.S. Out of Iraq Now!" As mentioned, in several of their articles they have polemicized against our use of the slogan "U.S. Troops Out of Iraq, Now!" because it supposedly echoes sectors of the bourgeoisie and appeals to the capitalist rulers. In addition, they claim that the Spartacist League "willfully obscures the position of Lenin" for not flaunting a slogan calling for *defeat* of the colonial occupation. A closer look proves that it is really the IG who grossly distorts Lenin.

For over a century, genuine Marxists have used slogans similar to "Colonial Troops Out!" and the IG knows it. The founder of the IG, Jan Norden, not only used such slogans when he himself was editor of *WV*, but also continued to use such slogans after he and his posse started producing the IG's newspaper, the *Internationalist*, in 1997. Thus, their April-May 1999 issue had an article on Yugoslavia with the subheading, "U.S./UN/NATO Out of the Balkans!" In a June 2000 *Internationalist*, an article on Puerto Rico prominently displayed in the title, "Navy

Get the Hell Out of Vieques *Now!*" How is the aforementioned slogan of the IG any different from the supposedly capitulatory slogan "U.S. Troops Out of Iraq Now?" Lastly, a June 2001 *Internationalist* ran an article entitled, "From Puerto Rico to Korea: U.S. Bombers Get Out!" Has the IG since had a line change that needs to be explained, or are we simply talking about false polemics here?

At the root of the IG's weak criticism is a reversal of Leninism through the implication that any *negative* slogan is necessarily a class-collaborationist appeal to the bourgeoisie. This is false. The only fundamental difference between the IG's slogan and ours is that we don't indicate exactly *how* the imperialists are going to leave Iraq—whether by increased attacks by Iraqi insurgents, class struggle at home, mounting imperialist rivalries, etc. In a piece by Lenin appropriately titled "A Caricature of Marxism and Imperialist Economism," he states with reference to a discussion on self-determination: "The slogan 'get out of the colonies' has one and only one political and economic content: freedom of secession for the colonial nations, freedom to establish a separate state!" What's most crucial for Marxists in the case of Iraq is that the neocolonial invaders leave; in that sense, the slogans used by the IG and the SL

are not hugely distinguishable. Moreover, what Leninists understand about the use of *negative* slogans like that of "U.S. Troops Out" is that it should be paired with a positive slogan in order to advance revolutionary consciousness. *Workers Vanguard's* choice to emphasize "For class struggle at home!"—a positive slogan which points the working class in the right direction—fulfills this purpose.

Of course, it would be a great blow for imperialism and a victory for working people around the world if the murderous imperialist forces were *driven out*, as the IG emphasizes. But this requires realistically taking into account the differences between the forces on the ground, including the immense military superiority of the imperialists, and the lack of conscious working-class mobilization among the forces of the resistance. Again, as Lenin put it: "...every slogan [must] be justified by a precise analysis of *economic* realities, the *political* situation and the *political* significance of the slogan.

It is embarrassing to have to drive home the ABC of Marxism, but what is one to do...?"

The IG certainly has a history of tailing alien class forces in search for quick "action" strategies, even if this relies on a lower level of consciousness. This is reflected in the fact that their articles on Iraq barely whisper a critical statement against the politics of the forces that seem to be leading the various resistance groups. This is the real crime of the IG's perspective. Lenin strongly warned against politically supporting an uprising of the reactionary classes against imperialism. The retrograde, fundamentalist consciousness of many of the resistance leaders, several who would just as likely kill a communist or an unveiled woman as an American soldier, is centuries away from revolutionary Marxism. While the battles waged against the neocolonial occupiers on the part of the insurgents are just and defensible, any Marxist cannot be blind to the fact that their leaders would be the new enemy to the working class and the oppressed after taking power.

Revolutionary Greetings,  
L.



## "No Peace with the Present-Day State!"

In an 1869 speech, German socialist leader Wilhelm Liebknecht (father of the revolutionary Marxist Karl Liebknecht) attacked the notion that socialists (who at the time called themselves Social Democrats) could get rid of capitalism through parliamentary means. Emphasizing the need for social revolution, Liebknecht pointed out that the capitalist state and its apparatus would not allow a peaceful transition to socialism.



LENIN

TROTSKY

Let us assume that a candidate comes up for election and that the government is absolutely opposed to having him in the "Reichstag" [parliament]. The government will confiscate the newspapers that advocate his election—it will do so legally; it will confiscate his election handbills—also legally; or it will give permits for meetings of electors and then dissolve them—again legally; it will arrest the candidate's campaign managers—quite legally; it will arrest the candidate himself—also legally....

But let us assume that the government—either because it feels it is strong enough, or because of some other calculation—makes no use of its powers, and that it becomes possible, as some socialist statesmen of imagination still dream—to elect a social-democratic majority in the "Reichstag"—what would this majority proceed to do? *Hic Rhodus, hic salta!* Now is the moment for transforming society and the state. The majority will adopt a world-historic decision; the new era is born—don't you believe it! A company of soldiers will eject the Social-Democratic majority from its stronghold and if these gentlemen make any objection to this procedure, a few policemen will take them to police headquarters and there they will have time enough to ponder the consequences of their Quixotic aspirations.

Revolutions are not made by getting the permission of the high powers that are in authority; the socialist ideal cannot be achieved within the frame of the present-day state; it must overthrow the state in order to secure the possibility of life.

No peace with the present-day state!

—Wilhelm Liebknecht, "The Elections to Parliament Are Only a Means of Agitation" (1869), printed in *Voices of Revolt: Speeches of Wilhelm Liebknecht* (International Publishers, 1928)



Spartacist contingent at March 20 protest in Chicago.

WV Photo

## Spartacist League/Trotskyist League Forums

Report Back from RNC Protests  
**We Need a Fighting Workers Party!**

**Break with the Democrats! No Vote to Nader!**

Saturday, Sept. 25, 6 p.m.  
First Parish Church  
3 Church St., Harvard Square  
Cambridge

For more information: (617) 666-9453  
or e-mail: bostonsyc@yahoo.com

**BOSTON**

## The Spectre of Tiananmen and Working-Class Struggle in China Today

**Defend, Extend the Gains of the 1949 Revolution!**  
**For a China of Workers and Peasants Councils in a Socialist Asia!**

Saturday, Oct. 2, 7 p.m.  
Trinity-St. Paul's Centre  
427 Bloor Street West  
(just west of Spadina subway)

For more information: (416) 593-4138  
or e-mail: spartcan@on.aibn.com

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Saturday, Oct. 9, 2 p.m.  
Rockridge Branch Library  
5366 College Avenue, Oakland  
(5 blocks south of Rockridge BART)

For more information: (510) 839-0851  
or e-mail: slbayarea@scbglobal.net

**BAY AREA**

Saturday, Oct. 2, 2:30 p.m.  
Collingwood Neighbourhood House, Multipurpose Room A  
5288 Joyce St. (between Vanness and Kingsway)

**VANCOUVER**

For more information: (604) 687-0353  
or e-mail TLLT@look.ca

## For Black Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!

**How the Liberals and Reformists Derailed the Struggle for Integration**

Saturday, Oct. 9, 5 p.m.  
University of Chicago  
Bartlett Gymnasium, Student Lounge  
5640 S. University Avenue

For more information: (312) 563-0441  
or e-mail: spartacist@iname.com

**CHICAGO**

## WORKERS VANGUARD

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17 September 2004

# NYC Transit: "Workplace Violence" Frame-Up

## Reinstate TWU Shop Chairman

### Carlos Blackman!

NEW YORK—On September 8, a so-called "impartial arbitrator" upheld the firing of Carlos Blackman, an elected shop chairman of Transport Workers Union (TWU) Local 100. As a dedicated union fighter against unsafe working conditions and speedup at the 240th St. subway car maintenance shop in the Bronx, Blackman is the victim of a transparent "workplace violence" frame-up by New York City Transit (NYCT) management. The victimization of Blackman represents an attack on all transit workers and on the union as a whole.

The first accusation against Blackman, which he flatly denied, was that during an incident when he tried to halt the use of an unsafe hydraulic jack last December 4, he supposedly told the supervisor that he couldn't be thrown off the property because he had "a .38." Secondly, Blackman was accused by a supervisor of saying that two transit supervisors who were killed in February at the Coney Island Subway Yard "deserved what they got" because one of them had fired the worker accused of shooting them. Blackman denied making such a statement, and he was backed up by a fellow worker who testified at the hearing. But the arbitrator simply dismissed these two black workers as not "credible" witnesses. In the slaveholders' South, black slaves could not testify in court; a slave could be convicted of any crime simply on the say-so of the "master." No wonder transit workers refer to the system they are subjected to as "plantation justice"!

The NYCT's frame-up of Blackman provoked outrage on the part of his union brothers and sisters, transcending ethnic, racial and national divisions within the workforce. A transit worker at the 240th St. maintenance shop told a *WV* salesman: "It's terrible. We have to do something. We have to defend him!" Before Blackman's firing, scores of TWU members rallied on April 21 at 240th St. to protest his suspension. The union has

filed a federal court suit demanding that Blackman be reinstated and allowed to perform his union duties without interference. There is reportedly considerable rank-and-file sentiment in favor of granting this staunch fighter a staff position in the union. That would be good, but that should not be the end of the story. This anti-union attack should be met by a

you could be fired for *anything* from protesting unsafe conditions to denouncing racist abuse!

This case is a stark example of how the policy of relying on binding arbitration and court suits is a trap for the working class. So-called "neutral" arbitrators and judges are actually agents of the capitalists. The union bureaucracy's

arbitration hearing ended, the NYCT, claiming to have found graffiti in some conductor cabs supposedly threatening the Republican National Convention, precipitated a July 14 police raid on the shop where Blackman worked. The early-morning sweep, involving more than two dozen police cars, was a blatant attempt to intimidate and regiment transit workers. Such sinister shows of force are part of the repressive climate created by the capitalist rulers' "war on terror," which is actually a war on blacks, immigrants and unions.

However, the TWU Local 100 leadership of president Roger Toussaint, while formally backing Blackman's case and supporting the rally at his work location, has not sought to mobilize the power of labor in his defense. In contrast, during the Republican National Convention the TWU bureaucracy put the forces of the union at the disposal of a labor rally that was nothing but a campaign rally for Democrat John Kerry. And a TWU poster calling for a vote for Kerry hangs prominently in the Local 100 union hall. The class-collaborationist program of the union bureaucrats in this country is exemplified by their integration into the capitalist Democratic Party.

It is vital to know who are our friends and who are our enemies. This is based on the recognition that the interests of workers and bosses are counterposed. To mobilize the power of labor, it is necessary to fight for a class-struggle union leadership that breaks labor's ties to the Democrats and fights for the independent mobilization of the working class. ■



Bryan/TWU Local 100

Carlos Blackman (center) with union brothers at Bronx support rally in April.

mobilization of the power of the TWU with solidarity from other unions in this city demanding Blackman's *reinstatement with full seniority and back pay*.

The firing of Carlos Blackman sets a dangerous precedent, posing a threat not only to transit workers but to workers throughout the country. If they can fire a respected union officer on such patently trumped-up charges, then they can run roughshod over any militant worker on the pretext of "workplace violence" against the company. The statement Blackman was accused of making about the Coney Island incident was simply ruled to be "extremely detrimental to the efficient workings of the shop." By that criterion,

reliance on binding arbitration serves as an excuse to avoid the kind of hard class struggle that is the only way the working class can defend itself and win significant gains. But while the union tops play by the bosses' rules, straitjacketing union workers, the capitalists are using brass knuckles. The very day after Blackman's

## Iran: Kurdish Leftist Sentenced to Death

### Stop the Execution of Esmail Mohammadi!

We reprint below a September 14 letter by the Partisan Defense Committee to the Iranian authorities.

The Partisan Defense Committee, vehemently denounces the Iranian government's threatened execution of Kurdish leftist Esmail Mohammadi, and condemns the ongoing state repression against Iranian and Kurdish activists. Esmail Mohammadi, a 38-year-old father of five who is a supporter of the Komala Party of Iranian Kurdistan, was arrested in 2002 at his home in Bukan, western Iran. He was reportedly charged with "armed struggle against the Islamic regime" and "membership of a proscribed organization," and was sentenced to death in July 2003. Other reported charges accused Mohammadi of "being at war with god" and "corruption on earth," both of which are punishable by death under Iran's Islamic theocracy. This summer, Mohammadi's appeal of his death sentence was denied by five judges of Branch 32 of the Supreme Court, claiming that he "confessed" to the charges against him.

As an August 21 Komala protest

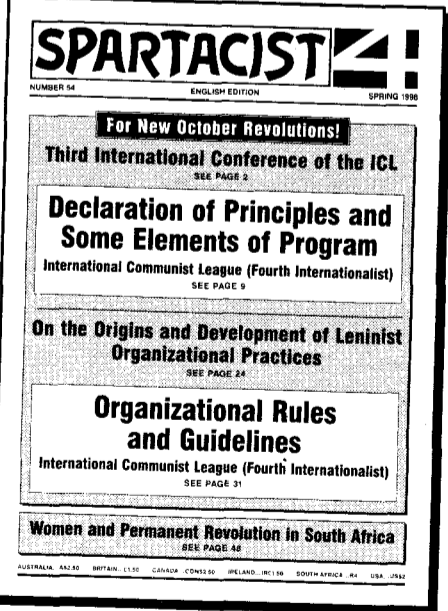
letter states, "The government of Iran is trying to create fear and terror in [the] people of Kurdistan by executing Mr. Mohammadi." Since his arrest, this courageous leftist has been subjected to numerous brutal interrogations as well as mental and physical torture. Untold numbers of government opponents, trade unionists, women and others deemed by the government to have violated Islamic law have been imprisoned and executed. On August 15, for example, Ateqeh Rajabi, a 16-year-old girl, was publicly hanged in the northern province of Mazandaran for "acts incompatible with chastity"!

Kurdish militants have been particularly targeted by the regime, with scores executed every year. Last year alone, at least two members of Komala—Saasaan Al Kanaan and Mohammad Golabee—were executed. As opponents of capitalist state repression and the barbaric institution of the death penalty everywhere, including in the U.S. imperialist state, we demand: *Stop the execution of Esmail Mohammadi! Free him now!*

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Programmatic  
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Spartacist League/U.S.

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For Socialist Revolution  
in the Bastion  
of World Imperialism!

Organizational Rules and Guidelines  
of the Spartacist League/U.S.

Opponents of the Revolutionary  
Internationalist Workers Movement



## Japan: The Struggle Against Women's Oppression

We print below a translation of an article from *Spartacist Japan* (No. 29, April 2004), publication of the *Spartacist Group Japan*, section of the *International Communist League*.

### スパルタシスト

On 1 May 1921 about 20 women joined 10,000 of their class brothers in the second official Japanese May Day demonstration. The women were organized by the group called *Sekirankai*, a socialist women's organization. In preparation for the May Day rally, *Sekirankai* wrote a manifesto, authored by Yamakawa Kikue. This was four years after the 1917 Russian Revolution, and the manifesto gives an indication of the power that revolution held for working people and women:

"May Day is our day, the day of the oppressed, propertyless working class. For several tens of centuries, the path women and workers have travelled down is the path of the history of oppression and ignorance. But the light is coming close. In Russia, the echo of the victorious extermination of the darkness of capitalism from the face of the earth is moment by moment thundering like the roar of a bell at daybreak. Within this echo is the power of the secluded woman, and, within the limits of our ability, together with our brothers, isn't it the chimes of the liberation of the propertyless class in Japan?"

"The *Sekirankai* is a women's organization that plans to participate in the enterprise to destroy the capitalist society and build a socialist society. The capitalist society turns us into slaves at home and oppresses us as wage slaves outside the home....

"The *Sekirankai* declares all-out war on this cruel, shameless society.... Socialism offers the only way to save humankind from the oppression and abuses of capitalism. Sisters who love justice and humanity, join the socialist movement!"

At that time, under the infamous Article 5 of the Police Security Regulations, women were legally prohibited from joining political organizations, attending political meetings and giving political speeches.

All 20 of the women who marched in this May Day demonstration under red and black flags were arrested. The next major activity of this organization was raising the funds necessary to get their comrades out of jail. Due to state repression, the life of *Sekirankai* was very short. Some of its members left the socialist movement. Others, such as Sakai Magara and Nakasone Sadayo, were arrested for distributing antiwar leaflets to soldiers. Takatsu Tayoko and her husband were arrested for producing a publication that included threats against the emperor system.

### Early Heroic Struggles of Women Workers

By 1890 women had become the backbone of the developing Japanese industrial economy. Female workers, the

the last part of the nineteenth century.

It is no accident that in every modern social revolution and numerous class battles women workers have been among the most audacious and courageous fighters. The low wages, long hours, prevalence of disease, prison-like conditions and rampant sexual attacks drove women workers to fight. The first strike in Japan was in 1886 at the Kofu Amamiya Kihyoei silk mill. More than one hundred women walked out in protest over longer working hours, lowered wages and arbitrary fines. Their action took management so much by surprise that they won most of their demands, including a return to the 14-hour workday. This strike sparked a series of others that summer.

On the eve of the government's celebration of the Meiji Constitution, strikes

the workforce but less than 20 percent of the union membership.

The role that Japanese women played in the labor movement was noted at the 2nd World Conference of Communist Women in July 1921. In addressing the conference, Leon Trotsky noted:

"In the progress of the world labour movement, women proletarians play a colossal role. I say this not because I am addressing a women's conference but because sheer numbers indicate what an important part the woman worker plays in the mechanism of the capitalist world—in France, Germany, in America, in Japan, in every capitalist country.... Statistics inform me that in Japan, there are many more women than men workers; and consequently, if the data at my disposal is credible, in the labour movement of Japan, they, the proletarian women, are destined to play the decisive role and to occupy the decisive place."

Following these strikes, the government moved fast. The Meiji government adopted heavily Confucian-influenced values of the *samurai* class as the foundation for its new social and legal structures which made women subordinate to men. The new order took the form of the *ie* [family household structure] as the basis for its new hierarchical social structure with the emperor on top as the head of the household (the entire country) and the husband as the absolute head of his respective household. Primogeniture was mandated for all classes. In 1898, the Civil Code and Domestic Relations and the Inheritance Law were enacted. Both pieces of legislation institutionalized more rigid family controls than most people had known in the feudal period. In 1890 the Law on Political Associations and Assembly was passed, making it illegal for women to participate in any political activities and even to listen to political speeches. In 1900 this law was reinforced with the passage of the Police Security Regulations whose infamous Article 5 was mentioned above. By the 1920s even the bourgeois *Mainichi* newspaper commented that, "Japan maltreats and insults her women to a graver extent than any other country on the globe."

For more than 100 years women have been protesting against the so-called Japanese family system. Given that the family came to be crucial in the structures of authority under the Meiji Constitution, any attempt to even question the role of the family in society was met with government repression. In 1884, Kishida Toshiko, who toured the country giving speeches demanding political rights for women, was arrested for her attack on the family system. She described the family as imprisonment for women and compared the upbringing of daughters to the cultivation of the *bonsai*, whose shape is created by the trimming of roots and branches. Another woman was Fukuda Hideko. She had been arrested in 1885 on charges of treason for fighting for the Korean independence movement following the Sino-Japanese accord of the same year. In 1907, she established the socialist women's journal *Seikai Fujin* (Women of the World) in which she argued that equality between men and women cannot



Tokyo, January 30: Teachers protest government imposition of *hinomaru* and *kimigayo*, the flag and anthem. The banner reads, "For Freedom of Thought in Education!"

majority of whom were indentured, outnumbered males in light industry, especially textiles, where a workforce that was 60 to 90 percent female produced 40 percent of the gross national product and 60 percent of the foreign exchange during

and walkouts gathered force throughout the country. In late September of 1889, 300 women workers struck the Tenma Cotton Spinning Company of Osaka demanding higher wages and the promised bonus payments. In the face of firings and physical intimidation, the workers persisted for days. A key factor in the successful outcome of the strike was that the male machinists decided to join the strike. By the time the strike ended on 5 October, 60 men and 20 women had been arrested, but the workers received a wage hike and some control over their bonuses, setting a precedent for workers in other mills.

The early strike activity carried out by female textile workers was done without the support of an organized union movement. All wings of the union movement—from patriotic to social-democratic to the Hogikai federation affiliated with the Communist Party—refused to organize women workers and also "colonized workers," the Koreans and Chinese who were working in Japan, on a mass basis. At the high point of prewar unionization in the 1930s, Japanese women constituted less than 6 percent of unionized workers, while they were 52.6 percent of the entire factory workforce in 1930. Today women compose almost half of



Toshiki Sawaguchi

February 1994: Japanese nurses protest overtime, staff shortages and subsidy cuts, demand better health care for all.

## For Women's Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!

be achieved without a social transformation along socialist lines, and what was necessary was the destruction of private property.

### Emperor System Sanctifies Social and Sexual Hierarchy

In many aspects, the crucial questions facing working women today parallel those from the Meiji period when women were regarded as *hara wa karimon*, obligated to produce a suitable heir for the family and empire. They were to be teachers of patriotism and loyalty in the home, and in the midst of social unrest, pillars of stability as *ryosai kenbo* [good wife, wise mother]. Today, the reactionary "good wife, wise mother" ideology is still codified in law, paternalistic corporate practices and religious superstition. Japan is home to the bullet train, Sony PlayStation, robotics and developer of state-of-the-art technology. It has the technological knowledge and capability, if placed in the hands of the world's working people, to begin the work of eliminating scarcity, hunger and poverty. And yet, women are still prohibited from entering tunnels under construction for bullet trains out of fear that the "mountain goddess" will become jealous, nor can they step inside a sumo *dojo* [wrestling ring] because they are "unpure."

Women in all capitalist countries are oppressed. But what is it about Japan that makes thousands of young women want to leave the country and never return? In this country, women's oppression is deeply intertwined with the perpetuation of the emperor system, whose purpose is to sanctify social and sexual hierarchy, the family, private property and the "glory" of the Japanese state. Reactionary Confucian ideology and Shinto and Buddhist religious superstitions permeate every aspect of society and are used by the state as a wedge to interfere into and regulate every aspect of social and private life. This includes even the right of people to name their children what they want. The government has an official list of names, and if you deviate from that list, your child cannot be listed in the family registry.

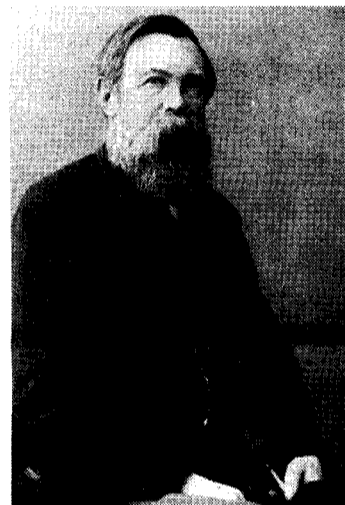
The traditional household system institutionalized in the 1898 Civil Code may have been technically outlawed by the postwar Civil Code, but its fundamental principles and practices continue. The new Civil Code legally did away with many of the more Confucian aspects of the family system and no longer categorized women as "imbeciles" as did the Meiji Civil Code. But regulations concerning marriage and divorce, and confirmation of paternity and inheritance were maintained. There is an article making it legally mandatory to distinguish between children born in and out of wedlock. Another article stipulates that a woman must wait six months before remarrying after divorce so as to determine the paternity of a child, and another article says a woman can only inherit one-half of her husband's estate. While the new code allows for a couple upon marriage to choose which surname they will use, it must be either the man's or the woman's to accommodate the family registry. While not enforced legally, temples and officials in charge of cemeteries refuse to allow people with different surnames to be buried in the same tomb, meaning that a married woman must be buried with her husband's family, giving new meaning to the old saying that even in death a wife must follow her husband.

While in some cases the courts have ruled that it is illegal to force a woman to quit work when she gets married, or when she reaches the "appropriate" age for marriage, commonly set at 30, the social pressure exerted on women to "settle down" and assume their "appropriate place" in society is immense. Older unmarried women are now referred to as *makeinu* [losing dogs] and *motenai onna* [unwanted females]. Those past 50 who are not married are even supposed to check a special category on the national census that brands them as *shogai mikonsha* [lifelong unmarried people].

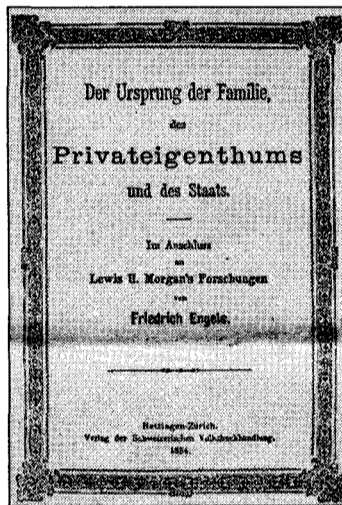
In almost all international social indices, Japanese women are placed at the bottom. This is true for surveys regarding percentage in the workforce, the type of job, salary, number of politicians, etc. Just over half of all Japanese women work, compared to more than 70 percent of their Western counterparts. Those that do have jobs are mainly outside the regular workforce and confined to "contingency" work; 77 percent of all part-time workers are female. On average, women's salaries are less than 60 percent of their Japanese male counterparts', the lowest percentage of all industrialized nations and a percentage that has been maintained steadily since women first entered industry as textile workers in the late 1800s.

The special oppression of women is essential to the maintenance of power and profit for the ruling class and will not be voluntarily sacrificed. Cheap marginal labor in the workforce makes possible tremendous profits because as lower-paid workers with little protection, women have been placed in a situation which undermines the wages and conditions of the working class as a whole.

Language is a reflection of social reality, and the hierarchical structure of Japanese society, the *senpai-kohai* [superior-inferior] relationship that exists in the home, in the schools and in business, is clearly evident in the demeaning four-tiered language structure requiring different levels of submissiveness depending on whom one is addressing, based on class, age, sex and status. A special lan-



W.E. Debenham



**Friedrich Engels' Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State (1884) explained that basis of women's oppression lies in development of family system and private property.**

guage, which most people do not understand, still exists which serves to give a mystical aura to all institutions related to the emperor system.

But perhaps the most vivid reflection of the inequalities in society as evidenced in the written and spoken language concern women. *Onna kotoba* [women's language] deliberately promotes obedience and submissiveness. It is to be used for all public functions and inside the family when dealing with one's in-laws. All written characters concerning women either denote humility or are derogatory, starting with the character for "woman" itself. All words for "wife," and there are many depending on whose wife one is talking about, contain the meaning "the one inside the house." We fight for the elimination of status, age and sex discrimination and, concomitantly, their reflection in demeaning language.

### Women's Oppression Is Rooted in the Nuclear Family

The oppression of women is a social institution that rests on private property. It is a human invention that is subject to change like any other. Women's oppression is rooted in the institution of the family and has been a feature of all class societies. With the beginnings of industrial capitalism, production moved from the home to the factory. The household became totally private, and women became economically powerless and wholly excluded from social production.

It is the family—and the necessity to control sexual access to the woman to ensure that the children of the marriage, who will be the man's heirs, are really genetically his children—which generates the morality codified in and reinforced by religion. It is the family that



Mainichi Shinbunsha

**During 1926 ten-day struggle against firings at Kawasaki-Fuji Cotton Mill, woman representative from solidarity group in Tokyo leads march in Kawasaki.**

throughout a woman's life gives definition to her oppressed state: as daughter, as wife, as mother. As 19th century revolutionary Friedrich Engels wrote in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State* (1884): "The overthrow of mother right was the world historical defeat of the female sex. The man took command in the home also; the woman was degraded and became a mere instrument for the production of children." And if you think this was true only 100 years ago, remember the comments of the racist, woman-hating governor of Tokyo,

nuclear family as the basic unit for regimenting society. One LDP member stated that "The proposed bill will promote too much individualism in society and lead to the collapse of Japan's family system. It is part of a campaign for breaking up the country" (*Kyodo*, 12 March).

The nuclear family, as a socioeconomic unit, is oppressive to all its members. Unmarried couples and parents and their children face all kinds of discriminatory treatment in every aspect of their daily lives, and it is the *koseki* [family registry] which is the instrument that enforces this. The *koseki* system is hell even for those who fall in the most prized social status category—the oldest born son, who, if he decides to change his gender, is prohibited from registering that change, and therefore becomes a *henin* [non-person].

There is a lot of bourgeois hypocrisy involved here. For years, the government has been on a campaign to increase the birthrate. The JCP [Japanese Communist Party] jumped on this reactionary baby bandwagon in 1999 when they announced that a high birthrate is an index of social equality for women. The next year, they noted that their "proposal for economic reforms to correct 'capitalism without rules' is closely connected with the task of overcoming the 'low birthrates'" ("Draft Resolution of the 22nd Congress of the Japanese Communist Party," 2000). At the same time, women who choose to have children outside the so-called ideal one man, one woman, 2.5 children family structure are ostracized. Single mothers are being denied all economic assistance from the state; children born outside of marriage are bullied in the schools. And the state is denying children born from surrogate mothers entry into the family's *koseki* which means that they do not legally exist.

As members of the proletariat, working women, at the side of their class brothers,

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Ishihara Shintaro. A couple of years ago, he stated that women who have reached the age of menopause no longer have any right to live because they no longer serve any socially productive function.

The family is a key social unit for the maintenance of capitalism. For the capitalists, the family provides the basis for passing on accumulated wealth. And where there is no property to pass on, the institutionalized family serves to raise the next generation of workers, care for the sick and aged, and instill conservative social values and obedience to authority. The working-class family is expected to provide for all the social services that capitalists don't want to pay for. It is therefore in the material interest of the working class to play the historically progressive role of socializing family functions after the revolution.

Each nuclear family exists in isolation from the rest of society, and thus weakens the class consciousness of the workers. Social institutions and conventions—like marriage and the family—are part of the way the ruling class maintains power and regiments society. "Family values" based on religion constitute a conservatizing ideology to regiment the population and prop up bourgeois law and order, which is aimed at justifying and reinforcing the family.

Since at least 1996, there has been a movement to pressure the Diet [Japanese parliament] to pass legislation allowing a married couple to have separate surnames. The continuation of this law has resulted in many couples not marrying at all. Last month, Liberal Democratic Party [LDP] members basically killed a bill to change this law. Their objections are a clear indication of the importance the ruling class places on the maintenance of the

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# Criminalization of Dissent



Left: Cops arrest protester in Times Square, August 29. Right: Detained protesters are held at Pier 57, which has no windows or ventilation and is full of asbestos. Jacob Richards and Connie Murillo

## Drop All Charges Against RNC Protesters!

Inside the Republican National Convention (RNC) George W. Bush proclaimed with fanatical madness to his fundamentalist Christian base that his war in Iraq is a mission from god almighty to fight tyranny and bring freedom to the world. Meanwhile the streets of New York City were turned into a living hell of "code orange" police-state tactics against the hundreds of thousands who poured out to protest the RNC or who just tried to go about their business in New York. There were three times as many arrests during the RNC in New York as there were at the infamous cop riot against protesters at the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago.

A police force with a budget larger than the standing army of all but 19 countries in the world swooped down on just about anything that moved. Helicopters chopped the air above while cops with automatic weapons stalked the subways below. Undercover cops infiltrated leftist planning meetings and violently attacked protests. The city even rented

the Fuji blimp and equipped it with surveillance cameras to identify those who dared to exercise their democratic rights to free speech and assembly.

New York mayor Michael Bloomberg and the media tried to whip up fear and loathing of the protesters, particularly the anarchists, who were disavowed by Democratic Party liberals. Bloomberg, who denied half a million protesters the right to free speech and assembly, claimed that the anarchists were denying the RNC delegates' free speech! He went so far as to tar the anarchists with the brush of terrorism, ranting: "That's exactly what the terrorists did, if you think about it, on 9/11. Now this is not the same kind of terrorism but there's no question that these anarchists are afraid to let people speak out" (*New York Times*, 3 September).

Mayor Bloomberg and the NYPD were right about one thing: it was a week of violent criminal activity—we're talking about the Bush gang inside Madison Square Garden and the awesome machinery of state repression unleashed to "pro-

tect" them. The NYPD snared entire blocks of people in orange plastic webs and disappeared them for days in a no man's land of detention. Demonstrators were crammed into wire cages in the toxic and filthy Pier 57 on the Hudson River. Parents couldn't find their kids, kids couldn't find their parents, groups couldn't find their comrades. Some were held incommunicado for over 60 hours as the NYPD tried to wipe out all but the tame August 29 protest march until the RNC crowned Bush and left town.

On September 2, State Supreme Court judge John Cataldo demanded the city release all protesters still held in custody or face a \$1,000 fine for each person still locked up at 6:00 p.m. The judge slapped the city with a contempt of court ruling, which will be argued in a September 27 hearing. Over 1,800 were arrested, and people face charges ranging from the absurd and trivial to life-robbing felony frame-ups.

The case of Jamal Holiday is among the most serious, and also emblematic of the systematic police violence, repression and surveillance against RNC protesters. Jamal Holiday, a young black man, spent his 20th birthday in jail where he remains held on \$50,000 bail and is looking at a future stolen by a cop frame-up. He was with the Poor People's March on August 30 when a plainclothes cop drove an unmarked motor scooter into the crowd of demonstrators hitting at least one woman. The protesters reacted to defend themselves against this apparently crazed individual assaulting them with a motor scooter. In standard racial profiling, Jamal Holiday was picked up the next day by police who claimed surveillance cameras showed him to be wearing the same clothing (a baseball cap and T-shirt!) as an individual filmed kicking the undercover provocateur. Chat on Indymedia's Web site, overwhelmingly positive, also includes scandalous disavowals of Jamal's defense. We say: *Free Jamal Holiday! Drop the charges now!*

### For Class-Struggle Defense— Not Kowtowing to the Democrats!

The half-million strong August 29 march was built as a mobilization for the Democratic Party by United for Peace and Justice (UFPJ). Notably, the Democratic Party brass and local chieftains like Al Sharpton and Charles Schumer, who staunchly defended the right of the racist killers of the Ku Klux Klan to rally in New York in October 1999, did little to

fight for the right of anti-RNC protesters to march and rally. That's because the Democratic Party is foursquare behind the "war on terror" and is running Kerry for the White House as a better bet than Bush to front for the U.S. occupation slaughterhouse in Iraq and related attacks on labor, blacks, immigrants and civil liberties at home.

In political opposition to the pro-Democratic Party politics of the August 29 march, and against the craven role of cop auxiliaries played by UFPJ marshals who ordered the crowd to disperse without rallying, the Spartacist League intervened with a counterposed program, calling to break from the Democratic Party of war and racism and forge a workers party to fight for socialist revolution. We joined others in breaking the ban on rallies in Central Park, raising a banner there as well.

The Partisan Defense Committee prepared an *amicus* brief against the ban on protest in Central Park, but was unable to file it because the plaintiff, United for Peace and Justice, did not appeal the court's ruling. The PDC brief stated: "The context and underlying pretext for the City's blatant denial of Plaintiff's free speech rights under the First Amendment and Article I of the New York Constitution is the so-called 'war on terror' declared following the criminal attack on the World Trade Center three years ago. A package of repressive legislation and executive orders, centered on the *USA-Patriot Act*, has granted the government unprecedented powers to obliterate the rights of anyone it chooses by invoking 'security' concerns and labeling opponents as 'terrorists.'... Through its intimidation tactics, the City is trying to frighten people from protesting against not only the City's own attempts to strip away civil rights but also the escalating attacks on democratic rights via the *USA-Patriot Act*, which was passed with bipartisan support. That the ultimate targets of the 'war against terrorism' are perceived political opponents of government policy and the labor movement is ever more apparent."

Even something as basic as defending rights that are supposedly protected by the Constitution requires an understanding that the capitalist state and its partner parties, the Democrats as well as the Republicans, are the class enemy of workers and the oppressed. Continuing to kowtow to the Democrats even as hundreds languished in jail, UFPJ called a

*continued on page 8*

### Spartacus Youth Club Events

#### NEW YORK

##### Class Series

Tuesday, Sept. 21, 7 p.m.

**From Protest to Power—Students and Working-Class Struggle**

Also: Report on graduate student strike at Columbia by campus worker who lost job for supporting strike

Columbia University  
325 Pupin Hall

Information and readings: (212) 267-1025  
or e-mail: nysl@compuserve.com

#### CHICAGO

##### Meet the Marxists

Wednesday, Sept. 29, 6 p.m.

University of Chicago  
Cobb Hall, Room 107  
5811 S. Ellis Ave.

For more information: (312) 563-0441  
or e-mail: spartacist@iname.com

**Visit the  
ICL Web Site:  
www.icl-fi.org**

#### BAY AREA

##### Video Showing

Wednesday, Sept. 22, 4 p.m.

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

City College San Francisco  
Cloud Hall, Room C349

For more information: (510) 839-0851  
or e-mail: sfsyc@sfsu.edu

#### TORONTO

##### Class Series

Wednesday, Sept. 29, 6:30 p.m.

**U.S. Troops Out of Iraq!  
Canadian Troops Out of Afghanistan!  
For Socialist Revolution to  
End Imperialist War!**

York University Student Centre  
room to be announced

Information and readings: (416) 593-4138  
or e-mail: spartcan@on.aibn.com

#### VANCOUVER

##### Class Series

Wednesday, Sept. 22

**Free Tuition and Open Admissions!  
Students Ally with Labour!**

Time and place to be announced  
Information and readings: (604) 687-0353  
or e-mail: TLLT@look.ca

# SYC Protests Racist Ideologue Malkin at UC Berkeley

On Wednesday, September 8, the Spartacus Youth Club joined about 150 students and others in a protest initiated by the Berkeley Stop the War Coalition (BSTWC) against racist ideologue Michelle Malkin, who was speaking in Dwinelle Hall at the University of California at Berkeley. Malkin was invited by the Berkeley College Republicans (BCR) and the *California Patriot* to promote her book, *In Defense of Internment: The Case for "Racial Profiling" in World War II and the War on Terror*.

Malkin grotesquely justifies the racist internment of over 110,000 Japanese Americans. Today the "war on terror" is an ever-present, all-encompassing pretext for bipartisan attacks on immigrants, blacks and labor. Malkin wants to deepen the government witchhunt against Arab Americans and Muslims.

We set up a picket line, chanting, "Racist round-ups—we say no! The whole damn system's got to go!" The International Socialist Organization, the leadership of the BSTWC and water boys of the campaign of capitalist



Michael Smith/Daily Californian



Andy/CalStuff Extended

LBL and SL signs at anti-Malkin protest at Berkeley. Right: Protesters outside room where Malkin was speaking.

politician Ralph Nader, struggled to keep the demonstration comfortably liberal. They tried to drown out our speech and chants that speak to working-class struggle and the need to overthrow the capitalist system with liberal chants like "Malkin—Shame! BCR—Shame!" Eventually protesters moved inside the

building and began chanting loudly outside the closed doors of the room where Malkin was speaking.

Marxists understand that it is necessary to protest racist ideologues like Malkin in order to refute their lies. However, our aim is not just to expose reactionary ideas, but to change reality.

The only way to uproot the imperialist system that breeds racism is to build a multiracial workers party that fights to end all oppression through socialist revolution, raising the call for full citizenship rights for all immigrants and leaving racists like Malkin quaking in their boots.

## Bill Cosby...

(continued from page 12)

called Spit. And I can spit in a bottle and sell it." Cosby is a true believer in the "magic of the market." But it is within this capitalist market that "you've got a problem," not the 'hood.

The new popularization of the "N" word is encouraged and promoted by America's racist rulers by all means at their disposal, above all the capitalist market. The main revenues of the "gangsta rap" industry, shameless promoters of the "N" word, are generated in the white suburbs. The ideological campaign to "reclaim" the "N" word as a "term of endearment" is promoted by black intellectual apologists safely nestled in the universities.

The "N" word bluntly defines the race-color caste oppression of American blacks—oppressed as a people regardless of class. The Cosby family has direct experience with the "N" word as the cutting edge of racist reaction. In 1998, on the day after the conviction of the racist thug who murdered her son, Ennis, Camille Cosby, Bill's wife, wrote a courageous *USA Today* commentary titled, "America Taught My Son's Killer to Hate Blacks" (8 July 1998). She wrote, "All African-Americans, regardless of their educational and economic accomplishments, have been and are at risk in America simply because of their skin colors. Sadly, my family, and I experienced that to be one of America's racial truths." She described how her son, Ennis Cosby, heir to a fortune, was murdered in a "middle-to upper-middle-income, predominately white community" by a white racist thug who boasted, "I shot a n-----. It's all over the news." A howl of right-wing protest answered Camille Cosby's simple statement of "America's racial truths," repeatedly reminding the Cosbys of the class position awarded them.

Racist ideologue David Horowitz led the mob, penning a widely circulated hit piece titled "Mrs. Cosby's Racial Paranoia." With great venom he wrote, "What can be said about a mother who exploits the tragic death of her own son to deliver a racist diatribe against a nation that has showered her with privilege, making her family wealthy and famous beyond the wildest dreams of almost anyone alive...?" Though Julian Bond, then president of the NAACP, rose to her defense, he was the rare exception among black leaders. But Camille Cosby stood her ground against the mob of white racist

media hit men. In a reply (posted on afrikan.net), she mentioned a "letter to the editor" she had written that the *New York Times* refused to print. She made this revealing point: the *Times* coverage of the killer's trial excluded the inflammatory epithet, n-----. Cosby wrote of the *Times* "sanitizing the word 'n-----' with 'black man' in paraphrase." Camille Cosby rendered a service to black America and the working class with these revelations. The same cannot be said of her husband.

*Village Voice* writer Ta-Nehisi Coates noted that the philanthropist Bill Cosby has played for some time "one ugly role that his activist friends like to ignore—patron saint of black elitists" (*Village Voice*, 26 May-1 June). Who are his

activist friends? The NAACP Image Awards, black America's biggest awards show, is as obsessed as Cosby is with "keeping up appearances." Coates correctly observed, "The civil rights crowd has had a rough 30 years as the old tactics of marching and boycotting have come up lame. Its leaders, like Cosby himself, are in winter, and having beaten Bull Connerism, they now stand befuddled and silenced before their greatest new adversary—class." She goes on to note, "They ignore the ghetto or, when emboldened like Cosby, shit on it." For regular readers of *Workers Vanguard*, Coates only confirms what we have long said of the Democratic Party black front men and misleaders. But the class adversary is not new; it is historic. American capitalist class rule and exploitation of wage slavery are based on a foundation of what Marx called the "primitive accumulation of capital," derived from another form of class exploitation—chattel slav-

ery. From the old slavemaster to today's capitalist, the fight for black freedom has confronted the adversary of class.

Class relations reveal themselves in many ways, one of which is how different classes and social strata use the common language of political economy—within the U.S., this is English. At last year's Emmy awards, when he was asked what accounted for his and other early black comics' success, an annoyed Cosby replied, "We spoke English." But Cosby seeks to distance himself from the Black English (Ebonics) dialect of his early comic characters. With a net worth of some \$500 million, Cosby is fond of referring to the oppressed black masses trapped in the ghetto as a "lower eco-

nomie area." "lower economic people," etc. But what intimately connects Cosby with these "lower economic people" is the special race-color caste oppression of American blacks—the anti-black racism targeting all blacks as a people regardless of class. This oppression is based on skin color and finds many social expressions, above all in language, the Black English dialect. It is this dialect that Cosby hates so intensely.

The demagogue Cosby cannot shed his skin, but he can denigrate a dialect that he shares with all classes of American blacks. John McWhorter, Cosby defender and author of *Losing the Race: Self-Sabotage in Black America*, candidly revealed this truth: "Bill Cosby speaks more ebonics than he knows..., and people don't want to hear it. It's not their favorite flavor" (*Oakland Tribune*, 8 August). The Black English dialect is the most reviled dialect of American English, yet linguistic studies reveal that this same dialect has by far the greatest impact of all American dialects on standard speech. Standard American English is peppered with words and phrases, such as "cool," "dude" and so on, derived from the Black English dialect.

This influence is historic as well. Charles Dickens and travelers in the pre-Civil War slaveholding South noted that the slaves had a significant effect on the speech of their white masters. One such traveler wrote: "It must be confessed, to the shame of the White population of the South, that they perpetuate many of these pronunciations in common with their Negro dependents" (Robert McCrum, *The Story of English* [Viking Penguin, 1986]). This is all evidence of the race-color caste oppression of American blacks. American blacks are the most American of Americans, shaping culture past and present. But with blacks forcibly segregated on the bottom of American society, their contributions and influences are met with loathsome rejection and denial.

The "soft target" for anti-black racism today is the "Hip-Hop culture" of black ghetto youth and its reflection in Black English. During a May 26 interview with NPR reporter Tavis Smiley, Cosby remarked, "It's a new language in the area, and it's only good for the people you come in contact [sic] living in that area. It's no good on Wall Street." Smiley pointed out that Cosby's comic characters, Fat Albert and Mush Mouth, "weren't speaking perfect English." But this irony was lost on Cosby, who responded, "Hey, man, I'm a millionaire." Remarking on Cosby's state of mind, black comic Dave Chappelle said, "no one is as uncomfortable as a black man with money." Indeed Cosby seems obsessed with his image of a black millionaire. Coates of the *Village Voice* speculated that "whenever he walked into a cocktail party and a stuffed shirt made a joke about Ebonics, his self-image crumpled from the hit."

In this spirit in 1997 Cosby wrote an anti-black satirical opinion piece, "Elements of Igno-Ebonics Style," in the *Wall Street Journal* (10 January 1997), the major mouthpiece of U.S. financial capital. Cosby's ostensible target was the Oakland, California School Board, which had passed a controversial resolution to teach black youth standard English using Ebonics. It was a ploy to squeeze more funding for the financially starved school district. As we stated at the time ("Desperation, Segregation and the 'Ebonics' Controversy," *WV* No. 660, 24 January 1997): "There *should* be programs that

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Restorer/Oakland Tribune

Poor and working-class children condemned to overcrowded inner-city schools. For quality, integrated education for all!

For regular readers of *Workers Vanguard*, Coates only confirms what we have long said of the Democratic Party black front men and misleaders. But the class adversary is not new; it is historic. American capitalist class rule and exploitation of wage slavery are based on a foundation of what Marx called the "primitive accumulation of capital," derived from another form of class exploitation—chattel slav-

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# Bill Cosby...

(continued from page 7)

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."

Bill Cosby's article was simply his contribution to the storm of racist reaction, the flood of derisive imitations of "black speech" parroting every vile racist stereotype. This vicious response showed why Black English as spoken by the current generation of ghetto youth is the language of despair and defiance of a society they know doesn't give a damn about them.

In the May 26 NPR interview, Smiley remarked that some have called Cosby's remarks "rooted in generational warfare." Cosby responds, "Might be generational warfare if they want war." Bill Cosby, "America's father," hates black ghetto youth and the language they speak—this is his message to his Wall Street friends. To someone like Cosby, nothing stands in the way of black youth moving forward except themselves; Cosby's demeaning and disparaging attacks on Ebonics reflect his contempt for the ghetto poor.

Cosby's threat of war is not idle; he has many influential defenders and friends. Russell Simmons, organizer of the pro-Democratic Party "Hip-Hop Team Vote," got a call from Nation of Islam minister Louis Farrakhan. Farrakhan's message was that in the work of lining up black youth as Democratic voting cattle, Cosby should be treated "like a father." The black left personified in Cornel West and Michael Eric Dyson genuflect to "Dr.

Cosby" before and after each tepid criticism. In interviews with Smiley, West announced that Cosby was "acknowledging the humanity of black people," while Dyson said, "if anybody has earned his ability to say what he has to say, it's Mr. Cosby." Former president Bill Clinton—who threw thousands of poor off the welfare rolls into homelessness and under whose administration unprecedented numbers of black youth were jailed—proclaimed, "Cosby did a service to black America and to all Americans." In a commentary, "Bill Cosby and the Flap That Wasn't," CBSNews.com's editorial director reported that he managed to find three black columnists who wrote "rather mild rebuffs of Cosby," but that after Cosby called one up, he "wrote a second column further qualifying his already qualified gibes."

Why is Bill Cosby so untouchable? He is a black American icon that has served well the ideological needs of America's racist rulers. Disappearing the seething black ghetto masses, *The Cosby Show's* Huxtable family lived a model upper-middle-class existence few American blacks—or working-class whites—have ever known. They were palatable across race lines, addressing all the standard sitcom topics. The show avoided controversy, including race. In an earlier show with Tavis Smiley, Cosby described one high point of controversy. One Huxtable child had a sign on his bedroom door: "Abolish Apartheid." Some network people objected to the sign. Cosby, the much-touted anti-apartheid activist, stood his ground, "it was not even a second thought. It wasn't even a clenched fist.... It was just very, very simple: If you take the sign down, there's no show." Cosby noted also, "that was at the peak of the apartheid going down quickly, and Man-



Two generations of misleaders: Jesse Jackson Sr. with Barack Obama.

dela being released from jail." The black African working class, with blood and sacrifice, smashed apartheid, and, with the deed just about done, the tepid liberal Cosby feels safe to defend a sign. But what made the Huxtable home was not the bedroom sign, but the "warm and fuzzy" house where, according to a Roper poll, one-third of America would most like to live.

Cosby is also an important Democratic Party supporter, backing the candidacies of several black Democratic pols, including Maxine Waters and Jesse Jackson Jr. At a 1999 fund-raiser for Al Gore's presidential race Cosby held up for the amusement of his well-heeled audience the autographed size 22 shoe of Los Angeles Lakers all-star Shaquille O'Neal. There were no nasty remarks about weird

names and expensive basketball shoes now. This shoe and name helped raise \$250,000 for Al Gore's coffers. This election year, Al Sharpton and black Congressional caucus members met with Cosby on September 8 in a show of support for Cosby's diatribes (*San Francisco Chronicle*, 9 September).

*San Francisco Bay View* writer Khalil Tian Shahyd was close to the mark when she complained that Cosby's assertions are taken as fact: "This is part of the media selection of our voices, of those who represent and interpret our reality—which is why Al Sharpton feels he can run for president, why Jesse Jackson dares to come outside anymore. Because they are chosen by those outside our communities to speak for us" (*San Francisco Bay View*, 14 July). They are chosen by America's capitalist rulers. They are beholden to the Democratic Party and big money men such as Bill Cosby.

But what was visited first on the black population is now becoming an increasing reality for all workers in America. This fact underscores the depth of treachery of the labor movement's official misleaders, whose allegiance to the Democratic Party goes hand in hand with their acceptance of the racist status quo. 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. This is the perspective of revolutionary integrationism. In order to change the systematic denigration and degradation of black youth 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. This is the urgent task of a much-needed, multiracial revolutionary workers party. ■

# Protesters...

(continued from page 6)

rally outside Pier 57, politely asking only that the police speed up the processing of those arrested and improve jail conditions! To call on the capitalist state to hurry up already with the arrest process of people who are guilty of no crime is obscene! In so doing, UFPI played dangerously into the hands of the capitalist state, its cops and its courts, which seek to criminalize dissent. The Spartacist League and Partisan Defense Committee raised placards at the protest outside Pier 57 to demand the immediate release of all RNC protesters. **Drop all the charges!**

## Callous Disregard for Workers' Lives

A few courageous and creative activists from ACT UP and Code Pink grabbed the limelight by taking their protest message right inside the convention and/or by flashing the holy delegates with naked

bodies painted with slogans against Bush outside Madison Square Garden. *Workers Vanguard* spoke with Barnard College student Mary Bruch, who was arrested and charged with felony assault (since reduced to a misdemeanor) and felony incitement to riot for participating in a protest during the RNC's pitch to youth. She said the Republicans are so hard up for the youth vote that it was easy to slip in. No questions were asked if you were dressed in a twin-set and pumps or blue blazer. When Bruch and others stood and stripped off their Republican drag to reveal red T-shirts reading, "Bush lies. Stop AIDS. Drop the debt now," the Secret Service and Republican delegates responded with violence. Protesters were knocked to the ground and kicked repeatedly. One Young Republican was captured on ABC News kicking a young woman who had already been thrown to the ground.

Hauled off to Pier 57 and locked in a 10-foot by 8-1/2-foot cage with ten others (some protesters were packed 30 to a cage), Bruch was questioned at least four times by the Secret Service and the NYPD, yet was never once read her rights. Bruch described the conditions as "degrading" and said one police officer told her, "You have no rights, you're in jail." Bruch told *Workers Vanguard*, "I know that's not true, but they threw out the rules and rewrote the Constitution to suit the Republicans." Bruch wondered whether the violations of supposedly constitutionally protected rights were because of the USA-Patriot Act and whether protesters were deemed "enemy combatants."

*Workers Vanguard* tracked down the story on the hazardous conditions inside Pier 57, an old bus barn turned into an RNC bust barn. WV spoke with Jay Bermudez, the last shop steward for Transport Workers Union Local 100 at Pier 57. Bermudez said the place is "full of asbestos," it's "all over the depot, all over the ceiling" and was "never abated." The pier has no windows and no ventilation. When transit workers complained about the unsafe conditions, the Transit Authority bosses stalled with the line that the loca-

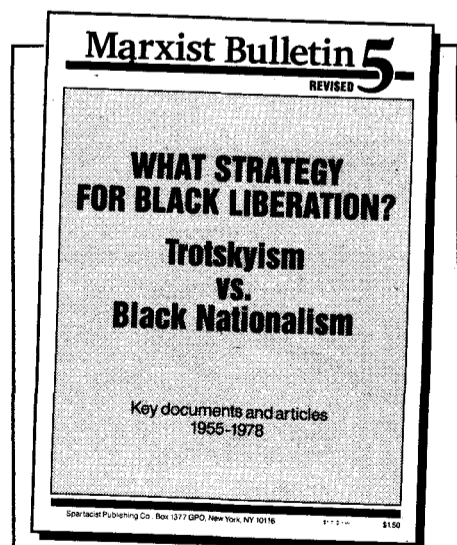
tion was "only temporary." Finally, after a fire broke out in 1994, asbestos was exposed and the TA was forced to begin abating it—while 500 workers toiled beneath! According to Bermudez, the asbestos abatement program was never completed. In addition, Bermudez says that there is **no fire suppression system** (pipes burst last year because the pier was unheated), **no fire alarm**, and lead paint chips are all over the place.

The hundreds of protesters packed into cages on Pier 57 could have perished in a terrible fire and many are likely to have health problems as a result of exposure to hazardous substances. But this is **normal** "business as usual" for the capitalists and their state—transit workers labored in these conditions from 1972 to 2003. The lives of workers mean nothing at all to the bosses except for the surplus value which can be extracted from their labor. Lest anyone think that the Democrats are "friends of labor," it was mainly under

Democratic Party city administrations that transit workers labored in these unsafe conditions.

The Spartacist League and Spartacus Youth Club seek to win protesters who took risks and came out to demonstrate during the RNC—and everyone fed up with the Iraq war and the rollback of black rights, women's rights, immigrant rights, union-busting, etc.—to the understanding that the Democrats represent the same ruling class as the Republicans. Nothing fundamental will change by alternating one party of capitalist rule with another. What's necessary is to build a completely different kind of party, a class-struggle workers party that fights for a thoroughgoing socialist revolution!

**Donations for the legal defense of the arrested RNC protesters can be sent to: New York City Chapter of the National Lawyers Guild, 143 Madison Ave, 4th floor, New York, NY 10016. Earmark checks "RNC Mass Defense Fund." ■**



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# Japan...

(continued from page 5)

have the social power necessary to fight for their emancipation. The overthrow of the capitalist order through workers revolution will open the way for the elimination of all oppression and exploitation. It is only the abundance of a worldwide planned economy that will enable us to replace the oppressive institution of the family with socialized domestic service, freeing women to fully participate in social and political life.

## Marxism vs. Reformism

Because we understand that women will never be liberated or equal under capitalism, does that mean that we do nothing between now and the time of a socialist revolution? Does that mean that Marxists do not support or fight for reforms that would make the situation just a little bit better?

Marxists recognize that struggles for bourgeois-democratic rights are of great importance to the proletariat. We recognize the struggle for reforms, which are measures that improve the conditions of the working people without destroying the power of the capitalist ruling class. For example, we are in favor of and fight for legislation that would allow couples to choose whatever name they want after marriage. We support the right of people to decide how to divide their goods after their death. We oppose all legislation that discriminates against children born outside of a marriage. We fight against all discrimination against homosexuals. We defend the right of people to change their sex if they so want. We defend the right of gay people to marry.

None of these measures challenge the very base of the capitalist economic system. And all are possible under capitalism. But as long as capitalism continues to exist, reforms cannot be enduring or far-reaching. Workers fight for better conditions and use reforms to intensify the fight against wage slavery. Marxists utilize reforms to develop and broaden the class struggle.

At the same time, we wage a most resolute fight against reformism which directly or indirectly restricts the aims and activities of the working class to only the winning of reforms. Reformism is bourgeois deception of the workers, who, despite individual and temporary improvements, will always remain wage slaves as long as there is the domination of capital. It is in the nature of capitalism to raise the rate of exploitation in order to maximize profits. The oppression of women, unemployment, racism and wars are integral to the workings of the capitalist economic system.

## Oppose Capitalist Counterrevolution and "Market Reforms"!

The struggle for women's rights has assumed particular political importance since the capitalist counterrevolution in the Soviet Union and East Europe. The

early Soviet Republic attempted under Lenin and Trotsky's leadership to free women from domestic bondage through communalizing childcare and daily household tasks. Laws against homosexuality and abortion were struck down, and divorce made simple. But the abolition of the repressive family institution only begins with a socialist revolution. The family cannot be abolished by decree but must be replaced. Under conditions of scarcity in post-revolutionary Soviet Russia, devastated by civil war and imperialist invasions, the material resources were lacking. With the ascension to power of the Stalinist bureaucratic caste, the early gains for women were abolished and the family was hailed as a "fighting unit for socialism" to reinforce obedience to the authoritarian bureaucracy. Seven decades of bureaucratic degeneration of the Soviet state culminated in capitalist counterrevolution. The return of the imperialist "freemarket" has unleashed an aggressive attack against the rights won by women and the workers movement through the proletarian conquest of state power.

In Asia, the ravages of "market socialism" can be most graphically seen in China. Before the 1949 Chinese Revolution, just as in Japan, the systematic oppression of women was integral to the Confucian code of conduct, which mandated loyalty to father, husband and the emperor. Most women in China didn't even have a name. It was their fate to be sold into marriage. Young girls suffered the agony of having their feet broken and bound. Permanently maimed, the mass of women were cut off from any role in social production and locked into the home to act as household slaves and sexual toys for their husbands. The overthrow of capitalist rule laid the basis for hundreds of millions of women to achieve enormous advances. Stalinist rule, with its bureaucratic deformations, poverty and social backwardness in the Chinese deformed workers state, is incapable of achieving the liberation of women, even the gains that women have won are now under increasing attack as female infanticide and kidnapping for prostitution and forced marriages are on the rise. In the words of Marx, all the old crap is returning. Just as we fought against capitalist restoration in the Soviet Union and East Europe, we fight against the imperialist incursions in the remaining deformed workers states—China, North Korea, Vietnam and Cuba. The Stalinist bureaucracies have gravely weakened the system of nationalized property internally while conciliating imperialism at the international level. These bureaucrats must be swept away by a proletarian political revolution, replacing the bureaucracy's political rule with workers democracy.

## Socialist Revolution Is Only Solution to Crisis of Capitalism

In addition, growing rivalries between the imperialist countries and the capitalists' drive to increase profits through intensified exploitation have fueled a reactionary social climate in which basic rights



VAAP  
Petrograd, March 1917: Women at demonstration in support of workers soviets (councils) raise banner demanding eight-hour workday. Demonstrations by women workers were first spark of 1917 Russian Revolution.

are increasingly targeted for restriction or elimination. The attempts to rewrite Japanese imperialism's racist, brutal war in the Pacific, to label the *ianfu* ["comfort women" enslaved by the Japanese military during World War II] as prostitutes, and the enforcement of the *hinomaru* and *kimigayo* [the national flag and anthem] are part of the bourgeoisie's attempts to ideologically prepare the working class for the next imperialist slaughter.

As the recession deepens and unemployment soars, women workers are the first fired and the last hired. The workplace is where the fight for women's liberation intersects the proletariat's fight for emancipation from wage slavery. Defending the right of women to work is not an abstract task for the future, but an integral part of the fight for socialist revolution. Central to the defense of women and minority workers is the abolition of the arbiter work system (part-time contract workers) and the organization of common industrial unions that will fight for equal pay and equal access to technical training and job upgrading. We call for a shorter workweek with no loss in pay and for free, 24-hour childcare.

Among the results of a union misleadership that won't fight for women's rights are weak unions that don't defend any of their members and an uncontested misogynist climate in society as a whole. The current reformist leadership accepts the bourgeoisie's outlook that working women are only a temporary aberration and should be treated differently from men, i.e., with lower pay, few benefits and no union protection. What is necessary is to oust the sellout leadership of all three union federations and organize the entire working class—Japanese, minority and immigrant, men and women—in a common struggle.

The working class must also fight against the growing social climate, brought about by the economic recession, that reinforces traditional family values. We say: Down with the retrogressive attempts

to get women to have more children. We call for free abortion on demand and for full access to free and safe contraceptives. We demand billions of yen for medical research to fight AIDS and demand the end to discriminatory treatment of HIV-positive and AIDS patients.

There is enormous resentment against the rigid feudal-derived hierarchy weighing upon present-day Japanese society. Recent surveys have found that more than half the women in their 20s are not married, and have no plans to do so. Young women are refusing to use women's language and instead have adopted words formerly used only by men. This is the solution that some have opted for in their struggle to achieve equality in an arrogant, male-chauvinist society. These individual acts of rebellion, while refreshing, at bottom do not challenge the fundamental root of women's oppression.

Real human dignity and equality can only come about through the collective ownership of the means of production—the steel mills, railroads, auto plants. Then the allocation of resources will be according to human need and not according to profits made in *Otemachi* [financial center of Tokyo]. There is no way that capitalism can be reformed sufficiently to accommodate women's liberation. Since the institution of the family is an integral part of the capitalist system, the struggle for women's liberation cannot be achieved under capitalism.

Those who would build a multiethnic Leninist-Trotskyist party must see the emancipation of women as central to a proletarian, socialist revolution. Our call for a workers republic combines the tasks of emancipating the working class from wage slavery and the necessity of sweeping away all the social rot left over from feudalism, such as the abolition of the emperor system. This is the kind of party we are fighting to build, part of an international communist movement inspired by the liberating program of revolutionary Bolshevism. ■

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# Elections...

(continued from page 1)

The capitalist class owns the means of production; in turn, the working class, in order to survive, is forced to sell its labor power to the capitalists, and through its labor generates the surplus value that the capitalists reap as profit. The working class is the only objectively revolutionary class in capitalist society; it has its hands directly on the means of production—the factories, mines, transportation systems of modern industrial capitalism—and the social power and interest to overthrow capitalism.

The fundamental problem, though, is political consciousness. It is commonplace for American workers to identify themselves as “middle class.” This bourgeois ideology, or false consciousness, is transmitted to the working class by the conservative pro-capitalist AFL-CIO officialdom. It is reinforced by ostensible socialists who give open or backhanded support to the Democratic Party and capitalist politicians like Ralph Nader as “lesser evils” or “realistic” choices.

Whatever rhetoric they put forward, every capitalist politician—whether they be Democrat, Republican or Green—serves and pursues the interests of the capitalists and their system of exploitation. Fundamentally, the government under capitalism is nothing but the executive committee of the bourgeoisie, serving to manage the affairs of the capitalist rulers. To defend its rule, the bourgeoisie has its own capitalist state—its cops, courts, prisons, military—that uses both force and deception to maintain the rule of capital.

Democracy under capitalism is nothing but democracy for the capitalist rulers. It is the means by which the bourgeoisie disguises its rule with the appearance of a popular mandate, and maintains its deception of those who oppose its systematic violence. As Bolshevik leader V.I. Lenin captured it in his 1917 work, *The State and Revolution*, “To decide once every few years which member of the ruling class is to repress and crush the people through parliament—this is the real essence of bourgeois parliamentarism.”

Because the bourgeoisie not only controls the media, schools and political life of the country, but also the “special bodies of armed men,” as Lenin called the apparatus of the capitalist state, capitalism can never be voted out of office. The capitalist state—an institution of violence against working people and the oppressed—can never be made to serve the interests of working people and the oppressed. It has to be smashed through a workers revolution that puts in place of the capitalist state a new and different kind of state: a workers state based on a planned and collectivized economy in which production serves to satisfy human need rather than capitalist profit. The establishment of proletarian rule—in the U.S. and internationally—will lay the material basis for the rational expansion of production and the elimination of scarcity, allowing for an unprecedented development of human freedom in all spheres.

The struggle for socialist liberation requires above all the building of a workers party to educate the working class about its historic role as the gravedigger of capitalism and to lead it to power—a revolutionary workers party whose primary arena is not the ballot box, but the shop floor, the picket line and the street.

## For a Revolutionary Workers Party!

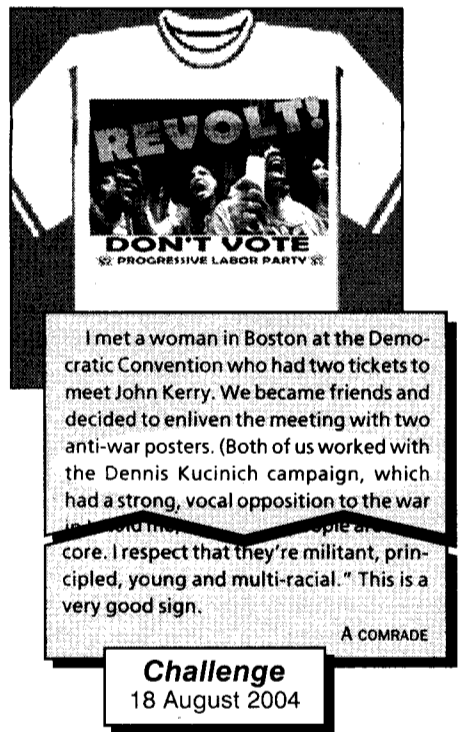
It would be false to say that there is no difference between the Democrats and Republicans. But the difference is one of style rather than content. The Republicans seem to revel in seeing and inflicting suffering on working people and the oppressed; in turn, the Democrats put on a more kindly face, posture as “friends” of labor and blacks, all the better to deceive the working people in order to give a more popular and democratic facade to pursuing essentially the same

policies as the Republicans.

In that context, the role of “progressive” Democrats like Al Sharpton, Jesse Jackson, Cynthia McKinney and others is to head off and contain any potential social struggle, keeping it safely within the confines of the capitalist system. This was clearly displayed during the antiwar movement, for example. While most Democrats in Congress voted for the war, just about every major demonstration organized by fake-Marxist outfits and their coalitions—like Workers World Party and its International ANSWER coalition—was tailored to provide a platform for “progressive” Democrats. These Democrats (and the “socialists” who promoted them) did everything to bill the Iraq war as simply “Bush’s war” and to advocate “regime change” at home (i.e., voting Democrat) to the millions who came out to protest the war.

But the horrors inflicted upon the Iraqi masses through war and occupation—like U.S. helicopter gunships firing missiles on Iraqis gathered around an attacked American armored vehicle on September 12, a deliberate act of mass murder and collective punishment against civilians—are not simply the products of a deranged American government. They are an expression of the very workings of capitalist imperialism, the competition for resources and “spheres of influence” between the major imperialist powers, and, consequently, the raping and bleeding of semicolonial countries like Iraq.

Meanwhile, the role played by “third party” candidates like Ralph Nader is to legitimize the American capitalist electoral system in the eyes of the many disillusioned youth and others, and, as Nader himself has repeatedly made clear, to steer the Democrats in a more “progressive” direction. Ralph Nader is a bourgeois politician who neither calls nor pretends to call for ending capitalism, only



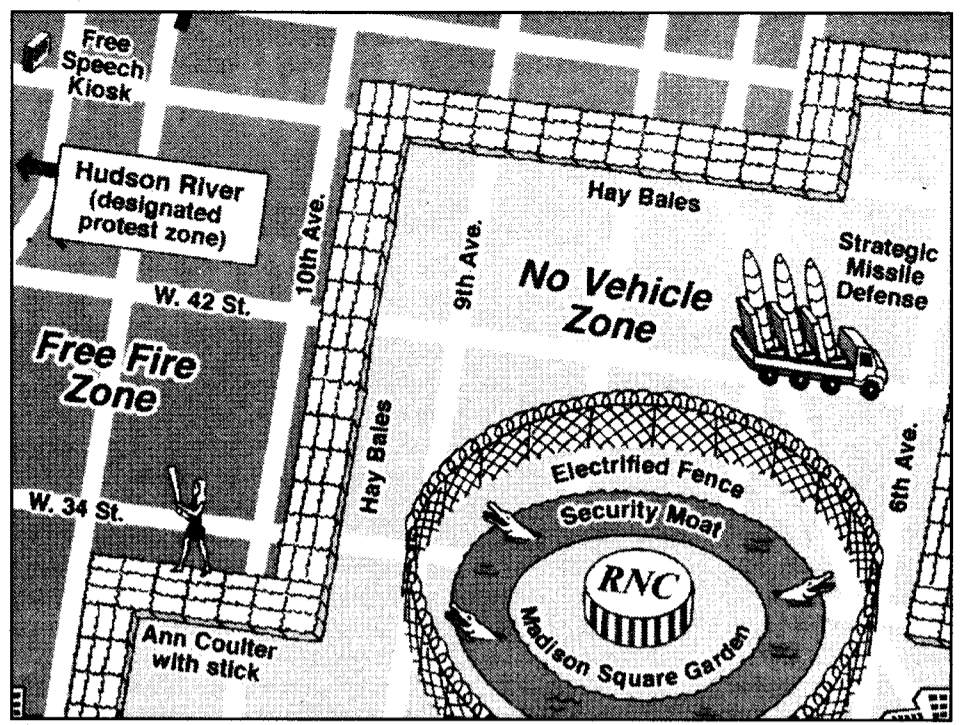
**PL T-shirt says: “Revolt! Don’t Vote,” while letter from “A Comrade” to Challenge brags about working in Democrat Kucinich’s campaign.**

for giving breaks to “little capitalists” against “big capitalists.”

In principle, Marxists will not give any political support to any capitalist party or politician because that would mean joining the bourgeoisie in deceiving the workers and further tying the workers to their class enemy. At the same time, Marxists are not indifferent or opposed to participating in elections. In opposition to comrades in the then-revolutionary Socialist Workers Party who wanted to support the 1948 presidential campaign of Henry Wallace (a capitalist politician dripping with populist rhetoric), Cannon outlined a Marxist approach to bourgeois elections in the same 1948 speech quoted earlier:

“We proceed from a principled line. The basic aim of our principled line is to assist the development of independent political action by the workers and turn it towards a revolutionary culmination.”

“There is the reformist conception that a labor party, by its very nature, must nec-



Cartoon from advertisement for *Daily Show*.

essarily be a reformist party, and that reformism is a necessary and inevitable stage of the development of a working class political movement. Against this is the Marxist conception that a reformist stage of working class politics is not necessary and not preferable; we do not advocate that the workers pass through a stage of reformism on the road to revolutionary Marxist politics.”

Here in the U.S., there has never been a mass workers party. The American ruling class has been highly effective in exploiting deep divisions within the proletariat, first along religious and ethnic lines and later along racial lines. Segregated at the bottom of society yet integrated into the economy, constituting a key component of the working class, black workers are a doubly-oppressed race-color caste. Black oppression is the bedrock of American capitalism. If it is to fight for its own emancipation, the multiracial proletariat must take up the struggle for black freedom. Black rights and labor rights will either go forward together or fall back separately. The working class will transcend its division only through class and social struggle. Socialism in the U.S. will be achieved only by the common struggle of the multiracial working class under the leadership of a revolutionary vanguard party.

Every gain working people have made in this country was wrested through hard struggle. To hold onto and expand these gains means politically combating the current pro-capitalist union leadership, which in a thousand ways impedes class struggle by tying the working masses to the capitalist order, primarily through support to the Democrats. It will be through the struggles of working people that a new class-struggle leadership will be forged in the unions. From the militant strike waged by UFCW grocery workers earlier this year to the potential strike by hotel workers on the West Coast and Washington, D.C., there is a palpable sense among workers and the oppressed that they have to fight to defend their livelihoods and better their conditions of life. The question is one of educating the working class that it must not only fight against expressions of its exploitation, but to overthrow the very capitalist system that breeds its exploitation.

For us, the call to break with the Democrats and build a workers party is not just words but the guideline for politically independent class-struggle action. Exemplary actions initiated by the Spartacist League, Labor Black Leagues and Partisan Defense Committee are powerful examples of the kind of fighting workers party we seek to build. We built the 9 February 2002 united-front protest against the Patriot Act and Maritime Security Act in Oakland, California—the first union-centered demonstration in the U.S. against the anti-labor and anti-immigrant “war on terror” after September 11. On 23 October 1999, while Democrat Al Sharpton fought for a permit for the race-hate terrorists of the KKK to rally in Manhattan, we initiated the mass mobilization of several thou-

sand opponents of KKK terror around a proletarian core of support. Actions like these give workers and youth a taste of the potential for victory when one is unshackled from ruling class parties.

## “Anybody But Bush” Reformists

In keeping with the “Anybody but Bush” sentiment so shamelessly pushed by the reformist left during the antiwar demonstrations, most ostensibly socialist organizations have failed to draw even the crudest class line in these elections, and have instead acted as the best builders of “Anybody but Bushism.” For Socialist Alternative and the International Socialist Organization (ISO), this means signing on to the Nader/Camejo campaign—in the case of the ISO, only recently openly after some initial coyness on the question. While Nader makes no secret of the fact that he is not anti-capitalist, his running mate is a “progressive” stockbroker whose political career took him from the reformist Socialist Workers Party (SWP) through several unsavory incarnations until he gave up the ghost to any “socialist” pretensions altogether. Even the ISO, which supported Nader in 2000, admits: “There are reasons for the left [to] be critical of Ralph Nader—his courting of the right-wing Reform Party’s endorsement, for example” (*Socialist Worker Online*, 10 September). Yet in the same article, the ISO writes: “A vote for Nader is the best way to say no to the evil of the Bush agenda, in both its greater and lesser forms—and to contribute to the building of a future political alternative.”

There are times when a revolutionary communist organization can offer critical support in an election—but only to an organization in the workers movement, never to a bourgeois candidate. There are times when Marxists can choose to run their own candidates in elections, as we have in the past, in order to take advantage of the heightened political interest during election time to gain a hearing for our program. But Marxists are opposed in principle to taking an executive office (like president)—i.e., to the administration of the bourgeois state apparatus. We run on a program for socialist revolution as the only solution to the exploitation and racial oppression inherent in capitalist society.

In countries where mass reformist workers parties exist, a small communist organization might, under certain circumstances, call for a vote to such a party in order to show workers with illusions in that party that once in power, it would defend the interests of the capitalists and not the workers. Lenin described the tactic of critical support as offering “support...in the same way as a rope supports a hanged man.” In the U.S., where there is no such party, we have sometimes advocated critical support to a candidate in the workers movement whose electoral program in some key way represents a break with capitalist rule. In the current election, none of the left groups running their own candidates

merit even savagely critical support.

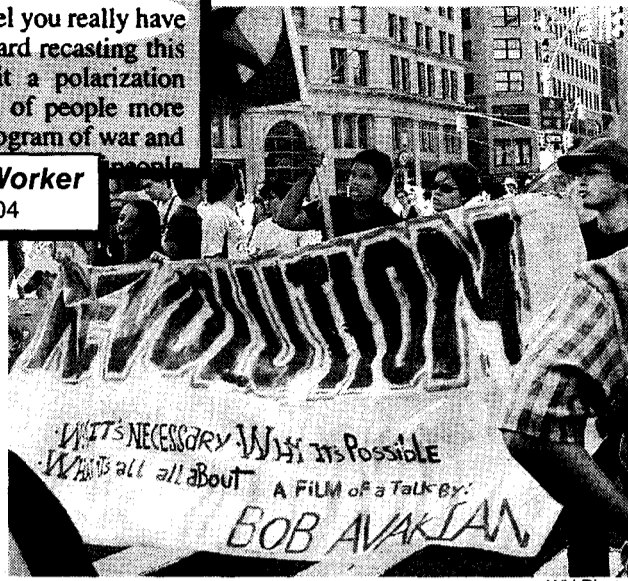
The Workers World Party (WWP) is fielding John Parker and Teresa Gutierrez, who are running on a vague program to further "mass action and class struggle." WWP states: "These two working-class candidates will be running against the pro-war, pro-intervention, pro-big business politics of George W. Bush and John Kerry" (*Workers World*, 3 June). But this lip service to some opposition to both capitalist parties was belied by WWP's work through their ANSWER coalition in the antiwar movement where they actively courted Democratic politicians. Most recently, WWP urged a vote to "progressive" Georgia Democrat Cynthia McKinney. A July 22 editorial in *Workers World* gushes: "Workers World Party's presidential and vice-presidential candidates, John Parker and Teresa Gutierrez, send Cynthia McKinney heartiest well-wishes for victory!" So much for WWP's "independent" campaign, a campaign virtually disappeared by WWP itself at the RNC protests, the better to blend in with the "Anybody but Bush" crowd.

We are not calling for a vote to the SWP either, whose quirky reformist program along with its nominal existence do not make it a particularly appetizing prospect. During the California recall elections last year, we did apply the tactic of critical support to the SWP's gubernatorial candidate because, as we explained: "The SWP's election platform, which presents, in however crude a way, a working-class line, allows us to make concrete and clear-cut our opposition to Davis while at the same time expressing our opposition to the Republicans'

We can't let it go down like that. Go ahead and vote for Kerry if you feel you really have to, but put your efforts toward recasting this polarization. Let's make it a polarization between a growing section of people more determined to STOP this program of war and

**Revolutionary Worker**  
29 August 2004

**Banner at August 29 march against RNC advertises new film of RCP "Chairman Avakian," *Revolution*, while *Revolutionary Worker* says go ahead and vote Kerry.**



WV Photo

attempted electoral coup" ("California: Vote Yes to Recall Davis! No Vote to Capitalist Parties!" WV No. 810; 26 September 2003). There is no such merit to advancing such a tactic in this presidential election.

We Spartacists are not alone in refusing to call for a vote to any of the candidates in the elections; both the RCP and Progressive Labor Party (PL) have the same position in the pages of their respective newspapers. However their radical-sounding rhetoric masks reformist and opportunist practice. Thus, the RCP talks a lot about revolution and its youth group, the RCYB, waved red flags during the RNC protests while adulating the RCP's supreme leader, Bob Avakian. RCYBers chanted: "The earth is quakin'/Follow Bob Avakian/The empire's shakin'/Fol-

low Bob Avakian." However, following "Chairman" Avakian led, during the antiwar movement, to the RCP's leading role in the class-collaborationist Not In Our Name (NION) coalition, no less eager than its ANSWER counterpart to promote Democratic Party politicians. To make it crystal clear, the RCP's *Revolutionary Worker* (29 August) advises: "Go ahead and vote for Kerry if you feel you really have to, but put your efforts toward recasting this polarization." Logic was never these Maoists' strong suit, but it should be clear this blessing to a vote to the Democrats is class betrayal.

During the RNC protests, PL was one of the few left groups that had a clearly anti-capitalist contingent with chants that drew a crude class line. PLers are sporting a T-shirt this year with the slogan:

"Revolt! Don't Vote." PL also openly proclaims its desire to fight for communism and can look pretty militant in comparison with the rest of the reformist left. However, PL's posture is in flat contradiction to the work they do, on the ground for capitalist candidates. The August 18 issue of *Challenge*, for example, carried a letter by "A comrade," which states that she "worked with the Dennis Kucinich campaign, which had a strong, vocal opposition to the war in Iraq." In the same issue, PL printed without comment a letter by a "Chicago Reader" criticizing Barack Obama, the black Illinois Democratic Party politician who made a big splash at the Democratic National Convention. The letter, however, goes on: "During the Senate primary race I volunteered at his South Side office." Why? "Chicago Reader" goes on to say that they'll explain later "how communists working in his campaign must deal with the contradiction of 'being in it to win it,' (one has to be among the masses to win them to PL's politics) while exposing the ruthless core of liberal fascism as the great danger to the working class." So, PL tells workers not to vote for "liberal fascists" while uncritically publishing the views of those who work in such campaigns!

A socialist program has to begin by telling the truth about this class society, the necessity for revolution. To end imperialist war, racist oppression and capitalist exploitation, there is no other way than to build a revolutionary workers party. No vote to capitalist politicians! For a class-struggle workers party to fight for a workers government! For international socialist revolution to open a new period of human freedom! ■

## Hotel Workers...

(continued from page 12)

and began distributing forms for workers to quit the union. They also stopped collecting union dues, which only underscores that the unions themselves should be collecting dues rather than leaving it up to the company.

The union leadership criminally kept the 2,900 union members working. In a real provocation, the Hotel Council announced in late June that they would start charging workers \$10 a week for health insurance unless the union dropped demands for a two-year contract. Union members displayed real determination to fight, overwhelmingly rejecting the bosses' contract proposal. But in a real sign of weakness, the class-collaborationist UNITE HERE leadership did nothing but hold impotent rallies in front of these hotels. While these rallies were lively and spirited, they were meant to deflect the anger seething in the union ranks away from the only real way to fight the bosses' intransigence: by withholding their labor in strike action. We stand by what was once a widely recognized tradition in the labor movement: "No contract, no work!"

### Wildcat Walkout Erupts

The outrage of union members got out of the grip of the union leadership and exploded on August 12 when workers from the Century Plaza and St. Regis hotels in Century City had had enough of management's arrogance. At the beginning of their shift, workers demanded to know why they were getting notices warning of the expiration of their health insurance. Dissatisfied with the bosses' response, some sat down, refusing to move until they got an answer. When the bosses ordered them to clock out, they walked out, and by 10 a.m., more than 100 workers in uniform, mostly women, were marching in front of the glitzy Century Plaza Hotel. Shaken up by this action, the Hotel Council moved to lock out the union, and only called off the lockout when Local 11's president, Maria Elena Durazo, disavowed the walkout, saying it was not sanctioned and promising no further job actions inside or in front of hotels.

While the union's demands include

affordable health care, which has been on the agenda of many of the recent struggles in the labor movement, the major issue in this fight is the union's demand for a two-year contract. An important lesson of the recent grocery workers strike in Southern California was the need to extend the strike nationally in order to succeed against the supermarket bosses. While hotel workers are not a powerful industrial or transportation workforce that can bring a city to a halt, they are placed in a crucial industry, tourism, and can, with the help of other unionized workers, have a powerful effect on a city's economy.

In addition, hotel union members must understand that the fight should not just be limited to having national expiration dates. Hotel workers should fight for a common contract nationwide. This will take hard class struggle against the machinations of the current pro-Democratic Party union leadership.

Another important aspect of the contract dispute is the ethnic make-up of the workforce. Union members have expressed concerns over the significant drop in the number of blacks employed in this industry in the last 25 years. Among the proposals put forward by the union leadership in response to these concerns is a "joint committee to enhance diversity of the workforce." What they mean by a "joint committee" is collaboration between the union and the bosses. But it's the bosses themselves who foster and encourage racial divisions in order to divide and conquer the working class. Tensions between blacks and Latinos have been particularly encouraged by the L.A. bourgeoisie ever since the city erupted in a multiracial upheaval in 1992 following the acquittal of the cops who beat black motorist Rodney King. It is crucial for the union to cut across racial divisions by taking up an active struggle for jobs for all. To undercut the poisonous racism pushed by the bosses, the union must fight for a union hiring hall. Labor rights, immigrant rights and black rights go forward together or they fall back separately.

Local 11 leadership's contract proposal for "fair procedures for Social Security no-match letters" from the state accepts the bourgeoisie's intrusion into the daily lives of immigrant workers. Such let-

ters—sent to employers by the Social Security Administration when a Social Security number does not match the government's records—are routinely used to harass immigrant union militants. Rather than demanding "fair procedures," the unions should be demanding that companies that receive "no-match" letters take no action against workers. In fact, the Social Security Administration does not require that employers take any action once they receive "no-match" letters.

The national leadership of UNITE HERE is trying to tie the workers to the bosses by endorsing the Kerry campaign. Not surprisingly, Local 11 president Durazo was the national director of last year's Immigrant Workers Freedom Ride which was organized as little more than an election platform for Democrats courting Latino votes. We wrote in *Workers Vanguard* (No. 811, 10 October 2003) when it passed through Chicago:

"The bureaucrats are not even calling for a campaign to organize immigrant workers in unions. Instead the purpose of the Freedom Ride, with buses organized nationally from California, Houston, Miami, Boston and other cities, is explicitly to pressure Congress for legislative reform, with the vague goal of promoting an open-ended 'road to citizenship' for all immigrant workers. The Freedom Ride rallies have been more like election rallies, with American flags passed out and Democratic Party speakers like Congressman Luis Gutierrez and black Illinois Secretary of State Jesse White."

Meanwhile, a key promise of John Kerry's campaign is that he will more effectively wage a "war on terror," which means an increased war against black people, immigrants and labor, and maintain the rapacious occupation of Iraq.

Workers should recall that when L.A. transit workers went on strike last year, their struggle was sold out by the likes of Miguel Contreras, head of the L.A. County Federation of Labor, working in collaboration with Democratic Party city councilman Antonio Villaraigosa and other bourgeois politicians. It is through such political support for the capitalists' parties that labor misleaders like Contreras and his wife Durazo disarm the workers movement. The government is the executive committee of the capitalist class, responsible for running its affairs. The labor tops' support for the capitalists' political parties also means support for the

state that ensures capitalist class rule through force and violence against those they exploit. The capitalist state can never be reformed to serve the interests of working people and the oppressed. It must be swept away through a socialist revolution that establishes a new state, a workers state.

To go forward, the working class must mobilize its social power independent of the capitalists and their state. The labor movement must fight to *organize the unorganized* and for *full citizenship rights for all immigrants!* While in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks the hotel industry was hit hard as tourism dropped dramatically, the union is in a better position than it has been in years. This has been the first year hotel attendance has risen to former levels, and major functions are expected at these hotels through the holidays, when the industry peaks yearly. Hotel workers must go out on strike, build solid picket lines that nobody crosses and forge a common front of struggle in all cities involved. UNITE HERE workers must fight for the solidarity of other unions and workers in action, from the overwhelmingly immigrant port truckers to the courageous SEIU "Justice for Janitors" union activists.

Battles for labor are won on the picket line, not at negotiating tables or the now-time-worn diversion of masses celebrated with Cardinal Mahony. Many of the immigrant workers in the hotel industry have experience in militant class struggle and are open to internationalist ideas. A victorious strike by this workforce would go a long way toward putting a dent in the massive anti-immigrant sweeps that are part of the ruling class's "war on terror." It would break the streak of defeats labor has endured, and point the way forward to a labor offensive against this country's arrogant ruling class. Hotel workers can and must win.

What labor needs is a new class-struggle union leadership. What we need is a revolutionary workers party independent of the parties of the bosses, a party that fights for a workers government. To this task we of the Spartacist League are committed. Remember, "*¡sí se puede!*" only with picket lines that nobody crosses. *Victory to the hotel workers! Strike to win!* ■

# WORKERS VANGUARD

**For a Solid Strike! For a National Contract!**

## Hotel Workers Confront Bosses' Union Busting

LOS ANGELES, September 14—Once again Los Angeles is poised to be a main arena of class struggle in the country with a looming battle between capital and labor. On September 13, hotel workers of the recently merged UNITE HERE (formerly the Union of Needletrades, Textiles and Industrial Employees and Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees International Union) Local 11 of Los Angeles and Local 25 of Washington, D.C. voted overwhelmingly to authorize a strike in defense of health care and a two-year contract. As we got to press, San Francisco's Local 2 is also taking a strike authorization vote. As of tomorrow all three locals will be working without contracts. A two-year contract for these locals will enable the union to line up expiration dates in ten major cities in 2006, involving more than 60,000 workers and giving the union greater weight in dealing with national hotel chains. UNITE HERE's contract in Washington, D.C. expires on September 15, directly posing the extension of any strike that breaks out in L.A.

On July 1, Los Angeles union members overwhelmingly voted down the insulting contract offer from the bosses' Los Angeles Hotel Employers Council by 92 percent. These hotels include major national chains such as Hyatt and Westin, which dominate the hotel industry. Having learned their lessons from the UFCW supermarket workers strike of last fall, nine of these hotels have entered into an agreement paralleling that of the bosses of the grocery chains: if one hotel of these



Ferazzi/L.A. Times

**Making a point about being overworked, hotel worker makes bed during a demonstration in downtown L.A. last month.**

nine is struck, the rest will lock out the union. The bosses' strong-arm unity must be met with the strong, united determination of the labor movement. *a solid hotel workers strike shutting down the hotels with mass pickets that no one crosses!*

Similar to SEIU and other service industry unions in the L.A. area, Local 11 is a heavily Latino and immigrant union. In the racist society that is capitalist America, immigrants, many escaping

countries ravaged by U.S. imperialism, are constantly terrorized by threats of deportation, which have increased with the racist "war on terror." This has been particularly true in the last few months as massive anti-immigrant sweeps have been carried out by Border Patrol throughout Southern California (see "La Migra, LAPD Terrorize Latinos, Blacks," WV No. 829, 9 July). The threat of a boss's phone call to *la migra* and the failure of the current pro-capitalist union

leadership to organize and defend immigrant workers have enabled the capitalists to intensify the exploitation of this vulnerable work force and drive wages down for all. The fact that these workers are organized into a union irks the hotel bosses in a town where the majority of the hotel workforce is unorganized. Even at unionized hotels, workers make poverty wages. Housekeepers, who represent a large portion of Local 11's membership, suffer under punishing workloads—many of them single mothers living on \$11 an hour. To give an example of what they go through, the September 7 *Los Angeles Times* reports on the luxury Century Plaza hotel in Century City, referring to the experience of one housekeeper:

"The Century Plaza quota is 15 rooms a day. That means an average of 30 minutes per room, plus lunch. By mid morning, the worker was already behind schedule. She consulted a scribbled list of room numbers, then braced herself and set her 300 pound cart rolling down the distinctively curved hallway of the hotel, an architectural landmark."

Other union members such as porters, servers and dishwashers face similar workloads, the lowering of which is a key union contract demand.

The Los Angeles contract expired in mid-April, at which point the union leadership agreed to an extension of the contract that lasted until June 1. At that point, the companies, feeling the wind in their sails following the bitter defeat of the UFCW workers in their five-month struggle, cancelled the contract

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## Bill Cosby Rants Against Ghetto Poor The Crisis of Black Leadership

**By Don Cane**

America's racist rulers like to dress up their rule in terms of general abstract slogans, pretending that they represent the "general will" of the nation. In fact they are a fabulously wealthy minority that lord over a hideously oppressive and unequal society with an unprecedented machinery of deception and repression. Central to this machinery is America's color bar—the stigmatization of skin color, itself a product of black chattel slavery—obscuring pivotal class relations within American capitalist society.

This social reality is so evident it renders unbelievable the widely circulated quote from black Democrat Barack Obama, Illinois U.S. Senate candidate, in the keynote Democratic National Convention speech: "There's not a Black America and White America and Latino America and Asian America—there's the United States of America." This is the big

lie, that America has largely eliminated racism through civil rights laws leveling the playing field. Pandering to the demagogic truisms provoked by Bill Cosby's recent anti-black diatribes, Obama adds, "Go into any inner-city neighborhood and folks will tell you that government alone can't teach kids to learn. They know that parents have to parent, that children can't achieve unless we raise their expectations and turn off the television sets and eradicate the slander that says a black youth with a book is acting white." With many ghetto schools deprived of funding for teaching materials, including books, there should be no fear that any black youth will be "acting white."

With the deindustrialization of the economy beginning in the mid 1970s, education has become an increasingly expendable overhead for the U.S. capitalist rulers. They invest only as much as they can realize back in profit when it comes to the education of those they exploit. Indeed, even the term "public education" is an oxymoron when there are

two "publics"—those who've got property and those who don't. The built-in inequality of public school funding, based primarily on local property taxes, ensures that per-student spending in the better-off white suburbs will be much—often many times—higher than in the urban ghettos.

Cosby's widely circulated quote, "Your dirty laundry gets out of school at 2:30 every day; it's cursing and calling each other n----r," amounts to blaming the victims for their own oppression. It reflects both the class divisions within the black population and the fact that black oppression transcends class lines. The cruel and bitter truth is that black ghetto youth are not wanted or needed by America's capitalist rulers. By the same token, growing alienation among black youth is the product of hardening race segregation in this country.

The position of the black middle class in this country is a precarious one, even for those like Cosby who have "made it." To be black and "make it"—to try to

become part of "respectable" bourgeois society—requires putting as much distance as possible between yourself and the black ghetto poor. What better way to do that than to blame them for their own oppression? Cosby speaks for the thin layer of wealthy blacks who see the ghetto poor as "bringing the race down."

Cosby, like many others, rightly opposes the casual use of the "N" word among blacks. On National Public Radio's 7 July *Talk of the Nation* show he complained of the unhappy sounds of black kids: "Now you can tell me it's the sound of the 'hood if you want to, but then when you put profanity with it, and degrading self-hatred sentences, you've got a problem." But in response to another guest who denounced Black Entertainment Television making "billions" by "contributing to the degradation of our culture," Cosby clearly defended capitalist enterprise in its entirety, responding, "You can do anything you want to in this United States. I can begin to sell—put a product out

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