

Capitalist Rulers Left Blacks, Poor to Die

NEW ORLEANS: RACIST ATROCITY



AP photos

Heavily armed SWAT teams rolling past New Orleans Convention Center, where desperate hurricane victims waited for days for transportation out of the city.

SEPTEMBER 12—New Orleans, one of the oldest, most cultured, most complex of American cities, remains devastated, its residents dispersed, its dead still uncounted and unburied. Whole communities along the Gulf Coast have simply disappeared. Hurricane Katrina has ripped away the tattered facade of the U.S. government as “of the people, by the people, for the people,” exposing the racism, venality, ruling-class arrogance

and utter ineptitude of the White House gang. A wave of revulsion has swept the country at the government’s response to the disaster, undercutting the post-September 11 “national unity” hysteria that had already taken a beating over the debacle in Iraq. Sections of the ruling class itself are hammering at Bush, not least for damaging the image of the “world’s only superpower” internationally.

Now they are even trying to forbid

news media from showing the dead, who are still shamefully left to lie in the open while troops patrol the streets. When the troops were needed to evacuate people from New Orleans, they weren’t sent. Now, they’ve been mobilized above all to assert control over the city, to disarm the remaining population and to enforce the government’s suppression of the truth about the number of dead. While the government and media claim that the

number is far lower than initially estimated, it is known that 25,000 body bags have been sent to New Orleans.

They want to hide the evidence of their crimes against the people of New Orleans. But what is starkly exposed is the raw reality of race and class in capitalist America.

It is not just that the victims in New Orleans were primarily black and poor.

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For a Planned Economy Under Workers Rule!

Statement of the Spartacist League/U.S.

The following leaflet was issued by the Spartacist League/U.S. on September 4.

“We’re dying!” This was the desperate cry of those mainly black people trapped by flooding from Hurricane Katrina, which has submerged 80 percent of New Orleans and devastated wide swaths of lower Louisiana and Mississippi. Natural disasters like hurricanes do happen, but the horror taking place on the Gulf Coast is manmade. Having done nothing except watch helpless people suffer, starve and die, the government says now is not the time to point fingers. Now is precisely the time to indict the capitalist criminals running this country. This anarchic, irrational profit-

driven system cannot even provide for the safety and welfare of the population—the system must go.

This disaster has laid bare the class and race divisions in America. The logic of U.S. capitalism is that whites mainly lost property, blacks mainly lost lives. It is overwhelmingly black people, deemed “expendable” by the rulers, who suffered and died by the thousands in this two-thirds black city. Because they did not have cars to get them out of town or credit cards to pay for motel rooms. Because they generally cannot afford to live on the higher ground. This catastrophic destruction of lives and livelihoods underlines that the oppression of black people is rooted in the very bed-

rock of American capitalism and will not be ended short of a socialist revolution that rips power and the means of production from the greedy rulers and places them in the hands of the working people.

This is a case of criminality piled atop criminality. The unspeakable, smirking George W. Bush trimmed his month-long vacation by a couple of days to survey the disaster zone from his presidential jet and asked inanely: Who knew the levees would break? Answer: Everyone. For years, scientists and Army Corps of Engineers officials warned that the levees were sinking and incapable of withstanding a powerful hurricane.

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The Evolution Wars: Religious Reaction and Racist Oppression
Hail Charles Darwin! SEE PAGE FOUR

On Footbinding in China

6 June 2005

Dear Comrades,

In *Workers Vanguard* No. 814, as part of a paragraph highlighting the gains of the 1949 Chinese Revolution, *WV* states: "The revolution enabled women to advance by magnitudes over their previous miserable status, symbolized by the barbaric practice of footbinding." Though not explicitly stated, because the sentence is couched in a paragraph listing other unique gains of the revolution like the creation of a collectivized economy and freedom from imperialist subjugation, it sounds like we are saying that the practice of footbinding had remained intact up until the 1949 Revolution.

However, nobody would say that footbinding, which is said to date from the court of the 10th century, ended with the anti-footbinding societies of the late 1800s, with the edict of the Qing court at the turn of the century, or with Sun Yat-Sen in 1911. Multiple sources put this hideous practice, which effectively restricted women to the kitchen and bedroom, as ending around the 1930s, about one generation after its formal abolition in 1911. John King Fairbank in *The Great Chinese Revolution 1800-1985* (1987) remarks about its prevalence until the 1920s, although he says women were still seen on farms hobbling on bound feet

in the '30s and '40s. William Hinton in *Fanshen* (1968), noting exceptions, says that footbinding "came to an end almost everywhere in the period between the two world wars." Elisabeth Croll in her book *Feminism and Socialism in China* (1980) cites a number of surveys taken in the 1920s and 1930s revealing increased percentages of women without bound feet in various rural areas. Jack Belden in *China Shakes the World* (1949) and Ono Kazuko in *Chinese Women in a Century of Revolution 1850-1950* (1989) both refer to the continued existence of footbinding, at least into the early 1940s in the areas where the Communists were introducing reforms, but these regions are continually referred to as the poorest and most backward in all of China. Modernizing nationalists, missionaries, communists, and even a warlord all seem to have played varying roles in abolishing this practice throughout the first half of the 20th century. Although it is indeed hard to imagine that there were not still vestiges remaining in areas of this large country by the time of the revolution, I think by 1949 significant inroads had already been made into its permanent eradication.

I do think it is important to include mention of footbinding in any discussion of the oppression of Chinese women so that the memory of the severe torture



Museum of American China Trade

and mutilation of most of the female population is not lost. Contrary to misconceptions in the West, the custom was not limited to women of the upper classes. Most Chinese women, including women throughout the countryside, had their feet bound, with only few exceptions such as women of the very poorest families, Hakka women and women of non-Han ethnic minorities like the Man-

chus. Very young girls from age three to seven or eight had their feet tightly wrapped and bent until the arch was broken and the toes permanently bent under to make the three-inch "golden lotus." The feet became of little use to stand and, while wealthier women were said to have servants to carry them around, peasant women who did work in the fields with bound feet were seen working on their knees. A recent article in the *London Guardian* (21 March) entitled "The Ties that Bind," states that by some estimates 10 percent of the little girls died from the shock of the severe pain in the first few days of the feet being bound. Even after several years when the pain eased, the various effects of the crippling caused suffering, continuing throughout a woman's entire life.

Comradely,
Judy C.

On Dresden Firebombing

30 August 2005

Dear *Spartakist* and *WV*:

I greatly appreciated the article "German Nationalism and the Bombing of Dresden" from *Spartakist* No. 158, translated in *WV* No. 852. My father, Jacob Schanzer, survived a death march from the Nazi concentration camp at Buchenwald. He always spoke of the Allied bombing of Dresden as an enormous atrocity, not only because of the massive loss of life, but because of the destruction of one of the important centers of German culture prior to WWII. Despite his experience, my father remained a great admirer of German culture, refusing to believe those who tried to find the roots of Nazism in the works of Beethoven and Goethe.

The article's points on the notion of "collective guilt" being the flip side of Nazi demagoguery casting the Germans as a "victim people" were also very

strong and again reminded me of my parents. As a child, many of my parents' social circle were also Jewish survivors, many of whom understandably were quite anti-German. My parents didn't want me to grow up with that attitude and explained it to me this way when I was quite young: The Nazis believed all Jews were bad. If you say that all Germans are bad, you are using the same method as the Nazis did. My father was an admirer of Kautskyan-style social democracy and my mother was a member of the left-Zionist Hashomer Hatzair. Thus, they had a rudimentary understanding of the class nature of fascism. It is a sad comment on the total degeneracy of today's social democrats that they cannot even manage to expound this simple truth in the face of resurgent German nationalism.

Comradely,
Jeffrey Schanzer



TROTSKY

Charles Darwin and Scientific Socialism

The reactionary ideological climate of the post-Soviet world has been expressed in the U.S. in the sharp rise of Christian fundamentalism. From the Bush White House to the Kansas State Board of Education, there is now a concerted attack on Charles Darwin's theory that the evolution of species, including human beings, is a result of natural selection. The founders of scientific socialism, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, recognized Darwin's great contribution to

a materialist understanding of man's place in nature. They further recognized that the progressive development of human society required the replacement of the irrational capitalist market economy with a planned, socialist economy.

In the most advanced industrial countries we have subdued the forces of nature and pressed them into the service of mankind; we have thereby infinitely multiplied production, so that a child now produces more than a hundred adults previously. And what is the consequence? Increasing overwork and increasing misery of the masses, and every ten years a great crash. Darwin did not know what a bitter satire he wrote on mankind, and especially on his countrymen, when he showed that free competition, the struggle for existence, which the economists celebrate as the highest historical achievement, is the normal state of the *animal kingdom*. Only conscious organisation of social production, in which production and distribution are carried on in a planned way, can elevate mankind above the rest of the animal world socially in the same way that production in general has done this for men specifically. Historical development makes such an organisation daily more indispensable, but also with every day more possible. From it will date a new epoch of history, in which mankind itself, and with mankind all branches of its activity, and especially natural science, will experience an advance before which everything preceding it will pale into insignificance.

—Friedrich Engels, Introduction to *Dialectics of Nature* (1875-76)



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16 September 2005

Feds: Hands Off ILA!

On July 6, the Bush administration's Department of Justice launched a full-scale attack on the 60,000-member International Longshoremen's Association (ILA), which represents dock workers on the Atlantic and Gulf Coasts from Halifax and Montreal to New Orleans and Galveston, Texas. The Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) lawsuit seeks to put the ILA and its health, welfare and pension benefits funds under the control of court-appointed officers and to remove ILA President John Bowers and four other leading ILA officials from the union. The suit also names the entire ILA Executive Council as "defendants" and puts the union's elections under government control.

The ILA has a history of bitter strikes—five between 1959 and 1971—which the government hit with strikebreaking Taft-Hartley injunctions. Now the Feds seek to place the ILA directly under the thumb of the capitalist state—to gut the very purpose of the union, which is to defend the interests of its members against the capitalists. The government has targeted the ILA because—along with the West Coast International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) and the Teamsters, which was taken over by the Feds through a RICO suit in 1989—the ILA has the power to throttle shipping and commerce nationally. The government press release (6 July) announcing the lawsuit made this clear, stating: "The ILA plays a critical role in the movement of manufactured, agricultural, and other goods throughout the Eastern seaboard, and it has a major impact on the nation's commercial activities." For the same reason, the Feds went after the ILWU during its contract battle with the shipping bosses in 2002, as the Bush administration was moving military cargo through the ports in preparation for its invasion of Iraq. The attack on the ILA is an attack on the labor movement as a whole and must be opposed and repulsed by the whole of labor.

The RICO suit alleges that ILA locals on the New York/New Jersey waterfront and the port of Miami are controlled by the mob. The federal government has engaged in a vendetta against the ILA for over 50 years, always using the mob as an excuse. In 1951, at the height of

the McCarthyite Cold-War witchhunt of reds and other labor and black militants, a waterfront "Crime Commission" was set up in New York to target the ILA. Massive strikes and work stoppages in 1954 defeated the government's attempt to drive the ILA off the waterfront. In earlier years, the government had tried to smash the West Coast ILWU through an anti-Communist witchhunt and deportation proceedings against then-union head

738, 30 June 2000). Leonard Riley, LWC co-chair and a member of ILA Local 1422 (whose president, Ken Riley, is also in the LWC), says in regard to the government action, "If we get an impartial-run membership vote for top officers, we will clean up this union" (*Labor Notes*, August 2005). The LWC has itself dragged the ILA into the bosses' courts, most recently last year on charges that the vote on the master contract had been

guns on Fort Sumter, a Union Army stronghold in Charleston harbor, today the capitalists aim their fire at the ILA because it is a bulwark of black labor power in the South."

ILA locals in the South have played a key role in struggles for black rights. During the 1960s, ILA members courageously defended civil rights activists against Klan terror. In 1983, the ILA in Norfolk, Virginia was at the forefront of a struggle to defend busing for school integration. The segregationists particularly hate this union because it represents integrated labor struggle. When black ILA militants in New Orleans called a three-day protest strike following the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. in 1968, white longshoremen announced they would not work without their black brothers. In 1989, black longshoremen who converged on Wilmington, Delaware to protest an attempt to introduce scab labor in Southern ports were joined by members of the largely white ILA clerks and checkers locals.

Genuine union democracy can be achieved only through hard class struggle. A program based on class independence and class struggle is opposed by all wings of the labor bureaucracy, from hardened business unionists to social-democratic fake progressives. It is necessary to fight for a new, class-struggle leadership of labor committed to the cause of black freedom and political independence from all the capitalist parties and their state.

Whatever corruption exists in the unions pales in comparison to the tens of billions doled out to Bush administration cronies from Enron and Halliburton. And the mob at the White House and Pentagon is responsible for the slaughter of tens of thousands of people in Iraq and the lives of countless black and poor people in New Orleans. The purpose of the capitalist state, whether under Republican or Democratic administration, is to defend the profit system based on the exploitation of the working class, and to this end it seeks to smash and otherwise police the unions, through scabherding, anti-strike laws and injunctions, and jailing, beating and killing union militants. **Government hands off the ILA! Labor must clean its own house!** ■



Baltimore, October 1986: ILA pickets during strike that shut down Atlantic ports.

Harry Bridges in the late 1930s and '40s.

The capitalists' drive to strangle the ILA, ILWU and other unions is facilitated by the policies of the pro-capitalist union misleaders, whose abject class collaboration with the Democratic and Republican parties of capitalism, the employers and their government weakens and undermines the unions. Far from mobilizing the membership in struggle against the anti-union suit, ILA president John Bowers joined with the shippers' United States Maritime Alliance to declare himself "shocked by the irresponsible and totally inaccurate" rumors that the union might actually organize work stoppages to protest the RICO attack (*American Shipper*, 8 July).

An opposition group within the ILA, the Longshore Workers Coalition (LWC), centered on ILA Local 1422 in Charleston, South Carolina, actually welcomed the RICO suit as an opportunity to "clean up" the union. The LWC is supported by the social-democratic *Labor Notes* and braintrustered by the sinister Association for Union Democracy, which specializes in anti-union lawsuits (see "Lawyers for Government Union-Busting," WV No.

rigged. The six-year, no-strike contract is a sweetheart deal, which certainly should be fought. But in making a "coalition" with the capitalist courts, the LWC invites the class enemy into the union and *undermines* the possibility of fighting for a better contract for the membership.

The LWC's actions are particularly vile in light of Local 1422's own long and bloody history of being targeted by the capitalist state. In January 2000, 600 cops in riot gear invaded the Charleston waterfront and launched a brutal attack—with clubs, tear gas and shock grenades—on Local 1422 members, including Ken Riley, who were picketing a scab operation. The Charleston Five, arrested for defending their union, were saved from years in prison through a campaign of international labor solidarity. The attack on this overwhelmingly black local came only days after a Local 1422 contingent had participated in a huge protest against the Confederate flag in the state capital, Columbia. We wrote at the time (WV No. 728, 28 January 2000):

"Just as at the start of the Civil War the Confederate slaveowners turned their

Cuban Five Convictions Overturned

The convictions and sentences of the Cuban Five (also known as the Miami Five)—Cuban citizens convicted in 2001 on bogus charges of espionage and murder conspiracy—were overturned on August 9 by a federal appeals court in Atlanta. The court ruled that the five could not have received a fair trial due to "pervasive community prejudice" in Miami, a city dominated for decades by virulent, counterrevolutionary Cuban exiles (*gusanos*), and ordered a retrial in another location. The court cited provocative statements by federal prosecutors, a press barrage against the defendants and the selection of obviously biased jurors, including the selection of a vehement opponent of Fidel Castro as jury foreman. Numerous prospective jurors said that they feared retribution from the *gusano* milieu if they tried to be impartial.

The Cuban Five—Antonio Guerrero, Ramón Labañino, Gerardo Hernández, Fernando González and René González—committed no crime. They were arrested under the Clinton administration in 1998 for working to prevent terrorist acts against Castro's Cuba, infiltrating the murderous counterrevolutionary exile groups in Florida in order to report on their plans as well as those of the U.S. military. Their sentences ranged from 15



Fidel Castro addresses Havana rally for Cuban Five following June 2001 conviction.

Free Them Now!

years to life. In addition to the espionage charges, Gerardo Hernández was also convicted of murder conspiracy after the Cuban air force shot down planes of the terrorist "Brothers to the Rescue" in 1996, resulting in the deaths of four pilots as they violated Cuban air space. The Cuban government has asked that the five

be allowed to return to Cuba immediately. We demand, as we have from the beginning: **Free the Cuban Five now!**

Three of these courageous individuals had earlier joined the Cuban forces in Angola that turned back the U.S.-sponsored invasion by the South African apartheid regime in the 1970s and '80s.

In a message to the American people issued shortly after their conviction in 2001, the Cuban Five proudly asserted that Cuba, which "has heroically survived four decades of aggressions and threats to its national security, of subversive plans, sabotages and destabilization, has every right to defend itself from its enemies who keep using the U.S. territory to plan, organize and finance terrorist actions."

The Cuban Five's actions in defense of the Cuban Revolution against U.S. imperialism are indeed heroic. Cuba has been in the gun sights of U.S. imperialism ever since the Castro regime kicked out the U.S. capitalists, the Mafia and the venal Cuban bourgeoisie and consolidated a workers state in 1960-61, although one that was bureaucratically deformed from its inception. Our defense of the Cuban Five flows from our unconditional military defense of the Cuban workers state against imperialism and domestic counterrevolution. We maintain this defense despite our political opposition as Trotskyists to Castro's nationalist bureaucratic regime. Key to the defense of the Cuban Revolution is the fight to forge a workers party to lead the struggle for socialist revolution in the U.S. belly of the imperialist beast. ■

The Evolution Wars: Religious Reaction and Racist Oppression



Hail Charles Darwin!

If ever there were an argument against "intelligent design," it is George Bush, an ignorant and dimwitted reactionary with state power. Almost 150 years since the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species*, this born-again Christian president has thrown the power of his office behind Christian fundamentalism by arguing that religious fables be given equal time with evolution in science classes in America. But the irrational obscurantism of leading circles of the American ruling class should not be mistaken for an absence of purpose. Now, as at other key moments in the history of this nation founded on black chattel slavery, religion is being promoted to inculcate acquiescence to injustice. The brilliant, self-educated former slave Frederick Douglass nailed the intrinsic relationship between the pious religiosity of Southern slaveowners and the hellish reality of those they lorded over:

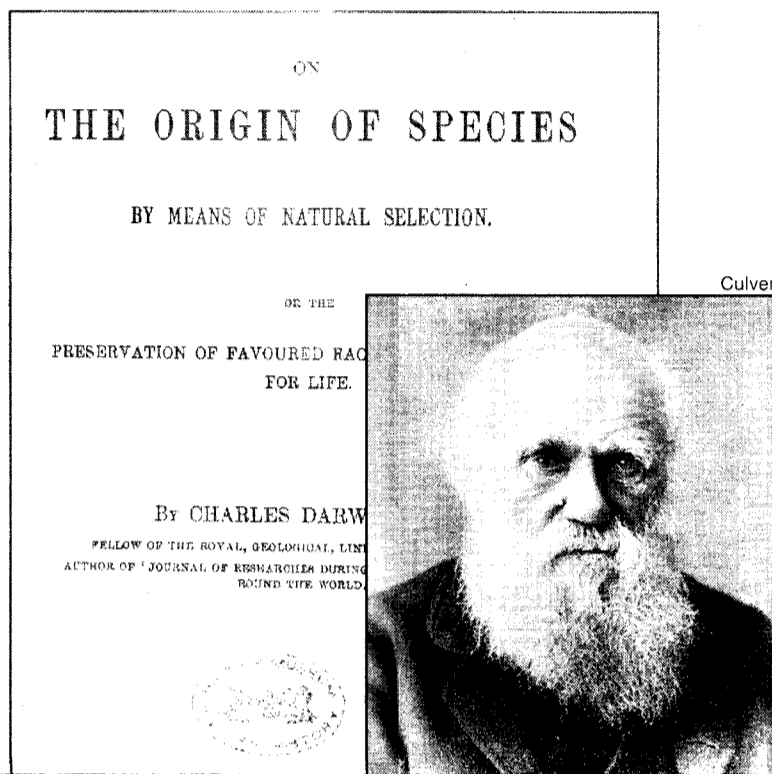
"I assert most unhesitatingly, that the religion of the south is a mere covering for the most horrid crimes,—a justifier of the most appalling barbarity,—a sanctifier of the most hateful frauds,—and a dark shelter under which the darkest, foulest, grossest, and most infernal deeds of slaveholders find the strongest protection. Were I to be again reduced to the chains of slavery, next to that enslavement, I should regard being the slave of a religious master the greatest calamity that could befall me.... I therefore hate the corrupt, slaveholding, women-whipping, cradle-plundering, partial and hypocritical Christianity of this land."

—Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass (1845)

For years, the fundamentalist Christian right has been politically pursuing its reactionary religious agenda. But since the second coming of George W. Bush to the White House, they're stalking the country. Since 2001 there have been challenges to the teaching of evolution in 43 states! Even more widespread but harder to measure is the informal coercion of science teachers to suppress the "E" word. In March, the National Science Teachers Association reported that 31 percent of teachers surveyed responded that they felt "pressured to include creationism, intelligent design, or other non-scientific alternatives to evolution in their science classroom." Some Imax theaters in science museums are refusing to show movies that mention evolution, the Big Bang or the geology of the earth!

A tangled web of billionaire Christian ultrarightists, their foundations and misnamed "think tanks" (like the Seattle-based Discovery Institute) provides the money behind this concerted drive to plunge the country deeper into ignorance and backwardness. The "Wedge Document," an unusually blunt 1999 Discovery Institute manifesto, proclaimed its goal as "nothing less than the overthrow of materialism and its cultural legacies" (*New York Times*, 21 August).

For all the conservative cant coming out of the Supreme Court about the "original intent" of the slaveowning framers of the Constitution, extreme right-wing religious elements seek to shred provisions of that Enlightenment-influenced document, and particularly the Bill of Rights, in favor of an America ruled as a theocracy



Charles Darwin's groundbreaking 1859 *Origin of Species* presented theory of evolution by natural selection.

under Biblical law. The particular version of Christian fundamentalism now associated with the Bush White House developed over the past four decades as an ideological umbrella enabling white racist bigots to link together their hostility to affirmative action and welfare, "women's lib" and legalized abortion, and any tolerance of gay rights. They want a society without public schools, without unions, without separation of church and state, with the death penalty for abortionists and many others, with legal repression and extralegal terror for gays, and with black people and immigrants yoked as subhuman objects of exploitation in a nativist white Christian America.

Bourgeois liberals push reliance on the Supreme Court as the guarantor of the basic democratic rights that the government has in its cross hairs. That strategy offers no more protection than an umbrella with holes in it. The truth is that every gain and every protection that working people and minorities have won in this country have been wrested through class struggle and political battles and outright civil war. Holding on to past gains and gaining a position from which to fight for new conquests require a crystal-clear understanding that the government rules on behalf of the capitalist exploiters, under both Democratic and Republican administrations. Political independence from the Democrats and a class-struggle perspective are key to any successful fight against the current onslaught.

A ruling class that sends more black youth to prison than to college in a society that purports to have equal opportunity bolsters its policies by blaming its victims and finding "scientific" justification for segregation and subordination. Thus the ideological servants of American capitalism revive scientifically discredited myths of biological determinism

and genetic inferiority of racial and ethnic minorities. In defense of an economic system and social order based on black chattel slavery, Supreme Court Chief Justice Taney deemed black people "far below" whites "in the scale of created beings" and so ruled in his infamous 1857 Dred Scott decision that a black man had no rights that a white man was bound to respect.

Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection continues to be explosive in America today because it indicates that all modern humans came from a common African ancestor, and hence there is no scientific basis for separate "races." The truth—that race is not a biological category, but a social and political construct—has profound political implications in the United States. As stated in the *amici curiae* brief filed by the Spartacist League and Partisan Defense Committee in the Supreme Court in 1985 against the teaching of Biblical creationism in Louisiana schools:

"Evolution, the science of man's 'descent with modification' is the particular object of the fundamentalist religious attack. The reasons for this lie in the fact that evolutionary theory deprives man of a mythical 'special' status in nature, and exposes the lack of scientific basis for the various religious and other justifications for belief in racial inferiority. The not so hidden agenda of the proponents of teaching creationism in the schools is to enforce the destructive and dangerous dogma of racial inferiority.

"To the organizations here filing as *amici curiae*, the study of scientific evolution is fundamental to man's quest for a materialist understanding of our world and human society, not the least because it provides material evidence that we are all part of the same human race, definitively destroying the myths of racial superiority."

The Materialist View of History

Regarding the warfare between science and religion over Darwinian evolution, the eminent British scientist and Marxist J.D. Bernal wrote:

"The very persistence of the struggle, despite the successive victories won by materialist science, shows that it is not essentially a philosophic or a scientific one, but a reflection of political struggles in scientific terms. At every stage idealist philosophy has been invoked to pretend that present discontents are illusory and to justify an existing state of affairs. At every stage materialist philosophy has relied on the practical test of reality and on the necessity of change."

—*Science and History* (1954)

Charles Darwin unshackled biological science from the chains of religion by providing a materialist explanation for the evolution of life on this planet through his careful, meticulously recorded studies of variation of species. As we wrote in our tribute to the late Stephen Jay Gould, who, despite having pathetically conciliated religion toward the end of his life, was a great Darwinian educator and propagandist:

"The revolutionary aspect of Darwin's idea was that the whole evolution of the natural world could be explained on a purely materialist basis—natural selection—rather than through any supernatural intervention. The motor force was survival of the fittest: all organisms produce more progeny than can possibly survive within their ecological niche—the most intense competition is *within* a species, whose members all compete for

White mobs besiege black student at Little Rock's Central High, 1957. Attacks on theory of evolution have historically reinforced white-supremacist ideology.



the same lifestyle and food sources. The competition *between* species is important, but on a slightly lower level."

—"Science and the Battle Against Racism and Obscurantism," *WV* No. 797, 14 February 2003

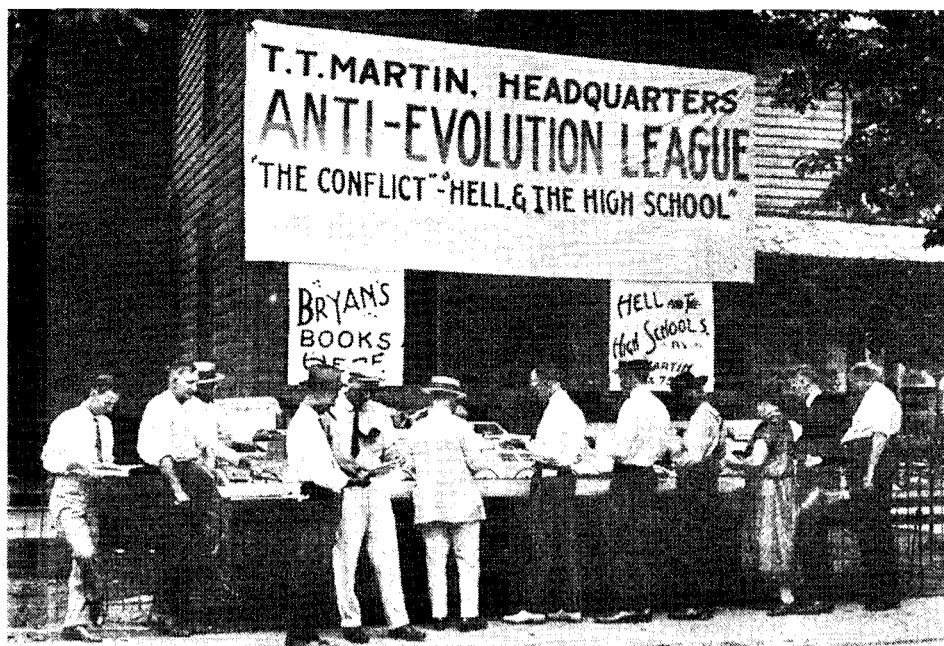
Darwin argued that natural selection, along with other more random processes, drove the evolution of new varieties of life. Darwinian theory is entirely free of moral pronouncements on organisms, whether they diversify and thrive or go extinct. This is contrary to the "social Darwinists" who, unsupported by Darwin himself, exploited the term "survival of the fittest" as "scientific" evidence that the rulers were a higher order of being, in order to justify the status quo of the cruelest exploitation of man by man. Indeed, Darwin was an ardent opponent of slavery, writing in a 5 June 1861 letter to Asa Gray in the very early days of the American Civil War, "Some few, and I am one of them, even wish to God, though at the loss of millions of lives, that the North would proclaim a crusade against slavery. In the long-run, a million horrid deaths would be amply repaid in the cause of humanity.... Great God! How I should like to see the greatest curse on earth—slavery—abolished!"

Evolution is not "progressive," nor does it necessarily lead to superior or more intelligent beings, and it is certainly not predetermined. The mechanics of evolution are a matter of continuing inquiry and argument among scientists. Darwin did not even like the word "evolution" because it implied a climb up a ladder from lower organisms to higher beings (grotesquely depicted in racist "scientific" illustrations of human evolution as a transition from stooped hairy apes to black people to Caucasians). Darwin preferred the term "descent with modification" and was a rigorous and consistent materialist in his interpretation of nature, not viewing a slug as lesser or more imperfect in its function or adaptation to its environment than an ermine-cloaked member of the royal family. As Gould wrote in *Ever Since Darwin* (1977): "Darwin was not a moral dolt; he just didn't care to fob off upon nature all the deep prejudices of Western thought."

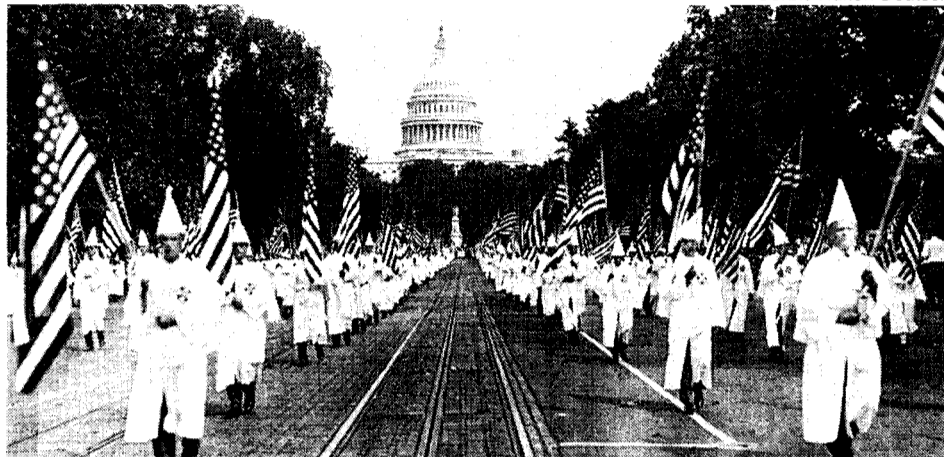
Those deep prejudices were unleashed against Darwin upon the 1859 publication of his *Origin of Species* (which may in part explain why Darwin waited more than 20 years to go into print). *A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom* by Andrew Dickson White, a co-founder of Cornell University who fought in the anti-slavery movement, documents the assault. In Britain, the Vatican founded the "Academia" to combat Darwinian science, while Protestants founded the Victoria Institute for the same purpose. In France, Monseigneur Ségur went into hysterics against Darwin, shrieking, "These infamous doctrines have for their only support the most abject passions. Their father is pride, their mother impurity, their offspring revolutions." Thomas Carlyle, a former Chartist (revolutionary democrat) turned reactionary defender of slavery, was eviscerated by White for his attack on Darwin:

"Soured and embittered, in the same spirit which led him to find more heroism in a marauding Viking or in one of Frederick the Great's generals than in Washington, or Lincoln, or Grant, and which caused him to see in the American civil war only the burning out of a foul chimney, he, with the petulance natural to a dyspeptic eunuch, railed at Darwin as an 'apostle of dirt worship'."

Behind the wrath of the rulers, their high priests and apologists, was worry. Geological evidence of the actual immense antiquity of the planet and fossil evidence of an evolving parade of life forms going back millions of years exposed the Biblical Book of Genesis as a fairy tale. Desperate explanations that God hid fossils within rocks to lure geologists into temptation were a bit far-fetched even for the most blindly faithful. When the geologist and Christian Sir Charles Lyell came over to Darwinism, the church feared that the Darwinian theory, like the findings of Copernicus and Galileo, might prove to be true. Suggestions of a divine design



Corbis Hulton-Deutsch



P&A Photos

Top: Dayton, Tennessee during 1925 trial of John Scopes for teaching evolution. That summer 40,000 Klansmen marched in Washington, D.C.

guiding evolution were advanced to shore up the crumbling foundation of Biblical literalism.

Darwin himself took on this forerunner to the "intelligent design" argument in correspondence with the Harvard botanist Asa Gray, a devout Protestant. Although Gray arranged for the *Origin of Species* to be published in America, he was troubled about the book's theological implications and maintained the Christian belief that each living thing reflected intelligent design by a creator and constituted evidence of the loving character of God. In a typically mild but stunning reply, Darwin wrote back:

"I had no intention to write atheistically, but I own that I cannot see as plainly as others do, and as I should wish to do, evidence of design and beneficence on all sides of us. There seems to me too much misery in the world. I cannot persuade myself that a beneficent and omnipotent God would have designedly created the Ichneumonidae [parasitic wasps] with the express intention of their feeding within the living bodies of Caterpillars, or that a cat should play with mice."

Even conservative columnist George Will wrote, regarding the film *March of the Penguins*, "If an Intelligent Designer designed nature, why did it decide to make breeding so tedious for those penguins?" (*Pocono Record*, 28 August).

Darwin's discovery of the continual motion and interaction between organisms and their environment was embraced enthusiastically by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. According to Gould, Marx offered to dedicate the second volume of *Capital* to Darwin (who declined as he had not read it). In *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific* (1880), Engels wrote:

"Nature works dialectically and not metaphysically.... In this connection Darwin must be named before all others. He dealt the metaphysical conception of Nature the heaviest blow by his proof that all organic beings, plants, animals, and man himself, are the products of a process of evolution going on through millions of years."

Darwin put history into science. Karl Marx put science into history. Marx showed the mechanism by which labor collectively creates wealth that is privately appropriated by the capitalists, out of which they extract profit. Marx unearthed what had been "concealed by an overgrowth of ideology." As Engels remarked in his 1883 "Speech at the Graveside of Karl Marx":

"The production of the immediate mate-

rial means of subsistence and consequently the degree of economic development attained by a given people or during a given epoch form the foundation upon which the state institutions, the legal conceptions, art, and even the ideas on religion, of the people concerned have been evolved, and in the light of which they must, therefore, be explained, instead of *vice versa*, as had hitherto been the case."

Engels drew directly on Darwin's work in his 1876 essay "The Part Played by Labour in the Transition from Ape to Man." Engels observed that with the development of erect posture and bipedal motion, "the hand had become free," allowing man to fashion tools. In turn, the use of tools, speech and social organization enabled man to begin to transform and master his environment. Engels wrote:

"Agriculture was added to hunting and cattle raising; then came spinning, weaving, metalworking, pottery and navigation. Along with trade and industry, art and science finally appeared. Tribes developed into nations and states. Law and politics arose, and with them that fantastic reflection of human things in the human mind—religion."

The division between mental and man-

ual labor became key to a class-stratified society, and "all merit for the swift advance of civilisation was ascribed to the mind." So too, the idea of god became independent of the mind that invented it. *Man created god yet became his subject.*

Marx also recognized the duality of religion: it is both an instrument of oppression and a balm for the oppressed. Historically, the religiosity of black people in America has been a solace from unmitigated racist oppression and a promise of deliverance. As Marx said, "Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the *opium* of the people."

You Can't Fight Republicans with Democrats

While it is a hoot to ridicule the demented rightists who think Sponge-Bob, a cartoon character, is gay (he holds hands with a starfish), or the Washington State Republican Party which outlawed yoga classes (did you know the word "om" is hidden in the word "communism"?), their agenda is serious and sinister. Readers are referred to the Web site www.theocracywatch.org run out of Cornell University for informative and regularly updated exposés of this crowd. Although the information provided there is valuable, the Web site's banal, liberal political conclusion—that people should campaign and vote for Democrats in the midterm elections to reclaim the flag—is a false perspective that will only help keep things in this country running rapidly downhill.

It's not just the Republicans! An infuriating series in the *New York Times*, "A Debate Over Darwin," makes this clear. This august spokesman of liberal Democratic Party opinion splashed hogwash across its front page day after day (see nytimes.com/evolution) and legitimized the neo-creo kooky proponents of religious reaction by oh-so-judiciously presenting their views—as if one could debate human origins and evolution with creationists. Thus the *Times* abets the Discovery Institute's purpose by accepting the logic of Bush's demand to give equal status to science and religious superstition. *Science and religion cannot be reconciled.*

We salute the eminent British scientist Richard Dawkins (dubbed "Darwin's Rottweiler"), whose forthright defense of science against the encroachments of religion have roiled the purveyors of superstition. Dawkins concluded in *The Blind Watchmaker—Why the Evidence of Evolution Reveals a Universe Without Design* (1996):

"Nearly all peoples have developed their own creation myth, and the Genesis story is just the one that happened to have been adopted by one particular tribe of Middle Eastern herders. It has no more special status than the belief of a

continued on page 6

No. 85-1513

IN THE
SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES
OCTOBER TERM, 1985

EDWIN W. EDWARDS, in his official capacity as Governor of Louisiana, WILLIAM W. GUSTE, JR., in his official capacity as Attorney General of Louisiana, LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, and THOMAS G. CLARKSON, in his official capacity as Superintendent of Education of Louisiana, Appellants,

DOE AUCILLARD, LOUISIANA BOARD OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION, ORLEANS PARISH SCHOOL BOARD, et al., Appellees,

ON APPEAL FROM THE UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS FOR THE FIFTH CIRCUIT

BRIEF FOR THE SPARTACIST LEAGUE AND PARTISAN DEFENSE COMMITTEE AS AMICUS CURIAE ON BEHALF OF APPELLEES

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A Spartacist Pamphlet

Enlightenment Rationalism AND THE Origins of Marxism

150 Years of the Communist Manifesto 35
Marxism and Religion 48

1986 legal brief filed by Spartacist League and PDC in defense of science, opposed teaching of "creationism" in Louisiana public schools.

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Evolution...

(continued from page 5)

particular West African tribe that the world was created from the excrement of ants. All these myths have in common that they depend upon the deliberate intentions of some kind of supernatural being."

Every leftist who has ever tried to get so much as a letter printed in the *New York Times* learns the race and class bias of "all the news that's fit to print" in that paper. Turning over page after page of their paper to proponents of "intelligent design" was a political decision in keeping with a decades-long Democratic Party strategy: to conciliate religious reaction in order to present themselves as credible rulers for God, country, family, and the "little guy."

The "culture wars" in America—and evolution is a big one—do indeed reveal differences between the two capitalist parties. After Clinton's 1992 election, a Democratic-controlled Congress passed the "Goals 2000: Educate America Act," which would have required states to adopt federally approved standards for teaching science and history as a prerequisite for receipt of federal funds. Right-wing Republicans, led by neocon Lynne Cheney, went nuts over requirements to teach a little truth about the Ku Klux Klan and McCarthyism. When the Republicans recaptured a Congressional majority in the 1994 midterm elections, they quickly

rail and airline strikes, and by vastly augmenting the arsenal of state repression directed mainly against black people through the passage of his 1996 "Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act." Hillary Clinton's recent pandering to the anti-abortion bigots to secure her own electoral fortunes lies on the same continuum.

Jimmy Carter, Democratic president in the late 1970s, epitomizes the contradiction of the religious element in the ruling class. Underneath that humble Southern Christian peanut farmer *shlick* is a man who was trained as a nuclear engineer and helped design nuclear submarines for the U.S. Navy. Carter brought being "born again" from its public perception as a backwoods affliction to the apex of political power in the White House. This served to morally rearm post-Vietnam U.S. imperialism for launching Cold War II against "godless Communism."

Religion: Social Glue for a Society Riddled with Contradictions

America is a deeply unstable, stable bourgeois democracy. Stripped of its democratic mask, the state is a dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, a class that accumulates vast wealth through the raw exploitation of labor. The working class is divided and prevented from uniting in its own interest mainly through the special oppression of black people as a segregated race-color caste—the last-hired,



Frederick Douglass House
Frederick Douglass, revolutionary abolitionist.

wheel of fortune is heavily influenced by whether one appears to be black or white.

America's other peculiarity among advanced capitalist countries is its deeply religious character. Nowhere else—not even in Italy where the Vatican still heavily influences civil society—is there such refractory religiosity and visceral hostility to the long-established facts of Darwinian natural selection as the motor force of evolution. Why? The absence of even a mass reformist workers party that expresses in even a blurry way that working people have needs and interests counterposed to those of their exploiters is a large part of the explanation for political backwardness in the U.S. But like everything else in this country, it also boils down to the central intersection of *race and class*. Religion in the U.S. supplies an ideology that can seemingly harmonize conflicting class interests while keeping this society with two races firmly ordered: capital above labor and white above black.

Although fundamentalist preachers and churches had been around for a while, it was the impact of World War I, the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution and massive labor strikes that drew them together as a political movement to fight "godless Communism," immigration, booze and the teaching of evolution. In the summer of 1919 the "World's Christian Fundamentals Association" was founded. The country was gripped by fear, cynically manipulated by the government through legal and extra-legal terror. Civil liberties were nullified as people were jailed for expressing anti-war views. Murderous racist pogroms raged, with 26 anti-black rampages across the country between April and October 1919. Immigrants (who were often anarchists and communists) were rounded up and deported. Labor strikes, such as the Seattle general strike of 1919, were denounced as unpatriotic "crimes against society" and "conspiracies against the government," and broken by deployment of federal troops. In 1921, the trial of the Italian anarchists Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti began, and they were executed in 1927.

The ways in which the fundamentalist movement served to bind a reactionary yet deeply contradicted society together were played out in Tennessee when a former Chicago Cubs outfielder turned evangelical preacher, Billy Sunday, arrived for an 18-day crusade in 1925 against the teaching of evolution. Leaping across the stage and screeching that "education today is chained to the devil's throne," Sunday whipped up more than 200,000 people in multiply segregated rallies against "the old bastard theory of evolution." *Summer for the Gods* (1997), Edward J. Larson's Pulitzer Prize-winning book on the Scopes trial, recounts:

"Thousands attended Men's Night, where males could freely show their emotion out of the sight of women. Even more turned out for Ladies' Night. The newspaper reported that '15,000 black and tan and brown and radiant faces glowed with God's glory' on Negro Night. An equal number of 'Kluxers'—some wearing their robes and masks—turned out for the unofficial Klan Night."

That was the immediate backdrop to the most famous battle between evolution

and creationism in U.S. history. In 1925, the Scopes "monkey trial" took place in Dayton, Tennessee. That same year, some 40,000 Klansmen in full regalia marched through the nation's capital. It was a period when anyone who wasn't as conformist and as patriotic as possible was suspect. Substitute "terrorist" for "communist" and it sounds eerily like the social climate today, and once again religious fundamentalism is advancing in lockstep with social reaction.

John Scopes was indicted for violating Tennessee's statute that banned teaching evolution. The high school biology textbook he taught from reeked of the racist Social Darwinist views of the times. Man was presented as the highest life form of evolution, with the Caucasian race being "finally, the highest type of all." A large political contradiction of the times was that many of the promoters of evolution were Social Darwinists who crusaded for bettering the human race by eliminating the "feeble-minded" through eugenics. By 1936, 35 states had laws compelling sexual segregation and sterilization of those deemed "eugenically unfit." In America, that was a loosely applied euphemism for "poor white trash," black people and immigrants.

Southern slaveowners often denounced the cruelty of Northern capitalism while falsely portraying themselves as loving Christian protectors of their Negro property. So, too, the eugenics movement enabled William Jennings Bryan, the blowhard orator, 1896 Democratic Party presidential candidate and prosecutor of John Scopes, to posture as a humanitarian! Bryan said, "The Darwinian theory represents man as reaching his present perfection by the operation of the law of hate—the merciless law by which the strong crowd out and kill off the weak." Dismissing geological evidence that the age of the earth was much older than the Bible said, Bryan blustered, "Men who would not cross the street to save a soul have traveled across the world in search of skeletons."

John Scopes was defended by Clarence Darrow, who used the trial as a platform to defend science and defeat Bryan's religious foolishness and phony goodness. As Darrow once said in a speech to a group of prisoners on the false definition of crime in an unjust society, "It is not the bad people I fear so much as good people. When a person is sure that he is good, he is nearly hopeless; he gets cruel—he believes in punishment."

Fundamentalism became notorious and identified with rural backwardness as a result of the Scopes trial. In response, fundamentalists constructed their own world with their own religious schools, universities and social institutions, beginning in the 1930s. But at every peak of fevered anti-communist and racist reaction, they were brought out of their subculture to center stage. Fundamentalists played a large role in the McCarthyite witchhunt of the 1950s, identifying the United States, Jesus and the Bible as God's gifts to humanity and the Soviet Union as the Antichrist and Devil.

What used to be the kooky fringe of John Birch ilk is now frighteningly mainstream and mobilized. No longer content with ruling their own schools, they want to destroy the public schools, and indeed the entire world. Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson and bigwigs who overlap heavily with the Texas Republican Party and the Bush White House are "Dominionists" or "Christian Reconstructionists." They believe that fundamentalist Christians are mandated by God to occupy all secular institutions in order to destroy society as we know it and usher in "the thousand-year reign of Christ." Then, as Bill Moyers wrote in "Welcome to Doomsday" (*New York Review of Books*, 24 March):

"Once Israel has occupied the rest of its 'biblical lands,' legions of the Antichrist will attack it, triggering a final showdown in the valley of Armageddon. As the Jews who have not been converted are burned the Messiah will return for the Rapture. True believers will be transported to heaven where, seated at the right hand of God, they will watch their



March 2005:
Scene outside
Terry Schiavo's
hospice in
Florida.
Capitalist rulers
have fostered
resurgence of
religious reaction,
anti-science
forces.

acted to allow states to adopt standards without federal oversight.

These are examples of the not unimportant distinctions between the oddly demented Bush gang and the more liberal Democrats. In the absence of a class alternative, it is precisely such distinctions that explain the, in many cases half-hearted, support for Democrats among labor and the oppressed. But the "lesser evil" is still the class enemy of the working people. Democratic president Clinton outflanked the Republicans by signing legislation to "end welfare as we know it," by invoking the union-busting Railway Labor Act 14 times against potential

first-fired bottom rung in a society buttressed by the myth of social mobility for all. Yet black workers still have tremendous potential social power as a leading part of the working class. The material reality of racial oppression itself perpetuates fear of and prejudice against people forced by capitalism to live in filthy, violent ghettos with few social services. The color line is the visible birthmark left by slavery and so fundamental to modern American society that it cuts straight across the multiple fissures of successive waves of immigration. As the census forms say, "Hispanics may be of any race." Sure, and where one lands on the

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TORONTO

political and religious opponents write in the misery of plagues—boils, sores, locusts, and frogs—during the several years of tribulation that follow.
"I'm not making this up."

Communism = America's Last Best Hope

Civilization does not continually advance. Throughout history, human society has also paused, decayed or moved backward. This motion, its tempo and direction are intrinsically linked to the economy and class struggle. Science is not independent of these processes. At the time of the industrial revolution, when the ascendant bourgeoisie challenged and replaced the feudal order, there was not only tremendous progress in the material results of knowledge (e.g., the steam engine), but also leaps in ideas of human freedom (the Enlightenment). But the French Revolution's philosophy of "liberty, equality, fraternity" was limited in application to the new ruling bourgeoisie once it had achieved its own fundamental class interest: the abolition of feudal restrictions on private moneymaking through exploitation of the working people. Marx surpassed the radical idealism of the French Revolution, understanding from his analysis that the dominant ideas of every historical period are those of the ruling class. Enlightenment philosophy could find universal material expression only through the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of workers rule—the dictatorship of the proletariat as a bridge to communism.

The working-class seizure of power in the 1917 Russian Revolution took Marxism out of the realm of ideas and gave it flesh and blood. Despite the relative backwardness of Russia, hostile imperialist encirclement, civil war and invasion by more than a dozen capitalist armies, the establishment of collectivized property and a planned economy spurred huge advances in science, technology, art and ideas. Despite the degeneration of the revolution in its national isolation and its grotesque deformation by the Stalinist bureaucracy, the standard of living as measured by key indexes of modern civilization (literacy, life expectancy, infant mortality, etc.) was testimony to the superiority and tremendous potential of working-class rule.

The last time the U.S. ruling class undertook a sustained effort to promote science education was after the Soviet Union launched its Sputnik I satellite in 1957. Fear of a Soviet lead in military technology led President Eisenhower to demand a billion-dollar program to improve science education in American schools and to the enactment of the National Defense Education Act in 1958. Creationism was elbowed aside as the newly formed Biological Science Curriculum Study (BSCS) wrote evolution into new high school textbooks.

Once again, the centrality of the struggle for black freedom to all progressive social change in America was revealed. The new textbooks reached Little Rock Central High in 1965 after almost a decade of pitched battles against court-

ordered desegregation of Arkansas' Jim Crow schools. The civil rights and Vietnam antiwar movements were ripping apart the conservative fabric of post-World War II America. In *Epperson v. Arkansas*, the trial judge made no secret of his contempt for the state's anti-evolution statute, scheduling the trial for April Fools' Day and ruling in favor of Susan Epperson's constitutional right to teach modern biology, namely Darwin's theory of evolution. This and similar cases went up to the U.S. Supreme Court. For about 30

man. Today the icon of the Madonna is back and the cathedral is again a nexus of reaction, bolstering an unjust social order with appeals to piety and mystical promises of reward after life on this earth ends.

Drunk with success in its crusade against the Soviet Union, the American ruling class falsely boasts that "communism is dead." With a military budget almost as large as the rest of the world's, according to the 2005 report by the Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation, U.S. impe-

abandonment of the black population in the flooding of New Orleans threw a worldwide spotlight on racial inequality in the U.S.

Science is subordinated to the capitalist state and its purse strings. Science is primarily funded for techniques of war, mass destruction and misery. From the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki to the napalming of Vietnam, to the bunker-busting destruction of Baghdad—in the cradle of civilization—the legacy of science in the service of imperialism is measured in mass graves worldwide. Even advances in biological science that could better the human condition, stamp out disease or eradicate hunger are deformed by the profit system. That developing countries must vow to respect drug company patents as a condition of membership in the World Trade Organization (WTO) illustrates the point. AIDS ravages Africa, but anti-retroviral drugs that give people the possibility to live with this disease are priced beyond reach. U.S. imperialism and the WTO have made India knuckle under and pledge to cease producing patent-busting, low-cost generic versions of the same drugs, thereby condemning millions around the world to death.

The war against teaching evolution in the schools is irrational even from the bourgeoisie's own class standpoint. To take the above example, pharmaceuticals can't be developed without an understanding of modern biology, which is incompatible with and counterposed to Biblical literalism. New bacterial strains emerge every day, exchanging whole DNA sequences and becoming drug-resistant; viruses mutate. Replace modern biology with Genesis and a new threat like the species-jumping avian-borne flu virus has a better shot at killing millions worldwide. The Bush administration has outlawed government funding for extraction of stem cells from new human embryos, thereby blocking therapeutic cloning and growth of tissue transplants for research to help treat diseases such as Alzheimer's, Parkinson's and diabetes.

To be sure, an elite will continue to be trained at private universities that are beyond the reach of the working class. But the anti-scientific religious dogma pushed by elements of the ruling class retards science even in those bastions of class privilege. Ultimately, it isn't possible to remain a world power and destroy science education and industry, the way the U.S. rulers largely have. In the short term, they can certainly stay on top of the world as Western ayatollahs with nukes. Thus, even a very basic issue like the right to learn Darwin's theory of evolution in public school requires that a multiracial revolutionary workers party be built in this country to rip power out of the hands of the bourgeoisie. Communism is the last best hope for America and the world. ■



G.P. Putnam's Sons

Above: Young Communists studying atheism following 1917 October Revolution. Right: Russian Orthodox priest on barricades of counterrevolution, Moscow, August 1991.



Der Spiegel

years, the creationists mainly lost and were decried even in Supreme Court decisions as "anachronistic."

So, what changed? Capitalist counter-revolution across East Europe and in the USSR, where the final undoing of the Russian Revolution took place in 1991-92, defines today's deeply reactionary period. Those wrenching events have been catastrophic for the people of the former Soviet Union and East Europe, especially women, whose rights and lives have been shattered by religious reaction and destitution.

Leningrad's Kazan Cathedral provides a vivid illustration of what's changed. In the Soviet Union, this former center of the deeply reactionary Russian Orthodox Church was turned into a grand Museum of the History of Religion and Atheism. The central apse showcased an exhibit on Darwin's theory of evolution, with life-size portraits of the transition from ape to

rialism is plundering the world without fear of reprisal. The same unfettered imperialist monster that is laying waste to Iraq targets labor, black people, immigrants and all the oppressed at home. When the Soviet Union existed, in order to sport credentials especially in the Third World as top cop for "democracy," the U.S. was forced to concede some basic civil rights to black people at home. Now, with affirmative action gutted, many black voters disenfranchised, jobs destroyed and jails filled, the Democratic and Republican rulers cynically pretend that racism is a bygone thing, that there is no need to talk about racial equality anymore—at least until the murderous

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Meet in Hamilton Hall Lobby
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**The Communist Manifesto
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Room B334
Information and readings: (604) 687-0353
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New Orleans...

(continued from page 1)

but a spotlight was thrown on the desperate conditions faced by black people across the country. New Orleans has its own peculiarities, including geography. But across the U.S., the mass of black people is forced to live in inner cities that are little more than rotting shells—from Newark and Camden to Detroit and Gary. No jobs, no health care, schools that are little more than prisons. This country's racist rulers see no reason to spend money to maintain a layer of the black population that is increasingly seen as a surplus population. The horrific images of homeless, hungry and dehydrated black men, women and children in New Orleans prompted many to compare them to images of the Third World. In fact, in measures such as infant mortality, America's ghettos do approach Third World conditions.

Rap musician Kanye West was widely cheered for saying on a telethon what millions are thinking: "George Bush doesn't care about black people." The matriarch of the Bush clan, former first lady Barbara Bush, sniffed disdainfully after looking in on the Houston Astrodome, "What I'm hearing, which is sort of scary, is they all want to stay in Texas!" With naked class contempt, she declared, "So many of the people in the arena here, you know, were underprivileged anyway, so this is working very well for them." She was



Former presidents Clinton and Bush senior backing George W. Bush in wake of Gulf Coast disaster. Bipartisan neglect prepared way for New Orleans flooding.

speaking of starving people who had just had everything in their lives ripped up, had just lost their homes and their jobs. Many didn't even know if their friends and companions and family members were drowned or saved.

But it's not just Bush and the Republicans. The other capitalist party, the Democrats, is also directly responsible for deaths that likely number in the thousands. The black Democratic Party New Orleans mayor, Ray Nagin, ordered an evacuation but provided no resources for anyone without a car to get out. Former president Bill Clinton publicly solidarized with Bush Junior and also Senior, seeking to restore the spirit of "national unity." Nationally, Democratic politicians are clamoring that the administration's inaction over New Orleans shows its incapacity to respond to "terrorist" threats. They aim to present themselves as the party best able to wage the "war on terror," a code word for ripping up the rights of immigrants, black people, the labor movement and most everyone else.

Despite differences over particular policies, the Republicans and Democrats are united in defending capitalism—an anarchic, irrational profit-driven system that cannot even provide for the safety and welfare of the population. The situation cries out for a socialist planned economy, in which natural resources and the technological and productive forces of society would be marshaled *on behalf of human needs*, not profit. What is urgently required is to build a workers party that can lead a workers revolution to rip power from the hands of the capitalist class and its political agents, right-wing Republican and liberal Democrat alike.

Criminality Upon Criminality

Billions in government handouts are being shoveled out as fast as possible—to the politicians' corporate cronies. It's a



Cars leaving New Orleans ahead of hurricane. Thousands, mainly black, were crammed into Houston Astrodome after days trapped by flooding in New Orleans.

real "gold rush reminiscent of corporate America's efforts to profit from the reconstruction of Iraq," as the capitalists' house organ, the *Wall Street Journal* (9 September) put it. Republican Congressman (and former real estate entrepreneur) Richard Baker of Baton Rouge told lobbyists in Washington, D.C., that "We finally cleaned up public housing in New Orleans. We couldn't do it, but God did." Forty years ago, this was expressed as: "urban renewal" means "Negro removal." In fact, the social disaster was *manmade*, and what's happening now is sheer profiteering. Gasoline prices have soared above \$3 a gallon and are expected to go higher.

want to be the guys who rescue people. But they were told...that is not the priority." Anger ran so hot over this incident that several men in their unit removed the patches from their sleeves reading, "So Others May Live," in open defiance of military discipline.

New Orleans police tried to keep people from even helping each other. Malik Rahim, a veteran of the Black Panther Party of the 1960s and a local activist in the Algiers neighborhood, which was not flooded and where phones worked, reported that police told people who had dry homes and boats that their help wasn't needed. Rahim wrote that "the people who could help are being shipped out. People who want to stay, who have the skills to save lives and rebuild are being forced to go to Houston" (*San Francisco Bay View*, 31 August).

Rahim described "gangs of white vigilantes near here riding around in pickup trucks, all of them armed, and any young Black they see who they figure doesn't belong in their community, they shoot him." When a band of some 200 people, including visiting paramedics from a downtown hotel, tried to walk out of New Orleans over a Mississippi River bridge into a white area, suburban cops turned them back and fired over their heads, saying, "This isn't New Orleans" (*New York Times*, 10 September).

Now the forces of the capitalist state are taking steps to disarm residents who managed to stay. No one, except for the armed thugs of the government, is to be allowed to defend himself. In this dire situation and in general, we defend the right of the population to bear arms. No to gun control!

The rulers' fear of an armed population harks back to the fear of "servile insurrection" that haunted the slaveowners of the pre-Civil War South. The role of the federal troops sent in to New Orleans is above all to reassert control *over* the city and its people. Immediately following the flooding, the cops herded prisoners out of New Orleans and into the infamous hell-hole of Angola prison. Many were kept handcuffed on a highway overpass in the merciless heat, held at gunpoint until they could be shipped to a prison. About the only thing this government knows how to build and maintain is prisons. One of the first "public works" undertaken by local authorities was to turn the Greyhound bus

station into a jail for "looters," with a sign reading, "Welcome to the New Angola South." We say: Release them and drop all charges against them! Immigrants along the Gulf Coast are in particular danger of deportation if they can't produce legal residency documentation. We call for full citizenship rights for all immigrants! No deportations!

Capitalist Chaos and Profiteering

The fatal undermining of the flood control system around New Orleans did not begin the day that George W. Bush entered the White House in January 2001. Far from it! Over two decades of neglect include the eight years of the Democratic Clinton administration in the 1990s, during which the U.S. experienced an economic boom and the federal government managed to run a sizable budget surplus.

But the pork barrel triumphed as usual, as politicians of both parties diverted the Army Corps of Engineers' money to far less important projects, as right-wing *New York Times* columnist John Tierney pointed out in "The Case for a Cover-Up" (10 September). Thus the Louisiana Congressional delegation and Democratic Senator Mary Landrieu, who now attacks Bush for not anticipating the breach of the levees, "have been short-changing the levees themselves" and have "directed large sums to dubious Corps projects aimed at increasing barge traffic, not preventing floods." And it's not just the Mississippi Delta. According to the American Society of Civil Engineers, some 13,000 traffic fatalities each year result from inadequate highway maintenance. Compare this one, all but hidden index of death by government neglect to the number of youth killed each year by firearms—some 2,800 in 2002—which is widely publicized by proponents of gun control.

The Gulf Coast disaster has exposed the deadly logic of the capitalist ideologues who extol the "magic of the market" and preach the virtues of "small government." One of these types, right-wing libertarian Grover Norquist declared: "I don't want to abolish government. I simply want to reduce it to the size where I can drag it into the bathroom and drown it in the bathtub." The White House and Congress reduced the size of government funding for flood control and disaster



After leaving thousands to die, authorities left corpses to rot on streets of New Orleans.

relief, and as a consequence, there are likely thousands of people, mainly black and poor, who have now drowned.

The decades-long deterioration of this country's government-maintained and -funded infrastructure has gone hand in hand with the *deindustrialization* of the United States. Hurricane Katrina knocked out 10 percent of the country's oil refining capacity. There is *no* spare capacity, which is why oil companies are about to make a killing at the pumps. There has not been a new refinery built in the U.S. since 1976. Over the past quarter-century, total refining capacity has declined by 10 percent while consumption of gasoline has increased by 45 percent.

Why has this happened? At bottom, it is because of the basic laws governing the capitalist system of production. The rate of profit, which determines where the money goes, was too low to induce the oil companies to invest in new refineries. As Robert Mabro, head of the Oxford Institute for Energy Studies, explained: "The fundamental problem is that we depend on oil companies that dislike the refining business because of historically low returns but whose deficit can produce an economic, social and political crisis" (*New York Times*, 4 September). Even before Katrina, sharply rising energy costs were dampening the feeble economic expansion. Now the energy crisis, a blatant case of the irrationality of capitalism, is likely to tip the U.S. economy into a recession.

Meanwhile, the airlines are trying to

1930s New Deal. But it was the great labor battles of the time that forced the U.S. rulers, represented by Democratic president Franklin D. Roosevelt, to institute those projects as well as economic reforms like Social Security, unemployment insurance and welfare.

The labor bureaucracy—in both John Sweeney's AFL-CIO and the recent breakaway coalition led by the SEIU's Andy Stern—are just as opposed to fighting for a program of unionized public works as the two capitalist parties are to accepting it. Despite wide sentiment at the base to participate in relief and rebuilding efforts, the union misleaders have done nothing to undertake the mobilization of unionized workers that is necessary.

The union tops' refusal to engage in class struggle is rooted in their support to the capitalist profit system, expressed politically in their ties to the Democratic (and sometimes Republican) parties. To unleash the social power of this country's multiracial proletariat, there needs to be a fight to replace the labor bureaucracy with a leadership committed to mobilizing labor's power, independent of the capitalist state and politicians, in the interests of all the exploited and oppressed.

The Bush administration and Congress are handing out billions in no-bid contracts for Gulf Coast rebuilding to the big corporations that are already looting Iraq—Halliburton; Bechtel; the Fluor Corporation. Significantly, Bush issued an order exempting jobs created by these



Reuters

New Orleans, September 1: Texas game wardens terrorize black residents who used mail truck to escape rising floodwaters, forcing them to continue on foot.

ricane Relief, Not for War." A coalition statement calling for a "national campaign for emergency action" headlines, "The Bush Administration Is Criminally Negligent." It then states, "We call on the Bush Administration" to do all manner of good things, including "a massive jobs program at union wages for rebuilding." What is this, Christian redemption through good works by war criminals?

Such groups cynically appeal to naive young liberals who believe that the American government, even under Bush, can be made to respond to "public pressure." In practice, such pressure politics is a vehicle for bourgeois "lesser evilism," i.e., the Democratic Party.

Left-liberal publicist Naomi Klein states in the *Nation* (26 September), "New Orleans could be reconstructed by and for the very people most victimized by the flood." But how? New Orleans is *owned* already, by corporations and big landlords. They must be *expropriated*, their system of exploitation overthrown by *workers revolution*, before such mass rebuilding in the interests of the people can take place.

American Capitalism and Black Oppression

Some 40 years after the passage of the Civil Rights and Voting Rights acts, the Gulf Coast disaster demonstrates that the basic condition of blacks as an oppressed color-caste forcibly segregated at the bottom of American society has not changed. Black and white liberals have long hailed the civil rights movement of the late 1950s-early 1960s as a historic triumph in the struggle for racial equality. Certainly, the end of legalized segregation in the South was a genuine and important democratic gain. But black oppression is rooted in the very structure of American capitalism, as the catastrophe in New Orleans has so graphically demonstrated. As we wrote in an early, basic document of the Spartacist League:

"The vast majority of Black people—both North and South—are today workers who, along with the rest of the American working class, must sell their labor power in order to secure the necessities of life to those who buy labor power in order to make profit. The buyers of labor power, the capitalists, are a small minority whose rule is maintained only by keeping the majority who labor for them divided and misled. The fun-

damental division created deliberately along racial lines has kept the Negro workers who entered American capitalism at the bottom, still at the bottom. Ultimately their road to freedom lies only through the struggle with the rest of the working class to abolish capitalism and establish in its place an egalitarian, socialist society.

"Yet the struggle of the Black people of this country for freedom, while part of the struggle of the working class as a whole, is more than that struggle. The Negro people are an oppressed race-color caste, in the main comprising the most exploited layer of the American working class.... Because of their position as both the most oppressed and also the most conscious and experienced section, revolutionary black workers are slated to play an exceptional role in the coming American revolution."

—"Black and Red—Class Struggle Road to Negro Freedom," *Spartacist* special supplement, May-June 1967

The mass mobilization of black people in the Southern civil rights movement, and the subsequent Northern ghetto rebellions, disrupted and challenged the racist American bourgeois order. But the civil rights struggles remained under the leadership of liberals like Martin Luther King Jr. who were tied to the Democratic Party and more fundamentally came up against the inadequacy of democratic reform in addressing the de facto segregation and impoverishment of black people.

The deindustrialization of the Northeast and Midwest beginning in the 1970s has been especially devastating for blacks, since unionized industrial jobs were central to the fragile economic base of the segregated black communities. Budget cuts at all levels of government and the slashing of social welfare programs, carried out by Democratic as well as Republican administrations, have hit particularly hard at the large sector of black workers employed in public services, and all but eliminated the slim lifeline formerly available to the unemployed ghetto masses.

The net worth (assets minus debt) of the average black family is today *less than one-tenth* that of whites (\$6,000 versus \$67,000). Black unemployment is almost two and a half times that of whites. And black people are twice as likely to die from disease, accidents and homicide. Seeking to escape poverty

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WV Photo

May 1983: ILA mobilized in defense of school busing in Norfolk, Virginia.

bust workers' unions, destroy their pensions and cut their wages, all the while claiming that high oil prices are making them do it. With early grain ready to ship but with few facilities working, farmers who ship crops down the Mississippi River are faced with ruin. The shrimping and oystering industries are wrecked. Poultry plants are destroyed, their stock rotting.

What Needs to Be Done

Over a million people are displaced. The masses of displaced people must be provided with jobs—*union jobs* at union wage scales, with health care, housing, clothing and all other necessities. Instead of being regarded as victims, these working people can be incorporated into a force for their own revitalization. What is needed at the minimum is a massive program of federally funded public works to rebuild New Orleans and the rest of the devastated Gulf Coast. There should be workers committees that would make sure that shoddy designs and penny-pinching construction could be vetoed before they endangered people's lives, and that lifesaving repairs and maintenance would not fall victim to the ax of austerity.

However, not only the Republicans but also the Democrats will oppose any such program that smacks of "socialism." There is one and only one force in American society that can change the current political balance in favor of working people: a revitalized labor movement. A number of Democratic politicians and liberal commentators are talking about public works programs like those of the

companies from the 1931 Davis-Bacon Act, which stipulates that federally funded construction projects pay prevailing wages, which in practice are usually significantly above the legal minimum wage. This is a calculated blow against the labor movement.

Popular outrage at the response of the Bush administration to the devastation of Hurricane Katrina extends to anger at its crony capitalists who run Halliburton, Bechtel et al. A labor campaign to unionize the corporations engaged in "rebuilding" New Orleans and the rest of the Gulf Coast would have massive popular support. Such a campaign could be an important first step in the long-needed unionization of the South and more generally the revival of the declining union movement.

Reformist leftist groups are pumping out lists of immediate demands for flood relief, for housing, for jobs—all urgent necessities. But what is left out of the equation is *how* we're going to get those things. The agency for social change—the working class, including its key black component—is not what they look to to carry out their demands.

Typical of this approach is the Freedom Socialist Party (FSP). In a 4 September statement that calls for "a planned, cooperative economy run by the workers," the FSP argues that "public pressure" can prevent the Bush administration from using the crisis to enrich Halliburton, Bechtel, et al. Workers World Party's new front group, the "Troops Out Now Coalition," one of the groups organizing the September 24 protests against the occupation of Iraq, calls for "Money for Hur-

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New Orleans...

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and learn a usable job skill, young black men join the armed forces at a rate close to 50 percent higher than their white counterparts, thereby becoming cannon fodder for the U.S. imperialists in their military adventures like Iraq. Over 900,000 black men and women, including one out of every eight black men between the ages of 25 and 29, are in prison, mainly victims of the bipartisan "war on drugs."

The attacks on the black population have also been wielded to undermine the conditions of the entire working class. In 1980, the average CEO received compen-

sation 40 times that of an average worker in his company. Today it's more than 500 times. The average real hourly wage of workers without a college degree is less today than 25 years ago. Today as before, labor and black struggle will go forward together or be driven back separately.

The Class-Struggle Road to Black Liberation

Black people are not just victims of American capitalism. Despite the destruction of industrial jobs and erosion of union strength, black workers, whose rate of union membership is 32 percent higher than that of white workers, continue to be integrated into strategic sectors of the industrial proletariat—in urban transit, longshore, steel and auto.

The proletariat alone has the power to shatter this racist, capitalist system. Won to a revolutionary program, black workers will be the living link fusing the anger of the dispossessed ghetto masses with the social power of the multiracial proletariat under the leadership of a Leninist vanguard party.

But for that to happen, the two main obstacles preventing black workers from playing that historic role must be overcome. These are the Democratic Party, especially its black component, and the trade-union bureaucracy. Beginning in the 1960s, the Republican Party positioned itself as the party of the "white backlash," while the Democrats moved to co-opt young black activists into the government bureaucracy, initially through the

"War on Poverty" programs. Since then, black Democrats have often served as mayors of major cities where they act as overseers of the ghetto masses. It is these politicians who have implemented on the ground the killing cuts in social welfare programs. It is the cops under their command who brutalize and imprison young black men en masse.

The trade-union misleadership's willful refusal to combat the racist oppression of blacks, and in recent decades of mainly Latino immigrants, is the single most important factor underlying the decline of the union movement. This is nowhere clearer than in the South, which has been the main regional bastion of anti-labor reaction since the building of the integrated industrial unions in the 1930s.

The momentous working-class battles that built these unions, often under the leadership of "reds," took place against the political backdrop of the so-called "New Deal coalition." In the North, this consisted of sections of the liberal bourgeoisie, the labor movement and the black and Jewish minorities. However, key to the Democratic Party's dominance nationally was the support of the white ruling class (the Dixiecrats) in the Jim Crow South, a racist police state in which blacks were stripped of every democratic right and liberty. The New Deal coalition literally extended from black leftist union organizers in the Midwest to Southern sheriffs who were members of the Ku Klux Klan.

Even in the heyday of labor radicalism in the 1930s and early-mid '40s, no serious and sustained effort was made to unionize the South, for the labor tops recognized that this would require smashing the entrenched system of white supremacy and would therefore have destroyed the fragile "unity" of the Democratic Party. That unity was finally broken up by the civil rights movement, as the main body of Dixiecrats decamped to the Republican Party.

Since the 1970s, parts of the South have experienced significant industrial growth, including large-scale investment by European and Japanese corporations attracted by the region's relatively cheap labor. Only a very small fraction of Southern workers are unionized, although there are some crucially important beachheads of union strength such as the predominantly black ILA longshore union locals on the Atlantic and Gulf coasts. Organizing the region's proletariat, which now includes increasing numbers of immigrants, especially from Latin America, cannot be achieved on the basis of narrow business unionism which accepts and adheres to this country's harsh anti-labor laws. It will require a level of working-class and black struggle that challenges the very foundations of the American bourgeois order.

On the one side, the black masses will rally behind racially integrated workers struggles against the local white power structure. On the other side, the Southern branch of the U.S. ruling class—both Democrat and Republican—will resort to police, company goons and professional strikebreakers while using racist demagoguery to turn white workers against the labor movement. The defense of strike pickets and the need to defeat racist terror will be directly linked.

This is a concrete expression of our perspective of *revolutionary integrationism*. Counterposed to both liberal integrationism—the false view that black people can achieve social equality within the confines of American capitalism—and to all forms of black separatism, revolutionary integrationism is premised on the understanding that black freedom requires smashing the capitalist system and constructing an egalitarian socialist society. There will be no social revolution in this country without a united struggle of black and white workers led by their multiracial vanguard party. And there is no other road to eliminating the special oppression of black people than the victorious conquest of power by the U.S. proletariat. ■

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Berkeley Public Library — 2090 Kittredge St., Berkeley

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Video showing of **Lynne Stewart's** presentation at New York Rally
Don Cane, Labor Black League for Social Defense

Moderator: **Valerie West**, Partisan Defense Committee

For more information: (510) 839-0852 or e-mail: pdcbayarea@sbcglobal.net

CHICAGO

Saturday, October 1, 5 p.m.

University of Chicago Law School, Room 2 — 1111 East 60th Street

Speakers include: **Lydia Barashango**, sister of Mumia Abu-Jamal
Standish E. Willis, Chicago Conference of Black Lawyers
Mike Elliott, UAW Local 551, Chair, Education Committee*
Don Alexander, New York Labor Black League for Social Defense
Fred Redmond, UAW Assistant Director District 7*

Moderator: **Brian Mendis**, Partisan Defense Committee

*organization affiliation for identification purposes only For more information: (312) 563-0442

LOS ANGELES

Saturday, October 8, 4 p.m.

Immanuel Presbyterian Church* — 3300 Wilshire Blvd. (at Berendo St., 2 blocks west of Vermont/Wilshire Red-line Station)

Speakers include: **Lydia Barashango**, sister of Mumia Abu-Jamal
Don Cane, Labor Black League for Social Defense

Moderator: **Valerie West**, Partisan Defense Committee

*The views expressed by the participants are not necessarily those of the Immanuel Presbyterian Church.
For more information: (213) 380-8897

Statement...

(continued from page 1)

But even the paltry millions that had been budgeted for repair and reinforcement were slashed and diverted to help pay for the occupation of Iraq and the phony "war on terror," while the filthy rich got more tax cuts. As Hurricane Katrina approached, black Democratic mayor Ray Nagin ordered a full evacuation of New Orleans. But no transport was provided for the 35 percent of black households without cars, and for the tens of thousands of the elderly and disabled. *They were all left to die.*

Then it took *five days*—with temperatures in the 90s, with elderly people dying in their wheelchairs and desperate mothers begging for food and water—for the government to even begin providing relief. Bush timed a photo-op in New Orleans to coincide with the first convoys of relief supplies. Meanwhile his man at the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) claimed that the government had not known that there were thousands in the Convention Center—this as hundreds of millions of TV viewers around the globe watched scenes evocative of concentration camps or the Middle Passage.

Barely a day after the flooding, the government and its media mouthpieces turned the victims into "criminals," depicting black people as those who "loot" and white people as those who "find" items from local grocery stores. Mayor Nagin called off search-and-rescue operations and redeployed police to stop looters. With depraved indifference to the desperate masses, Louisiana governor Kathleen Blanco announced that some 300 members of the Arkansas National Guard had been sent to New Orleans not to help the survivors but to terrorize them: "These troops know how to shoot and kill...and I expect they will."

Even as it joined the anti-looting hysteria, the *New York Times* (3 September) was compelled to admit that those abandoned by all levels of government viewed as "Robin Hood figures" the young black men who "found milk and food" or broke into fancy hotel kitchens to serve up gigantic breakfasts for those stranded in the Convention Center. These are the heroes of this disaster. It is the American ruling class that has looted entire countries and continents, that in this country bled workers' pension funds dry and gorged themselves on record profits while diverting funds from health care, education and life-saving measures like flood prevention. And now the oil companies are seizing on the disaster to further jack up prices.

Today the administrators of the capitalist state reveal the incredible depth of their class contempt and ignorance—they believed they could simply abandon the poor, the old and the sick of New Orleans to their own fate. But everyone was evacuated from the oil rigs in the Gulf before the storm hit. Commentators now speak of "the storm after the storm," advising America's rulers to prepare for social blowback at the base of society. Even from the standpoint of the bourgeoisie, the administration's seeming indifference to the destruction of a major American city and a crucial port, with a petrochemical industry responsible for 20 percent of the country's oil, is irrational. Coast to coast, working people, minorities and much of the rest of the population are furious with the people running this country.

The Democrats are now going after Bush hammer and tongs. This administration is a particularly crass expression of the greed and arrogance of America's capitalist rulers. But the decline in real wages and the decimation of the labor movement gathered speed under Democrats and Republicans alike, as did the gap between rich and poor, the impoverishment of the ghetto and barrio population and the massive incarceration of their youth. Indeed, it was Democrat Clinton

Bush Bans Cuban Medical Aid

It's more killing by the Bush administration, this time in the name of anti-Communism. Cuban leader Fidel Castro offered to immediately dispatch nearly 1,600 Cuban doctors with over 26 tons of medical supplies to the Gulf Coast of the United States to help treat the thousands of sick and injured victims of Hurricane Katrina. But Cuba's offer was snubbed as the hurricane victims were left to die.

A comparison of the U.S. government's disastrous response to Hurricane Katrina with the successes of the Cuban deformed workers state illustrates why overthrowing the capitalist profit system is literally a life and death question for working people, minorities and the poor. According to a study by Oxfam, Cuba has a "culture of safety," committed to reducing risks and saving lives. Before a Category 5 hurricane blasted Cuba last year with 160 miles per hour winds, nearly two million people were safely evacuated with *no loss of life and no serious injury*.

Before a hurricane season begins, Cuban authorities review and revise disaster plans based on the past year's experience. The entire country goes through a hurricane drill, the *Meteoro*, trimming tree limbs, checking dams for weak points and making repairs. Every shelter is stocked with food, water and medical supplies. Neighborhood representatives from the Federation of Cuban Women identify those most vulnerable—the elderly and single mothers with young children—who might need extra help evacuating. Schools ensure that even young children know what to do and where to go. Doctors are evacuated with the communities they serve, so they know who needs insulin, heart medication, etc.

Cuban doctors have saved lives worldwide and are often first on the scene to help the victims of disasters, whether the stricken region is ruled by an ally or foe. In 1972, when a devastating earthquake hit Nicaragua during



Havana, September 4: Cuban leader Castro addressing doctors equipped for Gulf Coast relief. Bush refused offer of almost 1,600 doctors and over 26 tons of medical supplies. Reuters photos

the Somoza dictatorship, Cuban doctors and field hospitals were immediately dispatched to help the victims, as they were again recently to victims of the tsunami in Indonesia and Sri Lanka.

Despite the choke hold of the U.S. imperialist blockade and the loss of economic aid from the former Soviet Union, the quality of medical care in Cuba is high. Amid the barrage of imperialist propaganda that Marxism "failed," this in itself is testimony to the superiority of the planned, collectivized economy that was created in Cuba when a workers state was consolidated following the expropriations and nationalizations of private property in the summer and fall of 1960. Although the workers state was bureaucratically deformed from its inception, the planned economy, modeled on that of the Soviet Union, brought enormous gains to the Cuban people, such as jobs, free medical care, housing and universal education. These gains are today increasingly threatened, from

without and within.

The Bush administration has pledged to maintain the starvation blockade against Cuba imposed by Democrat John F. Kennedy in 1962. We say: *End the embargo! For unconditional defense of the Cuban Revolution against imperialist attack! U.S. out of Guantánamo!* Since 1991-92, when capitalist counterrevolution destroyed the Soviet Union—Cuba's chief ally and economic lifeline—the Castro regime has increasingly opened up the country to imperialist economic penetration. This has led to growing inequalities, particularly for the black population and women. Defense of the Cuban Revolution requires a *workers political revolution* to oust the bureaucracy and put political power in the hands of the working class. Defense of the Cuban Revolution requires its international extension through successful struggles for proletarian power throughout Latin America, and especially here in the belly of the U.S. imperialist beast.

who boasted of having axed "welfare as we know it."

The devastation of New Orleans is the result of decades of bipartisan neglect by a ruling class that doesn't want to pay for repairing its deteriorating infrastructure, driven as it is by lust for immediate gain. Four years ago, FEMA itself warned that a major hurricane hitting New Orleans was one of the three deadliest disasters that could befall the U.S. Scientists at Louisiana State University modeled hundreds of storm possibilities and predicted that more than 100,000 people could die. The government responded by repeatedly slashing urgently needed funds. By 2004, the Bush administration had cut more than 80 percent of the Army Corps of Engineers budget request for strengthening the levees for Lake Pontchartrain. This June the government made even deeper cuts.

Bush and the Democrats cynically used the bodies of the working people killed in the criminal September 11 attack on the World Trade Center as a bloody shirt in launching the "war on terror" and invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq. Ask any black person in the Gulf Coast: Has the government protected them from catastrophe? Are working people safer? "Homeland Security" is now being directed with guns drawn *against* black people in New Orleans. Meanwhile, black troops from Louisiana and Mississippi who were sent to Iraq to kill and die for American imperialism now wait in anguish to hear if their own loved ones at home remain alive. The bloody subjugation of the Iraqi peoples is carried out

by the same capitalist class that has consigned thousands upon thousands of New Orleans residents to death and devastation. *U.S. out of Iraq—now! Down with the imperialist occupation!*

The capitalist rulers have their priorities, and taking care of working people isn't one of them. When Hurricane Michelle, a Category 4 storm, hit Cuba in 2001, some 700,000 people were evacuated in a matter of hours—despite poor roads and fuel shortages. Some 25,000 volunteers were mobilized to go door to door to prepare people for evacuation; trucks and buses were provided to move the population to safety and living spaces organized for the refugees. Similar operations took place in 2002, 2004 (evacuating 1.9 million people out of a total population of 11 million) and again this July. This shows the power of Cuba's collectivized economy, which, despite Castro's bureaucratic regime, is organized not on the basis of capitalist competition for profits but on the basis of economic planning. The 1960-61 Cuban Revolution threw out the capitalists, the U.S. imperialists and their CIA spies and Mafia henchmen, creating a bureaucratically deformed workers state, which must be defended unconditionally against U.S. imperialism.

The situation cries out for a workers revolution in the U.S. to do away with the capitalist system and establish a society with a planned, collectivized economy. This country was founded on black chattel slavery, and the continuing enforced segregation of the black population as a last-hired, first-fired race-color caste is

the key prop to capitalist rule. This material subjugation of the black population is what perpetuates the racist bigotry that divides and weakens the working class. Karl Marx got it exactly right when he said, "Labor cannot emancipate itself in the white skin where in the black it is branded."

Today, the trade unions—especially the heavily black ILA longshore union in the Southeast and on the Gulf Coast—should be mobilizing for the rescue effort and demanding a massive rebuilding effort that would provide every unemployed person with a job at good union wages. But the pro-capitalist trade-union tops, tied as they are to the Democratic and Republican parties, stand condemned through their inaction.

The "national unity" patriotism promoted by the bourgeoisie and embraced by the labor misleaders is being challenged by the mass anger over the government's New Orleans disaster and over the widely unpopular Iraq war. The current strikes at Northwest Airlines and Boeing, if backed up by the rest of labor, could point the way toward unleashing the social power of the working class. It is the class struggle of the multiracial proletariat that can open the road to overthrowing the decrepit capitalist order and establishing a workers government. The Spartacist League is committed to assembling the most conscious class-struggle militants to forge a revolutionary party to lead all the exploited and oppressed in this fight. As New Orleans shows, the choice is clear: socialism or barbarism. ■

WORKERS VANGUARD

Victory to IAM Boeing Strike!



Left: Seattle IAM members call for strike, September 1. Right: Pickets outside Boeing plant in Everett, Washington, September 2.

IAM: Honor AMFA Northwest Picket Lines!

SEPTEMBER 9—Some 18,400 workers at Boeing facilities in the Seattle area, Gresham, Oregon and Wichita, Kansas, have shut down production of commercial aircraft at one of the two largest aircraft manufacturers in the world. The aircraft producer is an industrial giant in the Seattle/Puget Sound region, supplied by and subcontracting to dozens of smaller companies. The resulting loss to capitalist profits therefore goes far beyond its direct effect on Boeing.

Members of the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM) walked off the job on September 2 after a resounding 86 percent strike vote (reportedly 93 percent in Wichita) that decisively rejected the company's takeover "best and final offer." The key issues in this strike are health care, pensions and job security. This is an important battle for all labor. As one striker told *Workers Vanguard* supporters who joined the Seattle-area picket lines of IAM District 751, "This strike could be a cornerstone that other unions could build on." *Victory to the IAM Boeing strike!*

WV reporters found a mood of grim determination among strikers. Workers spoke with contempt of the company's "divide and conquer" tactics—attempting to set one region against another and younger workers against those with more seniority in an effort to cripple the union. The bosses' demands included a separate and inferior economic package for Wichita and the elimination of retiree medical benefits for anyone hired after 1 July 2006. The company further demanded hefty increases in workers' health care premiums and offered a miserly percentage increase in pension payments. Pensions are a central issue for this workforce, whose average age is over 50. Strikers are furious that while the company countered their demand for an increase of \$20 a month in pensions per year of service with a miserly \$6 a month, new CEO James McNerney was reportedly awarded a \$22 million pension package after only two months.

This is the third or fourth strike that many Boeing workers have been through, the most recent being a 69-day walkout in 1995. A WV reporter observed: "These workers have a long memory for the crimes and outrages they have suffered over the years at Boeing. In many ways, these workers seemed more like miners who could remember every strike and disaster and really hated the company." Several IAM members spoke about the bitter, 144-day 1948 Boeing strike, which was centrally in defense of seniority rights and equal job access for women. One worker said his father still has the scar he got when company thugs beat him and other workers during that strike.

Boeing workers have a lot of power. The company is rolling in money brought in by extremely lucrative contracts as aircraft sales have rebounded in recent years. Recognizing the Machinists' struggle as their own, members of other unions have joined the picket lines. According to the *Seattle Times* (3 September), members of Plumbers and Pipefitters Local 32 refused to cross picket lines at Boeing's headquarters in Renton. However, while the strike has stopped production of planes, the facilities, including Boeing's mammoth Everett plant, remain open with thousands of employees crossing picket lines every day and nothing being done to stop them.

This scabbing scandalously includes some 18,000 members of the Society of Professional Engineering Employees in Aerospace (SPEEA) as well as about 230 members of Teamsters Local 174 who work for Boeing. Officials of both organizations claim to "support" the IAM but tell their members they cannot honor picket lines at Boeing due to no-strike clauses in their contracts. The IAM bureaucrats are deliberately keeping the picket lines small so that workers don't get the idea to stop the scabs. Moreover, the IAM tops used the same excuse to instruct their members to continue working when the SPEEA was on strike for 40 days in 2000. No such strikebreaking provisions—a sellout when they were agreed

to in the first place—can justify violating the fundamental labor principle that *picket lines mean don't cross*. The IAM needs to mobilize all of the more than 18,000 strikers in mass picket lines to shut Boeing down. More fundamentally, there needs to be a *single industrial union* at Boeing, from engineers to production workers and plant maintenance workers.

A member of the Aircraft Mechanics Fraternal Association (AMFA) in the Seattle area, currently in a bitter strike against union-busting Northwest Airlines, told WV that some AMFA strikers were joining IAM picket lines at Boeing. He added that some IAM members had come out to support AMFA, in his words, "against the advice of their leaders." Most Boeing workers knew little about the Northwest strike and seemed surprised that the IAM leadership was calling for IAM members to scab. Northwest's attempt to smash AMFA threatens all workers in the airline industry and the entire labor movement. If backed up by the rest of labor, the strikes at Northwest and Boeing could point the way toward unleashing the social power of the working class in this country. *IAM: Honor AMFA picket lines! Shut down Northwest!*

Boeing Machinists had, in one man's words, "taken it in the shorts" in 2002, when they were forced to accept a giveback contract after voting it down by 62 percent but failing to get the undemocratic two-thirds majority required for a strike. The IAM tops use this kind of union provision to undercut effective class struggle. Three years ago, the airline industry was cutting back as the recession hit. Boeing was heavily laying off, and, in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, the capitalist rulers' campaign for "national unity" was in full swing. Now that Boeing is doing well, workers think they should get a share. But the very notion of "national unity" between the filthy rich capitalists who run this country and the workers whose labor they exploit is a lie.

The capitalist atrocity in New Orleans, in which the ruling class left the poor and overwhelmingly black population to rot

and die in the flooded city, has struck a deep chord among Boeing strikers. Black workers were clear about its racist character, while some white workers attributed this crime to "bureaucracy" or "just Bush." One black Boeing worker commented, "It's all about class," and concluded: "We need a revolution, a serious revolution."

It is notable that this strike against a major military contractor takes place amid an increasingly unpopular imperialist military occupation of Iraq. In conversations with strikers, WV supporters could find no one who defended the occupation of Iraq and found many who were opposed to the invasion from the start. Opposition was often couched in terms of bringing the troops home or bringing the National Guard back from Iraq to help in New Orleans. In fact, the war and occupation of Iraq stem from the capitalist drive for profits and, more generally, for imperialist global dominance. At home this means war on workers, black people and all the oppressed.

With Machinists' jobs at Boeing in Washington state having plummeted from 39,000 in 1990 to 16,500 today, job security is one of the workers' main concerns. Boeing has increasingly contracted out construction of parts and subassemblies to countries such as Japan, South Korea, France and Italy. The labor bureaucracy's response is to try to set workers in the U.S. against their brothers and sisters overseas through protectionist campaigns to keep "our jobs" in the U.S. What's needed instead is to unite workers across national lines in struggle against their common enemy, the capitalists.

Boeing has also exported some of its production to China, a country where capitalist rule was overthrown in the revolution of 1949. The Chinese workers state is centrally based on collectivized ownership of the means of production, but was deformed from birth by the political rule of a privileged, nationalist bureaucracy. The gains of the 1949 Revolution are endangered by the Stalinist bureaucracy's "market reforms," which propel the forces of capitalist restoration. The U.S. ruling class strives to return China to the realm of unfettered exploitation, promoting capitalist counterrevolution backed up with the threat of military intervention. The China-bashing protectionism of the IAM tops and other sections of the U.S. labor bureaucracy feeds into the counterrevolutionary aims of American imperialism. Workers in the U.S. and throughout the world have a vital interest in defending China against capitalist restoration and imperialist attack.

On the picket lines, WV supporters talked about the need for a workers party to fight for a workers government and a planned socialist economy. Many strikers said this would be a good thing but considered it utopian. On the contrary, it is a necessity. IAM officials are pushing reliance on Democratic Party politicians such as Washington governor Christine Gregoire. But far from being "friends of labor," the Democratic Party is a capitalist party: it is the labor tops' alliance with the Democrats that is the main political obstacle to mobilizing the power of labor in the interests of workers, blacks and all the oppressed. As we noted in an exchange with a Portland IAM official during the 1995 Boeing strike, "The labor bureaucrats' fealty to the Democratic Party...has led to an unending string of defeats for organized labor" ("Protectionism vs. Class Struggle: Exchange on Boeing Strike," WV No. 634, 1 December 1995). A political struggle within the unions to oust the pro-capitalist bureaucracy and replace it with a class-struggle leadership is an essential part of the struggle to build a multiracial, revolutionary workers party. ■