

Issue #2:
Winter 2019

RED STAR



A Publication of
The Revolutionary
United Front



Revolutionary Organizing Among the
Bay Area Homeless — p.10, 18, 29



About the Cover

A series of images of the struggle at a homeless encampment in Oakland, CA. These images show both the incredibly difficult conditions that people are forced to live in, and the inspiring collective resistance. Even in the most dire of circumstances, the people are capable of uniting in struggle against their oppressors and winning victories in the struggle. The fight against displacement in Oakland is a beacon of hope for people's struggles across the country.

Red Star is a revolutionary magazine published by the Revolutionary United Front (RUF). The magazine covers history and theory from political struggles past and present. *Red Star* also provides revolutionary analysis of current events around the world. It is part of an effort to spread revolutionary theory among the masses of this country and cut through the lies spread by the capitalist ruling class and their media. The people of this country and of the world have the power to make history, to move mountains, to topple corrupt governments, and to change the world. We hope that *Red Star* can contribute to the peoples' struggles here in the United States by providing some much needed revolutionary theory and analysis.

www.RevolutionaryUnitedFront.com
RevolutionaryUnitedFront@riseup.net

The Wretched of the Earth are Rising

By John

Now the wretched of the earth are rising,
Calling for us to join.
Now our brothers and sisters are fighting,
Fighting against the rich.

Those who keep us in chains.
Those who kill us for their own gain.
Those few, those wealthy,
Those common enemies of humanity.
Those who, having plundered the world and
Slaughtered so many,
Look upon the fruits of *our* labor,
The wealth produced by *our* blood, sweat, and tears
And see only *their own* profit.

Those who see our lives as a disposable
Means to an end.
For them,
For the few,
For the rich.

Those who enslaved Africans,
And sent them to work to death on foreign shores.
Those who sent millions to the gas chambers,
And those who dropped the bombs,
On Hiroshima and Nagasaki.
And, let's not forget,
Those who launch the drone strikes,
And bomb the school buses.

And those who,
Far from the killing,
Count their profits,
Stolen from our labor,
Secured by bombs, invasions, famines,
And genocides.

Those executives, politicians, generals,
and war profiteers
The wretched of the earth are rising,
Against them.
Our brothers and sisters are fighting,
And the time has come to join them,
In the struggle for our common liberation.

Long live the Revolution!

Visit to an Oakland Encampment



Page 18

Class Struggle in France



Page 6

Table of Contents

-
- 01** **The Genocidal War in Yemen**
14 million Yemenis are on the verge of starvation.
The US supplies the bombs and the Saudi-UAE coalition pulls the trigger
-
- 06** **Class Struggle in France**
The Yellow Vest movement
-
- 10** **Gentrification and Class Struggle**
Fighting back against capitalist development
-
- 18** **Visit to an Oakland Encampment**
RUF members from the East Coast join the struggle on the West Coast
-
- 29** **Organization Among Homeless Encampments in the Bay Area**
Lessons from the struggle
-
- 35** **Black Liberation and Revolution**
An analysis of the way forward and a criticism of false solutions
-
- 45** **History of the Black Panther Party: Part 2**
The growth and development of the Party
-
- 55** **Kavanaugh, MeToo, and the Electoral Circus**
How the ruling class distorts feminist movements into "get out to vote" drives
-
- 61** **Naxalbari: The Birth of the Revolutionary Movement in India**
How a revolt in 1967 lit a revolutionary fire that is still burning
-
- 70** **Americans Must Oppose the War in Yemen**
An editorial

The Genocidal War in Yemen

by John



The ongoing genocidal war in Yemen has pushed 14 million people to the brink of starvation. Over 85,000 children have already starved to death, and death tolls from the war are rising every day. Meanwhile, the U.S. continues to supply bombs, planes, intelligence, and more to the Saudi-UAE coalition waging the war at their behest. School buses, funerals, agricultural fields, hospitals, and water treatment plants have routinely been targeted in bombing raids.

Recently there has been a frenzy of international press coverage of the brutal murder and dismemberment of Jamal Khashoggi, a Saudi dissident and Washington Post journalist. Khashoggi was lured into the Saudi Arabian consulate in Istanbul, Turkey and killed by a hit squad on orders from the Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman. The international outcry over this assassination has led to increased focus on and scrutiny of Saudi Arabia's other policies, including its role in the war in Yemen.

Likewise, countries such as the United States, which maintain close ties with the Saudi government have also faced public backlash for supporting this brutal regime. This in turn has highlighted the barbarism of governments like the United States which have countries like the Saudis and United Arab Emirates (UAE) carry out their dirty work.

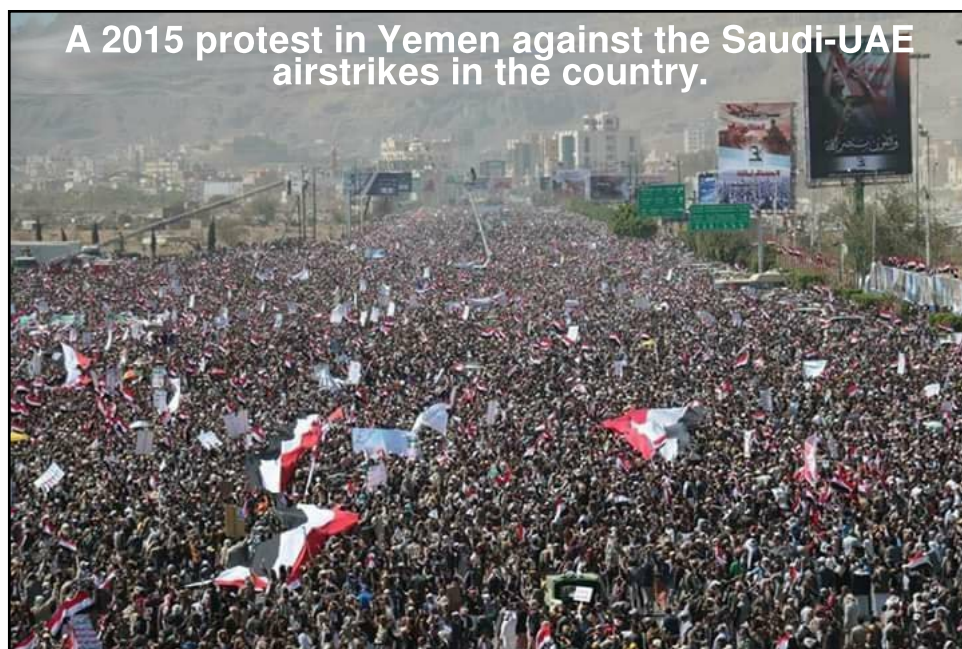
Yemen is the poorest country in the Arab world, and has a population of around twenty-eight million. According to a recent study, at least sixteen million people in the country are on the verge of famine as a direct result of the war. While the Saudi-UAE led coalition is dropping the bombs and firing the bullets, they are supported and directed in their efforts by the U.S., U.K., and France.

The U.S. government in particular provides logistical support, intelligence, bombs, bullets, guns, and even in-flight refueling for the coalition. In short, they support this barbaric war at every level. Even the genocidal strategy of blockading Yemen and depriving the people of food, clean water, and medicine was developed in consultation with U.S. intelligence and military advisers.

While the war officially began in 2015, it is actually a continuation of a long-standing policy of U.S. intervention in Yemen politically, economically, and militarily. These interventions have been necessary to maintain U.S. capitalists' dominance over the Yemeni people. The U.S. conducted its first drone strike in Yemen in 2002, as part of the War on Terror, which has actually been a War of Terror on the oppressed and exploited people of the world. Since this point U.S. drones have flown in the skies of Yemen, and terrorized the people.

This is part of the U.S. government's long-term strategic interests in controlling Yemen. The country sits at a key point next to the Red Sea, and approximately ten percent of the world's seaborne oil flows through Bab el-Mandeb, the strait which connects the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden. This strategic location has been a major factor in the U.S.'s long-standing efforts to control the government of Yemen.

The Yemeni peoples' decades-long resistance to foreign capitalist interests and local oppressive forces has pushed the U.S. to intervene in Yemen on an ongoing basis over the past decades. This came to a head when, in 2011 as part of the Arab Spring, the Yemeni people's resistance developed into a much larger mass movement. The people of Yemen rose in protest against the corrupt and undemocratic government of Ali Abdullah Saleh, who had served as president of the country since 1990, and for twelve years prior served as President of North Yemen.



A 2015 protest in Yemen against the Saudi-UAE airstrikes in the country.

The Yemeni people's decades-long resistance to foreign capitalist interests and local oppressive forces has pushed the U.S. to intervene in Yemen on an ongoing basis over the past decades.

During his presidency, Saleh had a well-established practice of serving as a lackey for foreign capitalists and the U.S. in particular. He amassed tens of billions of dollars in wealth through outright corruption and bribery from foreign countries and corporations who paid him handsomely to ensure their control of Yemen's oil and other resources. His government also facilitated foreign control of the profits produced by the blood, sweat, and tears of the Yemeni people. While the vast majority of Yemenis scraped by with barely enough to make it day to day, Saleh, his government, and foreign capitalists—in particular those from the U.S., Saudi Arabia, and UAE—made billions.

During the Arab Spring, the Yemeni people rose in opposition to Saleh's government and its foreign sponsors, forcing him from office. His Vice President, Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi, temporarily took over leadership of the government. This changing of the guard was orchestrated by the U.S. and Saudi Arabian

governments in the hopes that it would quell protests without upending their control of the corrupt and despotic government. However, in 2014 Hadi was driven from office after trying to force austerity measures down the throats of the Yemeni people. These measures came at the behest of his foreign masters, who wanted Hadi to cut various social benefits for the people, including a domestic fuel subsidy in return for a loan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The Yemeni people took to the streets for days and brought the government to a standstill. This heroic resistance shook the foundations of the government and startled its foreign sponsors.

However, the mass opposition to these austerity measures provided an opening to the Houthis to capitalize on. The Houthis are a Shi'a group who have been waging an insurgency in the country for decades. During the upheavals and instability of the Arab Spring they gained ground in their military campaign. These successes were aided by military and logistical support from the Iranian government, which sought to gain a foothold in the Arabian Peninsula and challenge the regional dominance of Saudi Arabia. What's more, control of Bab el-Mandeb would provide Iran with international leverage as they could threaten to blockade both this strait and the Strait of Hormuz and thus cripple the flow of oil globally. Given Iran's expansionist aims, and military inferiority to the U.S. and NATO, it needs to have various asymmetrical military options at hand. Blockading these straits is one way that Iran can threaten retaliation against a U.S. military strike.



These means are particularly important because Iran is not yet a nuclear power. What's more China has built its first overseas military base in Djibouti, which lies just across the Red Sea from Yemen. This context helps to frame the larger geopolitical significance of the war in Yemen. So, when the Yemeni people rose up against Hadi's government in the fall of 2014, the Houthis were able to march into Sana'a, the capital of Yemen and take control of the government.

After the initial invasion of Yemen—and corresponding air strikes—was unable to defeat the Houthis, the coalition developed a new strategy in coordination with the U.S., U.K., and France. They aimed to blockade the country and unleash a wave of brutal terror against the people of Yemen. The coalition began indiscriminately bombing schools, hospitals, water treatment plants, and school buses full of children. This is a genocidal strategy which

from foreign countries for basic necessities like food and medicine. This has exacerbated the impact of the blockade and led to a devastating crisis. A recent study estimated that since 2016 at least 80,000 civilians have died from bombing and military campaign alone. Another study found that over 50,000 children have already died of starvation in Yemen in 2017 alone. Over a million people in the country have Cholera because of the systematic and widespread lack of access to clean water, and another 22 million are at high risk to contract the disease. UN aid chief Mark Lowcock recently stated that at least 14 million people in the country are on the verge of famine.

This is a genocidal strategy which clearly shows that the Saudi-UAE coalition and their Western imperialist sponsors would rather kill tens of millions of people than let Yemen slip from their clutches.

Hadi fled to Saudi Arabia in early 2015 to seek support from the Saudi government and Western Imperialist powers for a military campaign to drive the Houthis from Yemen. The Saudis and UAE quickly formed a military coalition with a number of other countries in the region including Qatar, Egypt, Bahrain, Morocco, Jordan, Sudan, and Kuwait. At this point the War in Yemen began in earnest.

While soldiers from these countries are fighting on the front lines of the war, a number of Western imperialist powers—including the U.S., U.K., and France—have effectively orchestrated the military campaign and supplied the necessary equipment. Without intelligence, military planning, planes, bombs, in-flight refueling, guns, bullets, and other support from these countries, the coalition could not carry out the war in Yemen.

clearly shows that the Saudi-UAE coalition and their Western Imperialist sponsors would rather kill tens of millions of people than let Yemen slip from their clutches.

The long history of imperialist domination of Yemen prevented the country from developing a self-sufficient economy, thus leaving it heavily dependent on imports

These statistics help to paint a picture of the brutality of this war and demonstrate the impact of the genocidal strategy of the coalition and its Western Imperialist sponsors. In the wake of the murder of Jamal Khashoggi, the recent increased international focus on Saudi Arabia has put a spotlight on the war in Yemen.



U.S.-Saudi-UAE War on Yemen:

Out of a population of 28 million...

- † **20 million** reliant on food aid to survive
- † **16 million** on the brink of famine
- † **17 million** without access to clean water
- † **Over 1 million** infected with cholera
- † **Over 85,000** children dead from starvation
- † **At least 56,000** dead from airstrikes





Trump and Saudi Crown Prince MBS get together to brag about the size of a weapons deal that supplies the genocidal war in Yemen.

As a result, people here in the U.S. and around the world are beginning to mount an opposition to the US government's support for this war and their deep ties with the Saudi government.

For example, students at universities like Harvard, BU, and MIT have begun a struggle against their universities' ties with the Saudi government. Protests have begun to grow in cities across the U.S. and in other countries as well. These are important steps and can be the beginning of the regrowth of the Anti-War movement in imperialist countries around the world.

Growing opposition to the war in Yemen has pushed the U.S. Senate to allow discussion of this issue. In a recent vote they decided to go forward with discussion of a bill to limit U.S. support for the war in Yemen, and the President's war powers in the conflict. It's important to see that the Senate, and the U.S. government more broadly, is only moving on this issue because of the significant public pressure, here domestically and internationally. The U.S. government has been behind this war from the start, and helped to orchestrate the strategy of creating famine in the country. Therefore, the movement to oppose the war in Yemen, can't rely on this same government to play the leading role in stopping to war. In fact, even though the bill passed the Senate, it is unlikely to pass in the House of Representatives, or be signed into law by Trump. This process could take months, and in the meantime, the people of Yemen will continue to starve and die. Only through continued political pressure can the U.S. government be forced to

take action to end this war. Therefore, organizing in opposition to this war needs to be seen in this light, as an effort to build a powerful Anti-War movement, and not as a "call your Congressmen" type approach.

As the imperialist and expansionist countries around the war continue to pursue genocidal wars of aggression around the world, there is an urgent need to regenerate the Anti-War movement. This need is particularly acute in the U.S., which has conducted military operations in over 150 countries this year alone, has

over 800 military bases around the world, has maintained a military occupation of Afghanistan for over 17 years, and continues to lend support of all kinds to dictatorships like Saudi Arabia to do the "dirty work" for them. The people of this country have a real obligation to practice solidarity with our oppressed and exploited brothers and sisters around the world.



Class Struggle in France

by Sarah



For the past several weeks the Yellow Vests (Gilets Jaunes) protest movement has rocked France. Protesters have blockaded highways, created encampments and roadblocks in roundabouts, held large demonstrations, and fought street battles with the police. The French government has been forced to make changes in response to the movement's demands, including an increase in the minimum wage. Here in the U.S. we are dealing with many of the same political issues, and the success of the movement in France shows us what is possible when people come together and demand changes.

In the past few weeks a new protest movement has emerged in France. The movement, known as the Yellow Vests (*Gilets Jaunes* in French), has spread like wildfire all over France, from small rural towns to the streets of Paris. Participants—who wear yellow reflective safety vests that all cars are required to have in France—have blockaded highways, staged demonstrations and occupations, and have challenged the police in street battles and protests. The movement began in response to a plan to increase taxes on gasoline and diesel fuels, but it has since grown into a wider expression of working-class anger against the corrupt and decadent policies of the French state. After the first four weeks of major upheaval the

French government has been forced to make major concessions, in the hope of stopping the protests, but the Yellow Vests have continued to protest to push for more changes.

In Paris, street battles have taken place between the Yellow Vests and the police which forced the police to retreat under a hail of cobblestones. The Yellow Vests have destroyed high-end shopping streets and attacked symbols of the French government such as the Arc de Triomphe. The recent protests in Paris have rocked the city, so much that the government has considered declaring a state of emergency and using the army to crush the protests. Still, even in the face of tear gas, batons, and rubber bullets the protests have continued, and they have grown more and more militant.



The working people of France are giving expression to their anger and rage, about the indignity of their conditions of life and the utter injustice of a political system which enriches the ruling elite while the working class starves and cannot make ends meet.

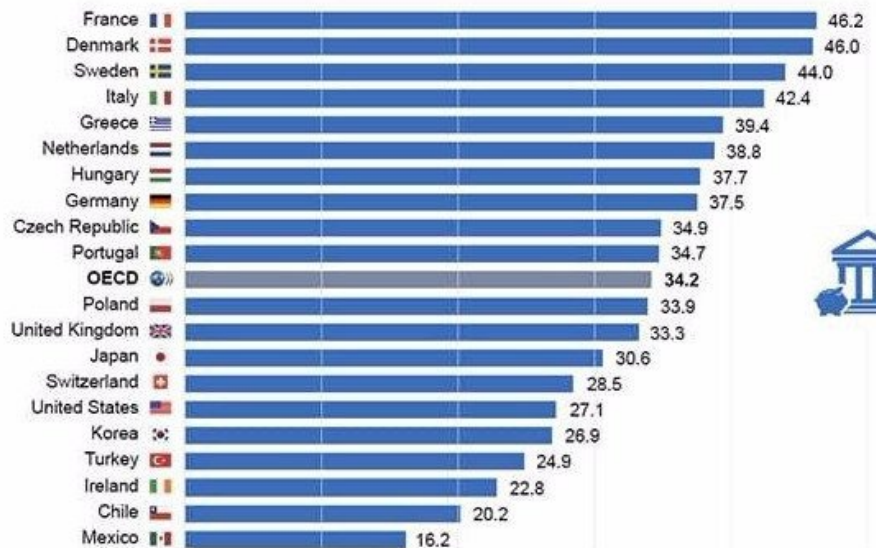
The protests were sparked by the current President of France, Emmanuel Macron, unveiling a series of new taxes on diesel fuel and gasoline. He framed these taxes as “progressive” measures to combat climate change, by discouraging people from driving to reduce CO₂ emissions. But in rural parts of France, and even in some of the outlying suburbs of Paris, people have no option except driving to get around. Similar to the U.S. there is not much public transit in the countryside or in the poorer parts of big cities, and people often have to travel far from home to find work. Many in France are often living paycheck-to-paycheck with very little wiggle room in their budgets. An increase in the cost of transport would stretch many people beyond the breaking point, and they would have to start choosing whether to pay for food or for gasoline to get to work. Many Yellow Vest protests have been held in rural areas, in smaller villages and towns where people would feel the impact of the proposed tax the most.

The French people have also suffered for a long time under austerity policies. These cutbacks in social services often hit people the hardest in the countryside or in working class neighborhoods in cities. Rural hospitals are often the first to be closed and rural schools the first to be consolidated or closed. Oftentimes, these austerity measures force people in the countryside to drive further for medical care, education, and the like. The way the tax was framed also put the blame for climate change and CO₂ emissions onto poor working people, portraying them as ignorant polluters who had to be forced to do what was necessary to protect the climate. This adds insult to injury, charging working people extra for a choice that is out of their hands and then insulting them for it too.



Tax revenues continue to increase in the OECD

Tax as a percentage of GDP for selected OECD countries (preliminary 2017 data)



Emmanuel Macron is a particularly unpopular president in France. He was elected in May 2017, in a hotly-contested election with a far-right candidate named Marine Le Pen. Le Pen was the candidate of the National Front (*Front National*), since renamed National Rally (*Rassemblement National*), a fascist party that blames the economic and social problems in France primarily on immigrants and Jews.

An increase in the cost of getting around would stretch many people beyond the breaking point, and they would have to start choosing whether to pay for food or for gasoline to get to work.

FN was founded by a number of Nazi collaborators who helped the Nazis murder Jews during World War II. Le Pen was able to convince a section of the French working class that the problems they face, such as low, stagnant wages, cuts to benefits, difficulty getting and keeping a job, etc, were the fault of immigrants coming to France and taking advantage of the country.

This redirected the anger and frustration people were feeling away from the business and



political elite who govern France, who are profiting immensely off the labor of French workers, and channeled it instead into support for fascist politics aimed at kicking immigrants out of France.

Going into the 2017 elections Le Pen's party had more support than in prior elections, and there was a real possibility that she would be elected President. Macron emerged in this context as a "centrist" candidate to oppose Le Pen. Before getting involved in politics Macron was an investment banker. He advocates for free-market, pro-business policies, and for dismantling protections for working people. The political and business elite in France rallied behind Macron, knowing that he would protect their interests. Macron's campaign was pretty much entirely based on just not being Le Pen, and many people who voted for him did so not because they supported his policies or wanted to elect him, but simply because they wanted to oppose Le Pen. The 2017 election generated mass outrage and protests at the absurdity of the choice, and a common slogan in street demonstrations was "*Ni le banquier, ni la fasciste!*" (neither the banker nor the fascist).

Since the election Macron's popularity has plummeted. He has led attacks on some of the big unions in France, such as the railroad workers on France's national railroad company, proposed firing hundreds of thousands of government employees, and planned billions of Euros in cuts to public services. He was also at the center of a national scandal when his head security goon, Alexandre Benalla, was filmed illegally impersonating a police officer and viciously beating protesters during a demonstration for May Day 2018.

Given the vicious series of attacks he has launched on the working class and the blatant

corruption and decadence of his administration it's no surprise that the Yellow Vests have targeted Macron in particular and many signs and chants have called for him to resign.

The Yellow Vest movement may have started out opposing the fuel tax, but it has become a rebellion against the whole social and economic position of the working class in France. People are not just

rebellious against the gas tax, but against grinding poverty, few opportunities to better their situation, and a political system which is set up to profit from their labor while keeping them at just bare-minimum subsistence. These conditions have become intolerable for people, and their anger and rage at the injustice of their situation has fueled the Yellow Vest protests.

The Yellow Vest movement may have started out opposing the fuel tax, but it has become a rebellion against the whole social and economic position of the working class in France.

These protests have forced the government to accede to some of the demands that the Yellow Vests have put forward. Thus far, the government has decided to cancel the planned gas tax, they have increased the minimum wage by 100 Euros a month, fees for retirement benefits will be lowered for many retirees, and overtime pay will not be taxed. Emmanuel Macron also encouraged business owners across the country to pay year-end bonuses to their employees, which would also be exempted from normal taxes. These are major concessions which the ruling class in France would not have made if the protests had not happened. It is a major victory for the working people of France that they forced the ruling class to make these concessions, but many issues facing working people are still unaddressed. The capitalist ruling class hopes that many Yellow Vests will be satisfied by these changes and will stop protesting, but many people prominent in the



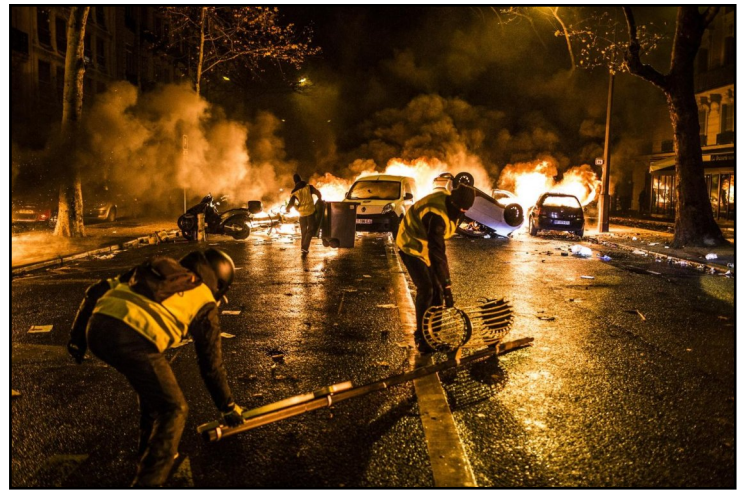


movement have called for the protests to continue, and have called the gains won so far “just the beginning.”

To totally address these issues the French people will need to get organized, build up a nation-wide revolutionary movement, overthrow the government of capitalist pigs and parasites which is bleeding them dry, and create a socialist government in its place. The Yellow Vest movement is not going to be able to do this on its own, since it is a decentralized movement without a nation-wide organizing body. Even so, a lot of the slogans that have appeared in demonstrations and marches show that a lot of working people in France are calling for this kind of change. Some slogans that have appeared in news media about the protests include “Kill the bourgeoisie!” and “We took off heads for less than this!” These slogans aren’t just calling for the gas tax to be lowered, or for increases in funding for hospitals and schools. They are calling for rebellion against

capitalist rule and against the capitalist government which runs France today.

Of course, not every Yellow Vest is calling for revolution. Nonetheless, these protests are very significant developments. Many people in France will get involved in them and become politicized for the first time. Just recently, in connection with the protests in Paris, there was a high-school walkout of over 400 schools in the Paris area. Some of the recent protests have involved hundreds of thousands of people all over Paris. The government has already been forced to grant major concessions, and if the protests continue to grow they will be forced to grant even more in order to return to “normalcy.” The victories which



the working people of France have won so far are significant in and of themselves, and they can play a key role in the development of a revolutionary movement across the whole country. For us here in the U.S. it is inspiring to see this movement, and we should support it as we support people’s struggles everywhere around the world.



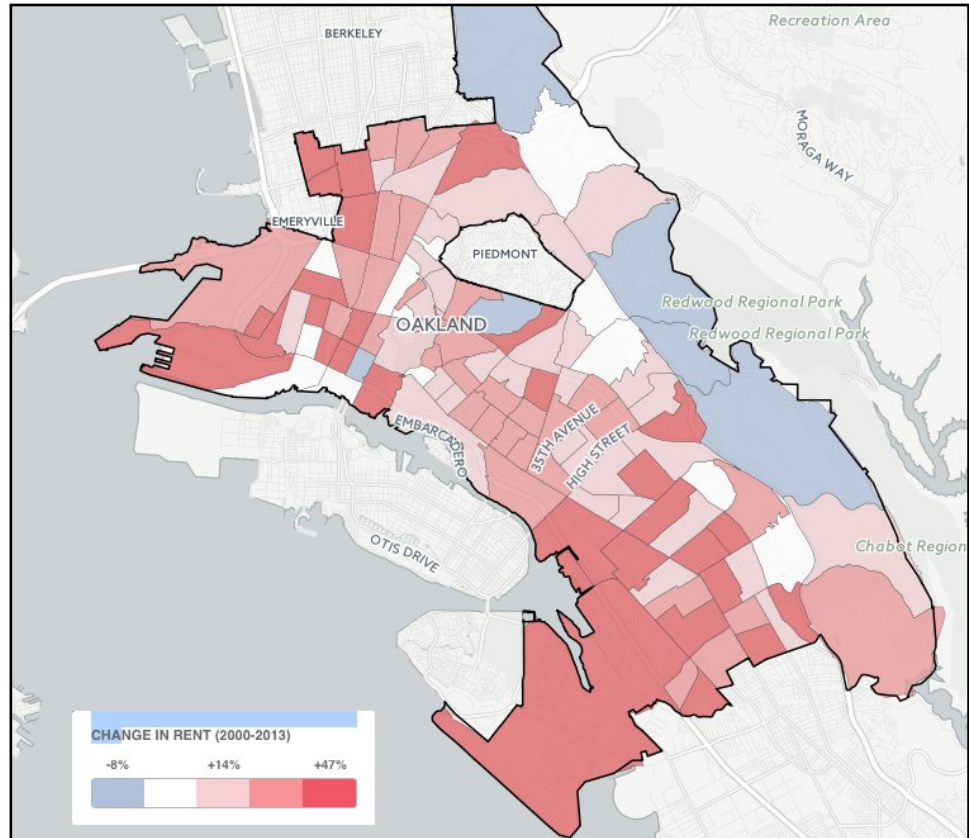
*Graffiti on the Arc de Triomphe reads:
“It is right to rebel” and “Impeach Macron”*



Gentrification and Class Struggle

by Darren

Gentrification is a major issue affecting many cities across the country. It is particularly acute in formerly industrial cities that are working to kick out poor people and transform the urban area into a playground for the rich. In the place of factories and warehouses come offices, tech companies, shopping centers, and startups. With these come luxury condos and rising rent, while the poor people are driven out of the city and onto the streets. In order to effectively fight back against gentrification it's important to understand the underlying political and economic dynamics behind this disease plaguing so many cities.



Changes in the cost of rent in Oakland between 2000-2013. Since 2013, things have only gotten worse.

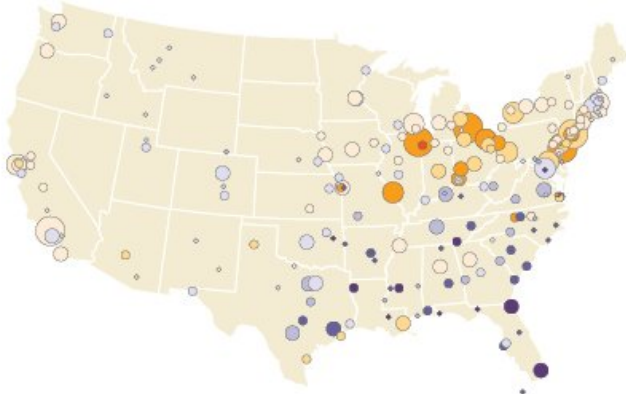
As rents rise, new developments for the rich and relatively well-off are cropping up in working class neighborhoods across the country. Working people are seeing themselves pushed out of areas they have called home, some for generations. New coffee shops, luxury condos, art spaces, fancy restaurants, and nightlife appear—but they are not for the locals. Instead this sort of development is being carried out for the “hip,” wealthier newcomers who want to turn cities into a playground for their enjoyment. These changes are supported by politicians who want to create more housing for the wealthy. With a lot of money to be made, local city governments protect developers’ interests by sending the pigs in to do their dirty work—evicting people and harassing the people even after they have been thrown out on the curb. The removal of working people from the community is just another part of redesigning the city to better serve the interests of the wealthy.

These changes are deliberate and their effects are destructive to most poor communities. They drive working people out of an area altogether and push them further into destitution. Working people are under attack by more than just rising rents.

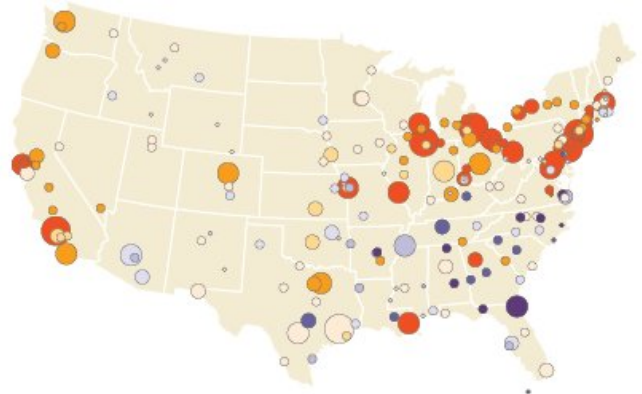
When business interests target a neighborhood for gentrification, they—in other words representatives of the rich, capitalist class, including the owners, the government, and their appointees—want the profits to start flowing in, and our asses to get the hell out. Of course, they don’t put it in these terms. Often wealthy companies moving into an area are presented as offering new jobs (though not for the original inhabitants). And new luxury housing developments often claim to offer “affordable” housing for working class people, paradoxically after many more units of housing for lower income renters have already been eliminated by their “development” initiatives.



The First Great Migration:
1910-1940



The Second Great Migration:
1940-1970



Despite this progressive facade, the developers and related interests take many actions that hurt the people. Working people are often used to living in apartments in neglect, full of issues that landlords take forever to repair. And, when landlords think they can make more money with wealthier clients or by selling a building, the current tenants' apartments are often deliberately neglected to the point of forcing them to leave. Landlords also use other tactics to force people out, like hiking rents by hundreds of dollars and selling out from under renters. As people are kicked out with nowhere to go, the city government often sends the police in to expedite displacement by force and threat of force. This is also part of the process of capitalist development known as gentrification.

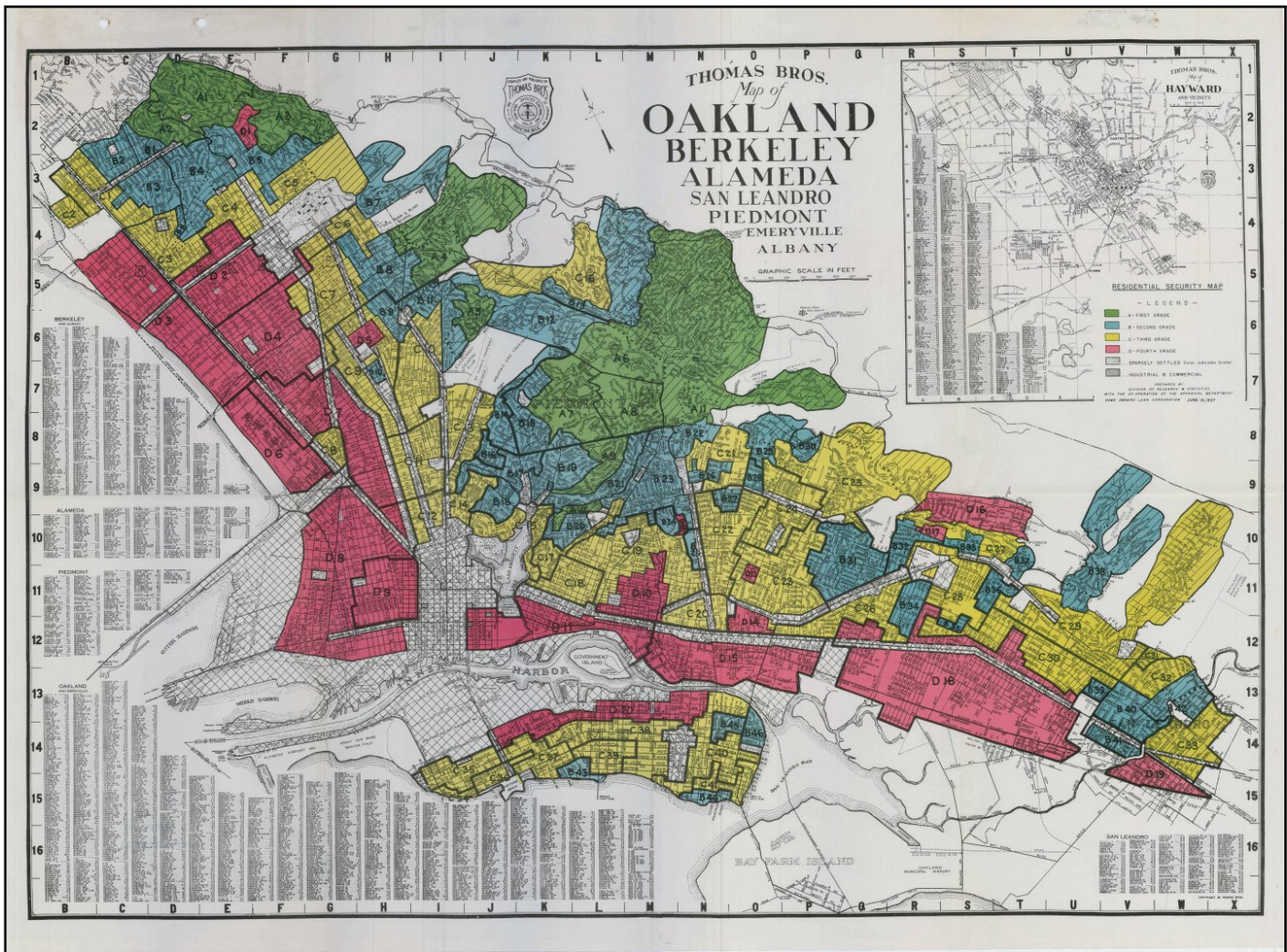
Politicians and developers have many tools to disguise this process. They often make empty statements about how much they care about the people. They know to use icons and historical figures that people respect, in order to disguise their true intentions. Businesses sponsor art with revolutionary symbols or even give superficial support to a few progressive causes because, after all, a mural of a revolutionary or a token gesture in support of one is a lot less of a threat than the real deal. In the meantime, our situations get worse and worse. We lose our homes and our friends. And we are endlessly blamed for our own troubles, when we should be raising hell about these thieves who are destroying our lives and our future.

Throughout the history of this country the working class has repeatedly been forced to chase fleeting opportunities, including even migrating across the country during economic booms and downturns. The Black community in the Bay Area can be traced back to massive

waves of migration that began during the early 20th century. This period known as "The Great Migration" saw many rural Black people move out of the American South into cities in the North East and later to the West Coast. Black folk looked to escape the intense racism of the Jim Crow South while also seeking new economic opportunities in Northern cities. New advances in the mechanization of agriculture forced many African Americans out of the South and cheap labor was in high demand in northern and western American cities.

The Bay Area saw a boom in the years following the Second World war. Black people from rural areas were attracted to the Bay, drawn by the prospects of jobs in factories, shipping yards, the ports and rail stations. As a result of these migrations, almost half of African Americans lived in urban areas by 1960. The numbers have risen since then, but the recent surge in gentrification has driven many Black people from urban centers to suburban slums.

At the same time as the Great Migration, several factors encouraged American whites to move out of certain neighborhoods in cities, into developments created on the periphery of major urban areas across the country. This phenomenon has been at times called, "white flight", referring to the drastic exodus of white Americans from more ethnically diverse urban areas to more ethnically homogeneous suburbs. These moves were part of a project of the U.S. government



Redlining in the Bay Area, 1937.

that used realty companies and the media to entice white people to leave cities. Racist depictions of Black men as criminal predators who preyed on white women helped to fuel a frenzy of white exodus from urban centers.

This was part of a conscious policy of the U.S. government to maintain and deepen segregation by new means. Middle class and some working class whites were offered loans and some new job opportunities elsewhere. The Federal government created new tax incentives and government assistance programs for prospective homeowners. By cultivating a culture of home ownership as part of the “American Dream” and providing many white Americans with access to credit for mortgages, huge profits were secured for banks and developers.

These policies, while portrayed as progressive reforms, often had explicitly racist overtones. Take for instance the Home Owners’ Loan Corporation (HOLC), created by Congress in 1933, and promoted by President Franklin D

Roosevelt to cut down on urban foreclosures that had increased during the Great Depression. HOLC issued low-interest, long term loans to almost a million homes. However, in order to show which areas were safe investments, HOLC created “residential safety maps” and classified neighborhoods based on terrain, age of buildings as well as whether or not there was a “threat of infiltration of foreign-born, negro, or lower grade population.” Banks quickly copied the standards set forth by the federal government and refused to lend to people in areas considered “risky” investments, often a euphemism for poor minority neighborhoods. Similar practices continued even after the Second World War.

Clarence Thomas, a West Oakland resident and Black Panther Alumni, described how his neighborhood in Oakland changed during his life: “When we moved here in 1949, we were one of four Black households in the area, everyone was either Italian or Portuguese. Then by the time I was in high school, the area



was almost 100% Black. Now, as of last year (2017), my mother's house is once again one of four Black households in the whole area." This description is an example of the general trend over the past half-century or so. Thomas also explained that when he was growing up, lack of access to credit and mortgages was a major barrier to home ownership for many Black people. Banks would flat out refuse to loan to Black people but as waves of Black migration continued into the Bay Area, white people were encouraged to relocate to the suburbs with the promise of cheaper, long term loans. In the wake of the post-World War Two economic boom, the U.S. went through a series of recessions and urban communities began to face higher unemployment.



Capitalists and politicians were particularly concerned about the impact of revolutionary organizing on Black youth in the urban slums.

Throughout the history of this country the working class has repeatedly been forced to chase fleeting opportunities, including even migrating across the country during economic booms and downturns.

At that same time an active labor movement was involved in strikes in cities across the country. The Black Liberation struggle was also experiencing an upsurge in Black ghettos in large cities. In response to this social upheaval in the 60s, 70s, and 80s many industries that previously employed working class Black folk began to move their factories from urban areas. This was part of a coordinated effort to stem the growing unrest and reduce the risk that the labor movement and Black Liberation Struggle posed to the profits of various capitalists. As a result of this exodus of factories and manufacturing, many city governments have pursued policies of "Urban Renewal" aimed at transforming cities into commercial centers and playgrounds for the wealthy.

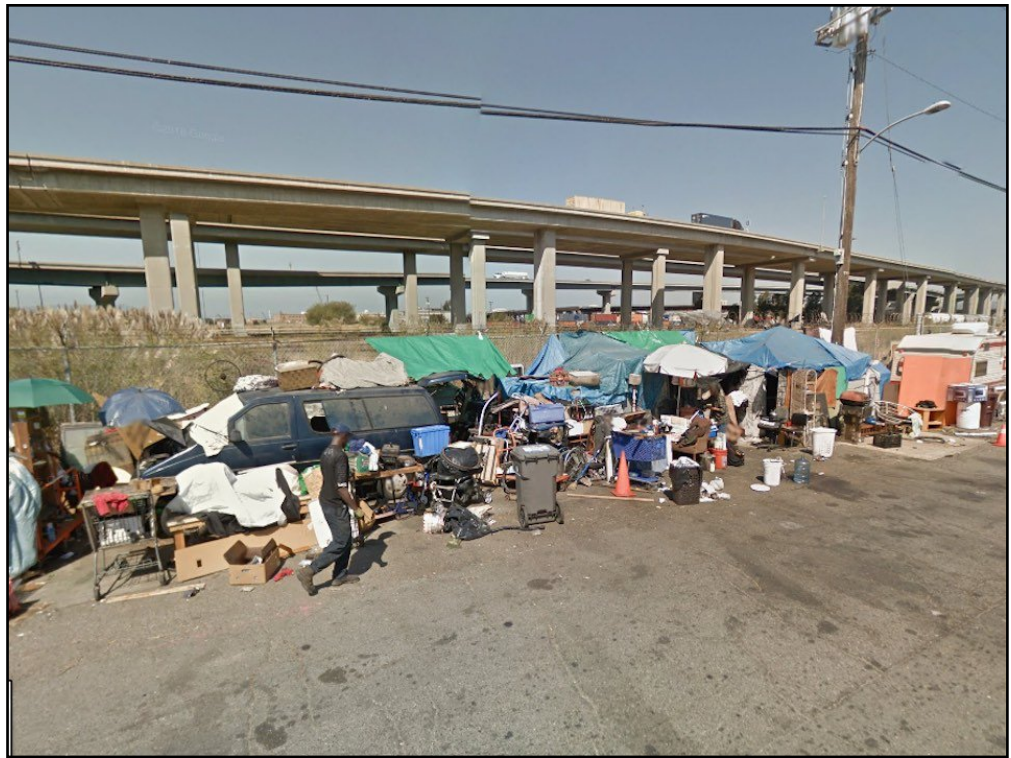
As part of this process, many cities have worked to drive out poor people and "redevelop" poor neighborhoods into luxury apartments and upscale shopping districts. Given this reality, it's important to see that the housing market does not exist in order to provide housing to the most people but to generate maximum profits for developers, financial institutions, and other capitalists.

This relationship essentially creates a monopoly between large realty interests. Monopolies in the market drive up the price of housing as different realty interests increasingly invest more into luxury housing and collaborate to keep rents—and therefore their profits—rising. These monopolies and semi-monopolies are able to influence the government to provide them with innumerable measures (such as tax incentives, zoning permits, contracts from the government, bailouts of large companies) to ensure massive profits for these corporate interests.

As part of this parasitic relationship, large developers are continually buying more property, and converting existing housing into luxury units. Many of these properties will not even be occupied in the short term, but sit empty, used purely as "investments" to be sold or rented at a more opportune time. This trend pushes working people out of the market and inflates the price of housing. Under these conditions, real estate developers and property owners collaborate to restrict the supply of housing for working people in order to sell luxury developments at higher prices to wealthier buyers. Cooperation between these large capitalist interests allows them to reshape the city according to their interests.

Working class housing in general exists in the worst conditions. Working people must contend with the lowest job security, and often deal with daily harassment from police and predatory individuals. But even working class neighborhoods are not uniform; they are filled with different types of people. People occupy different social positions in terms of what kind of housing they can afford to live in or what jobs are available to them.

Often renters make up the largest sections of a working class neighborhood and the renters stand to lose the most as rents skyrocket and developers begin to speculate on property. In every case, working people have little to gain. One way of thinking is that a person must be actively renting a unit, or employed at a particular location for an arbitrary period in order to be labeled as a “tenant” or a “worker.” But for the working class, whatever position they are in is always tenuous and stability is often temporary, not permanent.



A West Oakland Encampment in 2017.

Given this instability and the pressures of gentrification, working people are often not able to pay their rent and many jobs have seasonal layoffs or positions that will not employ people full time throughout the year.

Working class people are effectively forced to choose their housing based on their monthly income and are particularly vulnerable to shifts in the housing market, as working people cannot simply earn more as prices rise.

Homeowners are in a different position as many of them do not pay rent, but instead have mortgages. Therefore as markets shift, they generally do not see a significant change in their monthly expenses (except for increases in property taxes). However, as gentrification intensifies in a city many homeowners are often pressured to sell their homes, generally for a fraction of the profits a developers stands to gain from reselling those homes for significantly higher prices. These buyouts target lower income homeowners, people that still have mortgages but may have trouble paying, or have other debts.

On the other hand, many business owners and other property owners have an incentive to work together with new developers and investors in a neighborhood. Development is often supported by local property owners in an area, because they believe that they stand to profit by the rising value of their properties. Local business owners hope to gain in various

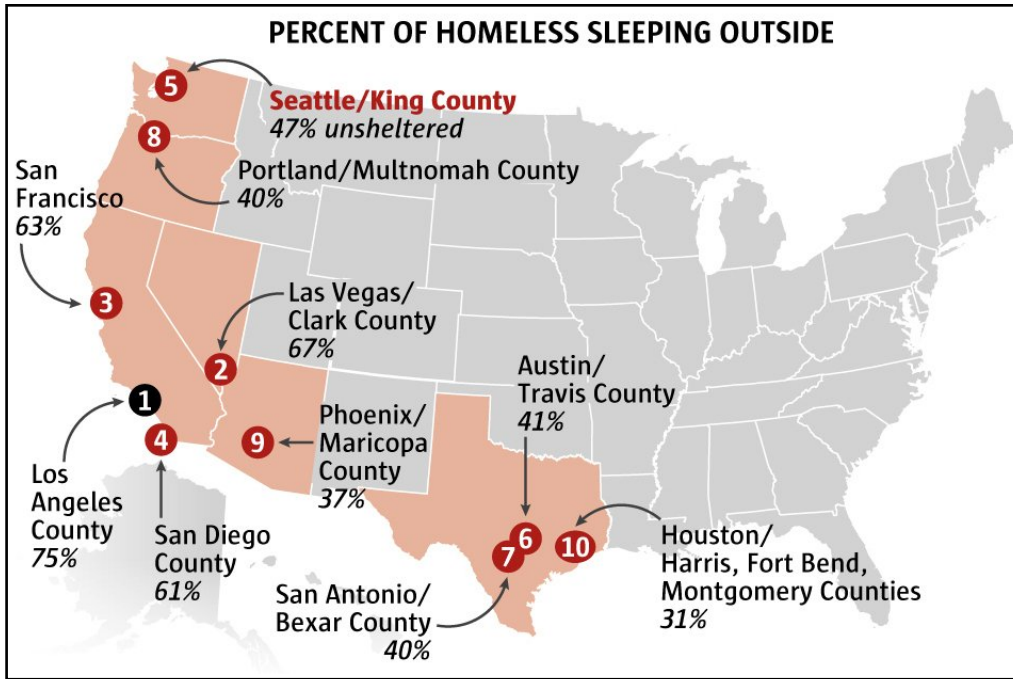
ways from an influx of wealthy people moving into a neighborhood. They often have a good deal to gain by gentrification in the short-term. However, they may later be out competed by larger businesses moving in and capitalizing off lucrative projects and profits from the wealthy clientele that move in to the neighborhood.

Working class people are effectively forced to choose their housing based on their monthly income and are particularly vulnerable to shifts in the housing market.

In contrast to these business owners, most of the people have nothing to gain from gentrification, except a possible eviction notice in their mailbox. For working people this process is more intense and continues to push many out of communities across the United States long before businesses feel the crunch. All too often, working class Black and Latino communities are the hardest hit by displacement and gentrification. For instance, the Black population in Oakland has dropped from 46% of the total population in 1995 to under 17% in 2015.



PERCENT OF HOMELESS SLEEPING OUTSIDE



Another important section of the population are the former renters. These are people that were once able to rent in a particular area but have been priced out of the area entirely. Some former renters are able to relocate to other areas and become renters again. Others are unable to make this transition. Finding new housing means often having to pay thousands of dollars upfront, including a security deposit as well as first and last month's rent. In addition, many landlords run credit checks that penalize people with a history of debt and poverty. People forced out of their apartments also have to contend with new restrictions put forth by other landlords such as rules against pets, children, or even guests and visitors.

There are currently at least 55,000 [homeless] people living in...the Bay Area.

In recent years in the Bay Area, these and other factors have forced droves of poor people to turn to living in informal settlements, or in their vehicles. There are currently at least 55,000 people living in such conditions in the Bay Area. While not a majority of the working population, homeless people serve as a grim reminder that under our current political and economic system, working people are set up to fail. Contrary to stereotypes made in media that homeless people are entirely "drug addicted," "lazy," "or mentally impaired," there are many working people living

on the streets. While many work full time, others are not able to find work on a full-time basis.

The sad reality is that in Oakland, as in many other cities across the country, one full time job is not generally enough to pay the bills. What's more only about 30% of homeless people in Oakland report that alcohol or substance use pose a significant barrier to their daily lives. Much of the homeless population is disabled, and elderly. In Oakland, the homeless population has

increased by at least 25% in the last two years. The large and increasing number of homeless people show how precarious things are for working people in this country.

The sad reality is that in Oakland, as in many other cities across the country, one full time job is not generally enough to pay the bills.

The source of immediate oppression for the homeless is generally not landlords, but often is the cops and other city workers. When people find themselves out on the street, they are quickly confronted by numerous city ordinances that outlaw living outside or restrict how people can use public space. Additionally, city governments restrict working people's access to public bathrooms and municipal services in general.

This often leads to informal settlements that can quickly becoming overrun with garbage and human waste. City governments often send out city workers, escorted by police to enforce city restrictions, laws which effectively amount to the criminalization of the poor. It is often city workers that act as the velvet glove of police harassment, confiscating property and displacing the homeless from their temporary shelters, all the while claiming to be simply "cleaning the streets."

Working people must resist these attacks, and unite in the struggle against developers and the other capitalist gentrifiers. This struggle will be fought primarily by renters and former renters (the homeless and semi-homeless). There is a possibility of some lower income homeowners becoming a part of this struggle, but these efforts must be led by the working people's interests (and not guided by the interests of the small businesses, homeowners, and middle class intellectuals). This interest is defined by the common reality of working people in this country and internationally. Unlike capitalists and property owners, working people do not ultimately benefit from exploitation and oppression and therefore have a shared interest to come together and struggle for a better world. Renters have a higher chance of being kicked out than bought out, and working class renters are forced to live in the worst conditions.

Resisting gentrification means organizing against the displacement of people from their homes, shelters, and the city altogether.

Some business owners and landlords may realize their short term gain isn't worth squeezing out working people. Larger business interests coming to such neighborhoods may even eventually endanger the interests of small businesses and landlords. But these owners tend to go back-and-forth between serving the interests of the people and serving their own immediate interest in profit. They cannot be counted on as reliable and consistent allies in our present situation. Resisting gentrification means organizing against the displacement of people from their homes, shelters, and the city altogether. This is only possible through unifying a broad mass of working people in resistance.



Fig. 3.1: Proposed infill commercial development in Opportunity Area 1 (26th Street and Mandela Parkway)

Real estate developers and city governments often create computer generated images to paint gentrification as an effort to “beautify” the city instead of the violent displacement of poor people that it is.

It is possible to do this even though the capitalist pigs and politicians are directing a coordinated effort to drive many working people out of their homes and out of many cities across the country. Once developers plan to “redevelop” an area it is almost inevitable that a large section of working people will be removed unless they unite in resistance to this displacement.

This is because the capitalists and politicians are focused on development for the rich and powerful at the expense of the vast majority of people. This is evident in their construction plans that cater to those who can afford luxury apartments and the lavish lifestyle of the wealthy. However, while evictions and displacement happens quickly, they do not take place overnight. As cities shift from predominantly industrial to commercial industries, the wealthy and powerful still need people in the cities to work, but fewer and fewer workers are needed over time.

**EVICTED
NOTICE**



Building resistance requires organizing for a substantial amount of time in a particular neighborhood, and this means taking the time to talk with people and build relationships. Through discussions, it is possible to gain clarity on recent events in the area as well as the larger issues that keep people from coming together. Sharing experiences can begin to create a common understanding of the problems in front of people. This unity is needed to break down the divisions between people and find ways to work together. To be clear, without any examples of how to fight back, people are unlikely to step out on their own. But demonstrating how people can come together, even in small ways, can change how people see a given situation. Such changes can help to clarify the basis for people to get organized and collectively fight back.



A recent protest at Oakland City Hall against displacement and gentrification in the area.

Working people must resist these attacks, and unite in the struggle against developers and the other capitalist gentrifiers. This struggle will be fought primarily by renters and former renters (the homeless and semi-homeless).

However, it is not enough to simply meet and talk amongst the people. The people must be challenged to see the problems right in front of them and to struggle against their oppressors. During conversations about key issues, it may be simple to speak about the problems at hand, but it is also very easy for the people to become overwhelmed by all the problems they face at a given moment. Working people are under constant pressure from their jobs, tenuous living situations, and other forms of oppression they face daily. What's more, they often have to work even harder after losing their homes.

The need to keep themselves presentable while living outside, the added pressure of securing their belongings, and the constant threat of theft and police harassment often dominate the thinking of people living on the street. To move beyond the day to day, and instead focus discussion on the larger struggle, it is often necessary to be direct with people that the only hope we have to really change things is to come together in the struggle against our oppressors.

This requires that people understand that their individual struggles are not isolated from those of the people around them, but are instead part of the larger struggle against the oppressive reality of our society. In this way, people can help to address problems around them together. These can include things such as theft, trash disposal, or even the need to create social events and friendships in the midst of a tough situation. It is by working through these immediate problems that we build can build our unity, and increase our ability to fight back against larger problems caused by the actions of the rich and powerful.

As the police clamp down on poor people, brutalizing them at the behest of the rich, we must find ways to come together to fight back. Even if it is just a handful of us at first, we can be an example that inspires others to take a similar stand. We will lose the most by not fighting back.



Visit to a Homeless Encampment in West Oakland

by John

This article documents one RUF comrade's visit to the Bay Area, and his involvement in the struggle there against gentrification and displacement at a homeless encampment there. Other comrades have been organizing among the homeless and working-class population in the area for months. Through joining with the people in struggle they have been able to prevent many from being evicted, and mobilize the people in the struggle.

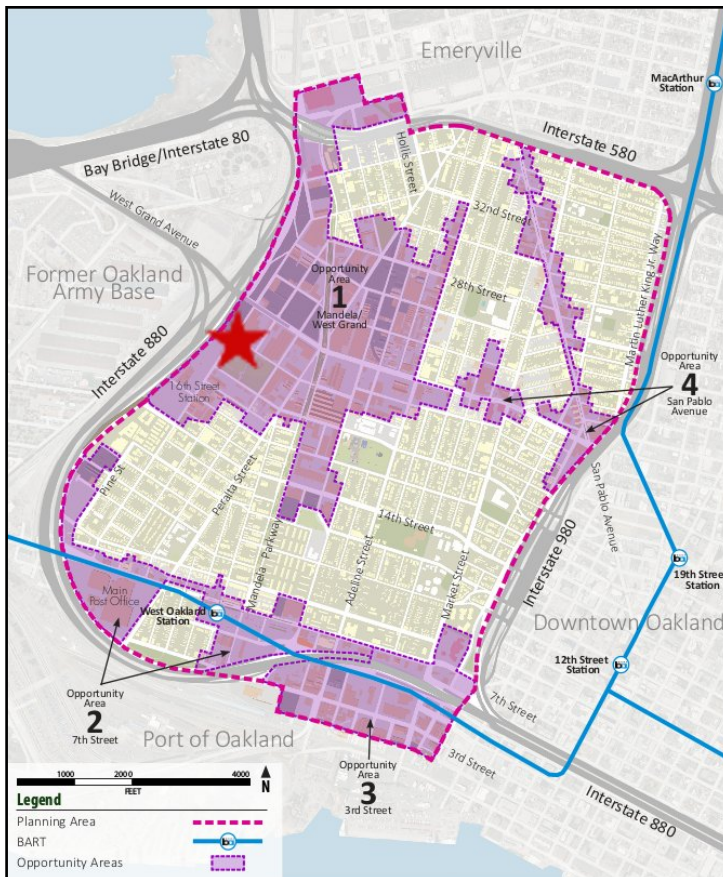


I recently traveled out to the Bay Area to see the work that some comrades in the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) were doing. For a number of months they have been doing outreach among the homeless community in West Oakland. Like many other places in country, the Bay Area is in the midst of a man-made crisis of displacement and homelessness. Money is flowing into the area, and a few wealthy bankers, city officials, and developers are making profits hand-over-fist. This accumulation of wealth comes at the expense of poor and working folks throughout the area, who are being pushed down and out by rising rents and disappearing jobs. This has led to a situation where 55,000 people are homeless in the Bay Area, if not more.

While many non-profit organizations and government bodies pretend to care about the homeless, the reality is that the vast majority of homeless people are left out to die. In this context there is a real urgent need to bring people together, get organized, and fight back. And that's exactly what comrades in RUF are doing. I was lucky enough to get to participate in these efforts first hand and see the amazing work being done.

Before getting into the struggle itself, I want to step back and talk about the larger situation in the Bay Area. This context is important because it helps to clarify the significance of the struggle. It used to be that the area was a hotbed of manufacturing and shipping in the country. This was particularly true during and after WWII, when a lot of industrial development took place in the area and many Black folks migrated there from the South, seeking to escape the racism of the Jim Crow South, only to find a different form of white supremacy in the urban ghettos of the North. While the industry in the area provided employment to many, employment under capitalism is a brutal form of exploitation where poor people are forced to work long, hard hours in dangerous conditions for the enrichment of the few. Thus, many who fled the terror of the Klan in the South found new oppressive forces in the factory owners, foreman, police, and other white supremacist forces. And while Black and Latino working class people often faced the most difficult conditions, their white working-class brothers and sisters were often not much better off.





A map of one of the city of Oakland's gentrification plans with the site of the struggle marked with a red star.

As the boom died down in the post-war period, the Bay Area and San Francisco in particular underwent a period of “Urban Renewal.” This term is really a euphemism for the displacement of working-class people and poor communities for the benefit of the rich and wealthy. Basically, as factories and related industries closed down, the city government worked to replace them with commercial enterprises (which employ fewer people), luxury apartments, and various office buildings that employ wealthy and middle class people—instead of the working class folks who had previously worked in the city. With these efforts come the corresponding rise in rents, crackdowns by police, evictions, and gentrification. Urban Renewal initiatives left many jobless and pushed the area’s poorer residents further from the downtown areas, which were increasingly transformed into playgrounds for the rich.

In many senses, this is a process which continues to this day. Especially in the wake of the Black Power movement and the political struggles of the 1960s and 70s, capitalists sought to move their factories overseas and to other

locations in the US without a legacy of revolutionary struggles. They felt that it hurt their profit margin to have their factories in places like the Bay Area and Detroit which had a long-standing history of revolutionary struggle and union organizing.

A similar process took place in many industrial cities around the country. As a result of this, poor folks in cities all across the country were forced into even more dire circumstances, unemployment rose drastically, and more and more people were forced to increasingly rely on various limited and inadequate government welfare programs just to meet ends meet. These programs themselves have come under increasing attacks and faced so many cutbacks that many poor people who are in the most desperate conditions do not even qualify for assistance.

As part of the ongoing process of “Urban Renewal” in major cities and the Federal initiative for the “Deconcentration of Poverty”—a racist scheme aimed at destroying Black and Latino neighborhoods—millions of poor people have been displaced from cities all across the country. To replace the manufacturing and industry that left cities like San Francisco and Oakland, politicians and capitalists have worked to transform these urban centers into commercial cities full of middle-class office workers with a lot of disposable income.

Urban Renewal initiatives left many jobless and pushed the area’s poorer residents further from the downtown areas, which were increasingly transformed into playgrounds for the rich.

This is particularly clear in the Bay Area where countless start-ups and Biotech companies have sprouted up. This has led to a big influx of tech workers who make hundreds of thousands of dollars each year. With this has come a huge real-estate bubble that has driven up the cost of housing to astronomical levels. Those working people “lucky” enough to be employed—and therefore work hard for the enrichment of some capitalists—have had to move farther and farther from the urban center. It is increasingly common for working people to have to commute several hours to work each day.





Many people at the encampment live in vehicles, and the location provides them with safety from towing and costly tickets.

And while the developers, banks, and politicians have driven most working class people from the city, they still need some of them to work there in various service level and minimum wage jobs. This sort of employment is essential in cities that are increasingly becoming playgrounds for the rich.

As part of this whole process known as capitalist development, many poor folks have been left out in the cold, both metaphorically and literally. While the rich get richer, the poor are left with fewer and fewer scraps. And many have been driven out of their homes and onto the streets. The crisis is particularly acute in the Bay Area. And it was in the context of one of the worst homelessness crises in the country that I traveled to West Oakland.

My comrades in the area had been working hard doing outreach to various homeless encampments in the area for a few months. They had begun to link up with folks in one section of West Oakland in particular. This spot, right by the freeway, and nearby an old railway station had a few hundred people living in a few block radius. There were a number of vacants and

semi-repurposed old industrial buildings in the area, the decaying skeletons of the industry of years past. The industries which occupied these buildings—which employed and exploited the working people of the area—have left. They outsourced their production to other sections of the country or overseas. In their place, the city of Oakland plans to build a “high intensity Biotech campus.” In short, a mix of office workplaces for middle class tech workers and capitalists as well as the associated commercial playground for them to spend their substantial income on overpriced health foods, new-age healing quackery, and expensive micro-brewed beers made by their fellow hipsters.

The major obstacle to such “luxurious” forms of “Urban Renewal” are a few hundred homeless people living in the area. Some folks live in shelters and tents they had set up around a park with a baseball field. These shelters are often makeshift (although one made by an El Salvadorian carpenter was sturdy and a testament to his knowledge of his trade) and provide folks with little more than some basic shelter from the elements.



Folks slept in tents, in makeshift lean-tos made with tarps, and I even saw one guy sleeping on a old beat up couch outdoors with little more than cardboard to cover him. A number of other people were set up in RVs and cars parked around the park. Many of the folks living out of their vehicles can never stay in one spot for more than a day or two. The city has an extensive police force which constantly harasses them and forces them to move or risk losing their vehicles and everything in them. For many this can be a life or death struggle; they keep most of their stuff in their cars and RVs.



At this particular spot, many people had vehicles in need of expensive repairs before they could move, and had set up in this area because it had provided—at least temporarily—a respite from harassment by the pigs. Given this relatively stability many people had set up some of their things around their RVs. Others had built small structures next to their vehicles for their dogs, and set up chairs and couches so that they could sit outside during the day.

The city has an extensive police force which constantly harasses [the homeless] and forces them to move or risk losing their vehicles and everything in them. For many this can be a life or death struggle.

A block from the park was a larger encampment. This was set up on a group of connected vacant lots by the train tracks and freeway overpasses. Some folks here had RVs and vehicles on site, and others had set up shelters of one sort or another. One guy even had a San Francisco Municipal Bus (in pretty good condition) that he lived in. Around the Muni bus and a few other RVs he and others had built up a rock wall.

Others lived in more makeshift structures or beat up old vehicles. A few burnt out cars without wheels were scattered throughout the encampment. I would later learn that tweakers who live under the freeway overpass will sometimes set people's cars on fire in the middle of the night. In other places there are larger collections of stuff, including trash. The city provides no regular garbage collection to the encampment so people don't have a way to get rid of their trash. Nearby businesses and even random people in trucks sometimes show up in the middle of night and try to dump their trash in the encampment. Sometimes they are driven off by the residents of the encampment, but sometimes they manage to dump the trash and then the homeless get blamed for being messy.

On my first day on the West Coast I went through the park with my comrades and they introduced me and another comrade from the East Coast to folks in the encampment and around the park. I was struck by how many homeless people in the area work regular jobs. Many are able to find at least some part-time employment, but this is not enough to cover the cost of an apartment in the Bay Area. In fact, even a full-time working-class job generally doesn't provide enough income to pay the bills. When I first met Tommy, the carpenter from El Salvador, he told me about how he works a few days a week, doing skilled labor, and still can't afford to pay rent in the area. Many people in the area and across the country are in a similar situation.



Tommy (second from right) with some friends at the park where he lives.

Tommy is a funny and articulate guy; he has seen some stuff in his life, but despite (or maybe because of) the struggles he has been through, he is kind and generous. Like many other homeless folks in the area, he also has some friends who have housing—for now—and stop by to catch up with him most afternoons.

My comrades had linked up with Tommy early on and worked with him on a petition aimed at uniting homeless folks around the park in resistance to their impending displacement. They also met up with Larry who lives right next to Tommy in the park. In order to go forward with developing the Biotech buildings, luxury apartments, and upscale commercial shops, the City of Oakland first needs to displace the homeless people living in the area. Through talking with Tommy, Larry, and others in the area, my comrades had gained an understanding of the contradictions among the people there as well as the contradictions they had with the city and the developers. Weeks of discussions and meetings had helped them understand these issues and demonstrate their

political conviction to the homeless folks in the area.

This is particularly important because there are a series of predatory non-profits and charity type organizations in the Bay Area. While these groups claim to want to help the homeless (and sometimes they have well-intentioned members), they generally maintain parasitic relations with people living on the streets. This is because these non-profits operate on the basis of conditional funding from big capitalist run

organizations like the Ford and Rockefeller foundations.

These non-profits rely on these capitalist organizations and government grants for their funding, and therefore can't get too radical with their political approach without losing their source of income. So, they keep the homeless at arms-length, and look to find a few that they can bring out for photo-ops to support one political candidate or another.

This was particularly clear when these groups came to the encampment. They would generally bring some food or other supplies to hand out, but they were generally afraid of venturing into the encampment or even getting too close to the people living there. My impression was that most homeless people in the area had a sense of what these non-profit groups were about, and so it was important for my comrades to clarify that they were trying to do something different.



Making posters with people in the encampment has been a key way to talk about obstacles in the struggle and how to fight back.





What do I mean by this? They weren't there to hand out a few bags of food and pat themselves on the back for a job well done. And they weren't trying to funnel people into the latest dead-end ballot initiative for a minor reform to a major problem. Instead, they were intent on going among the people, talking with them on an ongoing basis, hearing what they had to say, and working with people to bring them together in collective struggle against displacement.

Based on our initial conversations, it was clear to me that my comrades had a deep understanding of the situation at the park and the encampment. They had clearly learned, through discussions with Tommy, Larry, and many others, about some of the key issues that kept the homeless folks in the area from uniting in struggle for their common interests. And they saw that if the people didn't work through these contradictions, not even the imminent threat of displacement at the hands of the

police and city workers would be enough to unite them in resistance. So, while the people in the area have a shared enemy who is working hard to drive them from the area, and potentially even to their deaths, without working through the things that keep the people from uniting, they would not be able to support each other in the struggle.

Some basic things that divided the people in the area included people's assumptions that they were better off than those around them. It was striking to see how even some homeless people can believe the vicious anti-homeless propaganda spread by developers, tech capitalists, city officials, and other pigs. Even people living in very desperate conditions would

convince themselves at times that they were above working with, or even talking to the people around them.

But, things are complex, and it's not just a matter of people looking down on those around them. Some folks in the area do hoard a lot of stuff, and make big messes that bring rats around. Rats spread disease, and nibble on people's toes while they try to sleep. Other people steal stuff from those around them, or rip people off in one scam or another. Some people use drugs to one extent or another, but most people in the area are pretty lucid even if they have a low-level habit. In some cases people have even fought each other, and burned cars and structures. These are real contradictions that divide the people in the area. Some can be worked through by discussion, others issues are more severe and can't be resolved right away through conversation.

By talking with a lot of folks, my comrades had a pretty good idea of these issues and what divided the people. They had learned from talking with the homeless people, and listening to what they had to say. Based on these conversations they had been working hard to resolve issues among the people so that they could unite in the struggle against displacement.

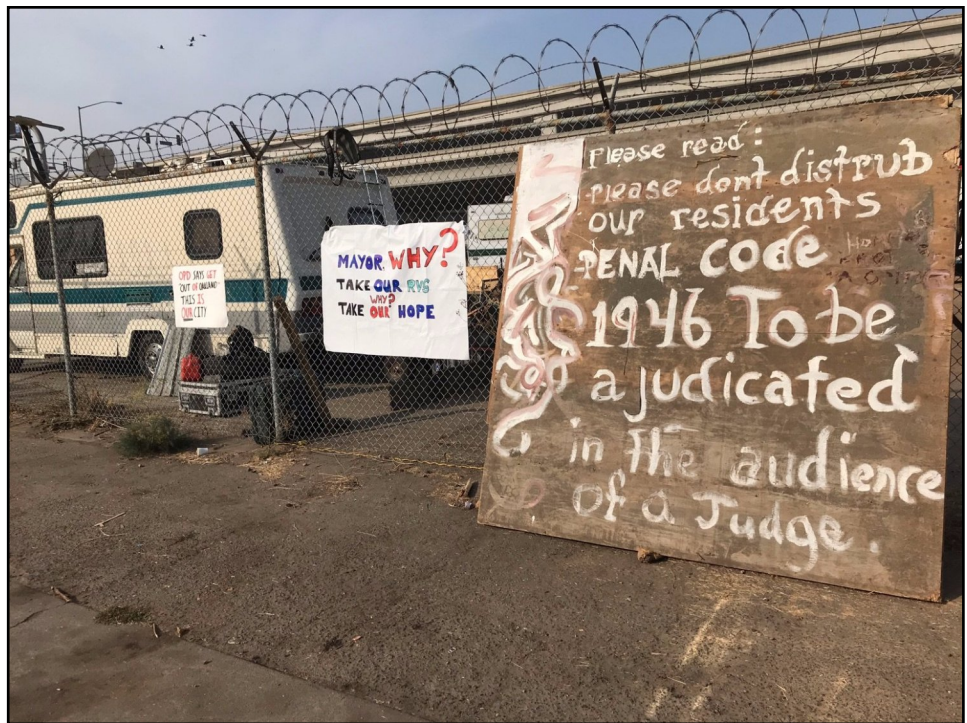
[My comrades] were intent on going among the people, talking with them on an ongoing basis, hearing what they had to say, and working with people to bring them together in collective struggle against displacement.

Despite these divisions, there was also some important and inspiring cooperation among the people in the area. For example, a number of tweakers live under a nearby freeway overpass. At night they come out and try to steal people's stuff. At the encampment on the vacant lot some folks coordinate guard duty, and do their best to make sure someone stays up at night to keep the tweakers away. On a more basic level, one of the older residents of the encampment, C, uses a wheel chair to get around. Others in the area look out for him in different ways. For example, when a charity organization came by to drop off food one day, Jesse who lives next to C's RV, made sure to bring some food over to him. I saw others helping C out too.

These forms of cooperation show that even in the most dire circumstances, where people are struggling each day to stay alive, they still work together and cooperate. It's not just a dog-eat-dog world, despite what the pigs who run this country would like us to believe.

However, by themselves, these basic forms of cooperation are not strong enough to overcome the oppressors who are working to drive people from the area in the name of capitalist development. Instead, an organized and conscious effort is needed to bring people together to cooperate in new ways.

By themselves, these basic forms of cooperation are not strong enough to overcome the oppressors who are working to drive people from the area in the name of capitalist development.



Things came to a head my second day at the encampment. There had been word that the police were going to show up and try to evict people. So we got there early to rally people in opposition to the evictions. When we showed up, some folks were in a panicked state. The pigs had yet to arrive, but people were working hard to get their stuff out of the encampment. C has an old RV that he lives in, but it doesn't run, so he had got Iyesha (who also lives in the encampment) to tow the vehicle out. But she was low on gas, his RV was stuck, and people were worried that the pigs were about to show up and smash everyone's stuff. So tempers were flaring, and people were starting to turn on each other.

In this situation, even though we didn't want folks to move their stuff out of the encampment, as they had no where else to go, we jumped into the mix to deescalate the brewing conflict and get people to work together. It's worth speaking about this more. Folks at the encampment had received some posted notice telling them that they had to vacate the premises by that morning. The notice seems dubious, invalid, and illegal for a number of reasons, especially because a local business owner (known to be hostile to the homeless encampment) had been seen posting it. And even if it was a real notice, according to a recent 9th Circuit Court decision it is illegal to evict or even criminalize homeless people for living in an encampment, mobile unit, temporary structure, or tent if there are no spots open in the shelter system—which there are not. But,

above and beyond all of the legal questions (because the corrupt and undemocratic government of this country breaks its own laws all the time), the power of the people united in struggle has the ability to overcome oppressors of all sorts, and win victories small and large.



My comrades and I share this view, so it might seem strange that, when we arrived at the encampment and saw people moving out, we helped them work together to tow the RV, among other things. Why didn't we just tell people to stop moving their stuff, and get ready to protest and resist? In fact, we had conversations along those lines the day before, even with some folks who were then moving their stuff out of the encampment that morning. But, in the heat of the moment, facing the possibility of imminent eviction, people were panicking. If arrested they could lose what few possessions they have, either from the city destroying them or from someone stealing them. And even if not arrested, they faced the prospect of being driven from the encampment, where some had been living for months, with nowhere else to go.

So, instead of trying to debate the people who were panicking and getting short with each other, we jumped in and helped people work together to move C's RV. This deescalated the situation and prevented the argument from turning into open hostility. This was key, because it provided the basis for folks to work together later on, when the police eventually did show up. But, before they arrived, a fencing company showed up. The encampment is set up on a lot separated from the road by a fence with a bunch of holes in it. People have set up shelters all along the fence, and the company had been called in to seal the holes and thereby keep people out of the lot.

I went over to talk to the guys from the fencing company when they showed up in their

truck. The two workers in the truck were from Mexico, and after a bit of conversation in Spanish it became clear that they hadn't been informed that the fence repair was for a lot that had an encampment in it, and no one had told them that the people in the encampment had set up shelters all along the fence.

But, above and beyond all of the legal questions (because the corrupt and undemocratic government of this country breaks its own laws all the time), the power of the people united in struggle has the ability to overcome oppressors of all sorts, and win victories small and large.

In order to seal up the fence they would need to move all of the people living in these structures first. I told them that the people living there had nowhere else to go, and that if they were forced to leave the encampment many would lose what little they had, and some would likely die. I explained that the company who owned the lot wanted to build a big Biotech development there and commercial space for wealthy people. In order to do this, they needed to drive out the poor people living in the encampment. The driver of the truck told me that he knew what it was like to be poor, and that it was getting harder and harder each year to pay for rent. It seemed like he knew what it was like to live paycheck to paycheck, and how little separates most working people from homelessness and destitution. They called their supervisor and told him they didn't want to seal up the fence with all the people living along it and in the encampment, and eventually got his approval to head out without repairing the fence. Before they drove away they wished us luck in the struggle.

Around this point, the pigs showed up. Six burly officers stepped from their vehicles and began to tell folks in the encampment that they had to leave. At first, some folks started to comply. The cops, assuming that we were non-profit type activists, initially ignored us. A few actual non-profit types had shown up that morning.

Larry lives in the park and has been a key leader in the struggle.





These three frames show the confrontation with the police. When faced with the united protest of people in the encampment they quickly retreated.

They stood nervously on the edge of the encampment, afraid to venture in and talk with folks. It seemed like their main goal was to hand out some pastries they had bought, and it was easy to see why the cops were in the habit of ignoring such “activists” who do little more than provide an occasional meal to a homeless person and lobby for minor legislative reforms.

While some residents of the encampment were initially willing to comply with the police, others were less than happy about being told to leave. Cam in particular was less than happy. He lives in the San Francisco Muni bus on site, and he was woken up by a police officer drumming his night stick on the windows and telling Cam to get out of the bus and leave the encampment. I had never met Cam before, but he made quite the impression that morning. He responded to this rude awakening by yelling that he had been a paramedic and “in fifteen years of emergency medicine, I have never once seen a police officer make ANY situation better. You pigs always make it worse!”

He yelled this a few more times, and pretty quickly others joined in. Phi, who lives in an RV with a back porch she made with some friends, came out and joined in the protest. She held a big sign attached to a cross that said

“These roots have thorns.” She had come up with this slogan in discussion with comrades during the week prior, emphasizing that if the pigs tried to dig up the roots the people had laid in the encampment, they would have to reckon with the thorns too. Maeve, who lives along the fence with her dog Bacon, joined in too, repeatedly telling the police officers that they were breaking the law by trying to evict people and demanding to see legal documents justifying the eviction.

As all of this was unfolding, my comrades and I unfurled the signs we had and began chanting “Hell No! We won’t go!” About ten or so local pitbulls who live in the encampment joined in, barking and scratching at the windows of the RVs in which they live. The pigs were surprised and scared. Suddenly six burly police officers with night sticks and guns were surrounded by dogs, homeless people schooling them on the law, and some revolutionaries letting them know that we all weren’t going anywhere. C, who had previously been trying to get his RV out of the encampment had joined us at this point, as had others. The day prior, C had come up with an idea for a protest sign, “Though I walk through the valley of railroad conductor, they will pay hell trying to punch my ticket, for I do have the law.”



I think this summed up the situation pretty well. The police, faced with some significant organized resistance that they had not anticipated, hightailed it out of there. When I later watched the video of the confrontation with the police, I noticed the typical non-profit activists watching from the fence outside the encampment, afraid to join in the struggle.

Afterwards, one of my comrades informed me that the standard operating procedure for the pigs is to show up at an encampment and without providing any documentation or real legal justification, just tell everyone that they need to leave. Then the pigs just post up and talk among themselves while people pack up their stuff and head out over a number of hours. So without even the most basic legal documents, the pigs are able to drive people from their shelters with the threat of violence and unlawful seizure of property. When some people do stand up and push back against this, a few burly police officers are generally able to crack some skulls and intimidate others into compliance. And the public generally doesn't care too much if a few homeless people end up dead or in jail. The politicians and developers in the Bay Area know all of this, and use these tactics go forward with their ongoing capitalist development projects for the rich, the result of which is gentrification.

That's why the resistance at this particular encampment is so significant. It is an example of the power of the people united in resistance to oppression. It's quite something to see first hand. This world is full of oppression and exploitation, the rich get richer and the poor are pressed into more dire situations day by day, so it is inspiring to see that people, even in the most dire of circumstances can come together and fight back against their oppressors.

This world is full of oppression and exploitation, the rich get richer and the poor are pressed into more dire situations day by day, so it is inspiring to see that people, even in the most dire of circumstances, can come together and fight back against their oppressors.



Cam and Bulldog share their views on the police.

This one standoff with the pigs wasn't the end of the struggle at this encampment, it was the beginning. In the days that followed I met many people and saw the folks in the area come together in new ways. We had a group meeting with folks to prepare for future eviction attempts, and this marked the first time that people in the encampment had come together in this manner to strategize on how to best fight back.

On even more basic levels, I witnessed an increased degree of cooperation among folks in the area. For example, Jesse was sick one day, in part from staying up all night on guard duty, and Phi, who had just met Jesse a few days before, made him some ginger tea to settle his stomach. People had begun to talk to each other more, and some of the previous barriers to discussion were breaking down.

Folks in the encampment also now had a better sense of what my comrades and I stood for. One resident, who had been standoffish to us in the past, explained in conversation that she hadn't been sure what we were about, and had seen some other "activists" come around that weren't so great.



Thelma encouraged me to film Anthony cooking so that people could see how homeless people are forced to live.

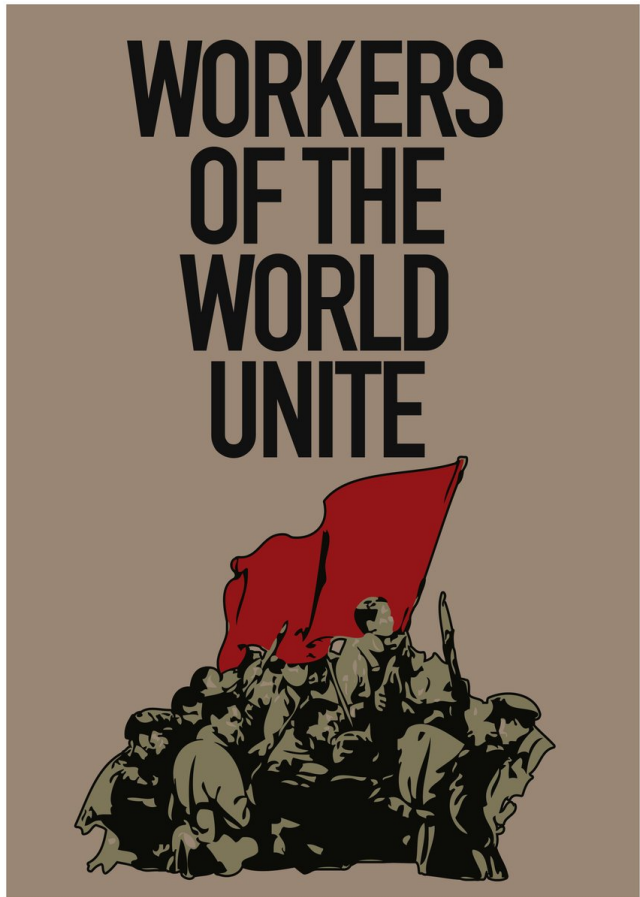
I couldn't help but think of those non-profit folks who were so clearly afraid to even talk to most of the homeless people in the encampment. After the protest, Thelma, who lives out of her car stopped to talk with us. She had heard about the protest, and was hoping we could organize something similar with folks who lived in their vehicles around the park. I also met her brother Anthony who has been homeless for twenty years. He told me some harrowing stories about growing up in the South, including an early childhood memory of waking up to see a family member lynched outside his house. Others around the area also shared stories about their lives and struggles.

[Poor folks] outnumber [the rich], and we pose a threat to them, so they figure out socially acceptable ways to drive people from their homes and even kill them.

As part of the struggle, in less than a week on the West Coast, I had come to know many homeless folks in the area pretty well. After seeing the amazing work they were doing with my comrades in the area, I was sad to leave. There are many who I met during this trip who I did not have a chance to mention in this article, but the folks in the encampment and the surrounding area left a deep impression on me.

I saw first hand how brutal this capitalist system is. Its brutality is all around us, but in the encampment it was particularly evident. In order for the rich to keep getting richer, the poor need to get poorer and poorer. And, at certain point, the rich come to conclusion that there are too many of us uppity poor folks around. We outnumber them, and we pose a threat to them, so they figure out socially acceptable ways to drive people from their homes and even kill them. No one pulls the trigger when someone starves to death in an encampment, or when someone overdoses, or dies an early death from a life of poverty and exposure.

But seeing all this wasn't the most significant thing about my trip. That was the struggle, the resistance, and the shining example of the power of the people that I saw and was part of during the few brief days I was in the Bay Area. On my flight back to the East Coast, I thought of all the people I had met in the encampment, of the tireless work that my comrades were doing to further the struggle, and of the enormous potential that the people have when we join together in the struggle. I could not help but remember the words that Marx and Engels wrote over 150 years ago: *Working people of this world have nothing to lose but our chains, and world to win.*



Organization Among Homeless Encampments in the Bay Area

by Earl

After defeating the cops' attempt to evict people from the encampment, there are some key questions: Where do we go from here? What is the future course of the struggle? How will the city try to evict people next? What can others learn from this struggle? How can we link up with other encampments and progressive forces around the area? This article aims to answer some of these questions, and chart a course forward for the struggle.



Comrades and folks in the encampment have grown more organized and militant after stopping the pigs' first eviction attempt.

How Did Things Get This Way

People have set up shacks to live in right on a spur from a railroad. They are in one of many homeless encampments around the Bay Area. This one covers a train track though—a rail spur leading off from the main freight line, a football field away, where trains still rumble by.

But the spur, like many strands in a city, is not a random loose end. It is connected with the larger history of a city and with the struggles of its working people. The owners of business and property have chosen not to use this rail. Homeless people have turned its neglect into their temporary refuge.

A few blocks away, a work crew sprays a road with water to remove dust and dirt shortly before using welding tools to dismantle a rail track on a nearby road. The road sits next to a large construction site, where luxury apartments are being constructed. Removing the rail that once served the port freight is part of the project. In a homeless encampment of tents and tarps on a park a stones-throws away,

a crowd of day laborers and their friends look on as the work crew rips up the rail.

Like many places around the world, the demolition of port and transportation infrastructure is not the result of a lack of trade. Investors believe they will get more return per dollar by trading in new “luxury” apartment buildings than they would on the port and related businesses. In the meantime, countless jobs specific to port enterprises are lost. Goods and products will increasingly have to find a different way to make it to and from the region, clogging roads with extra truckloads of cargo. All because in the short-term, a few people can make a load of cash by tearing up the old port rail and building some expensive housing for people who are moving in to gentrify the city.

The wealthy and aspiring wealthy see a city created in their image. In the meantime the working people of the city, who once worked the port and related jobs, are shown to the curb.

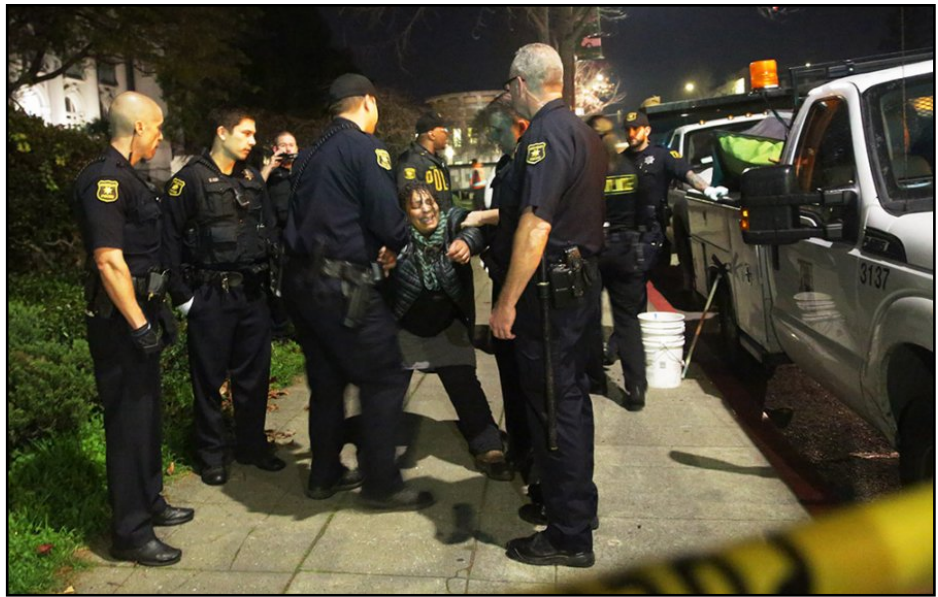
Who Will Turn the Tide

Many people have been pushed out of a neighborhood where they have lived their whole lives. Many have seen their families living here for generations, ever since port jobs drew waves of Black migrants from the South—where many still have ties even after generations. The capitalist development by companies like Google and Facebook have created jobs in the area for an aspiring wealthy class to make many times the average wages of working people. In the meantime, worksites throughout the neighborhood have shriveled up. Many small businesses with family ties in the neighborhood have shut their doors long ago. Many poor people living in the area talk of uncles or cousins who used to own a well-known warehouse or diner back in the day.

Here, being pushed out of the neighborhood generally means being pushed onto the street. Many first hang on by living in cars, vans, or aging recreational vehicles. Eventually people are pushed out of these as police ticket and tow their vehicles. They then end up in tents and tarps on the streets. Many of those living in vehicles now will be in tents in the future. Without uniting in struggle, they and their friends face a future of harassment, evictions, and arrests until they die an early death.

There are some people who are beginning to fight back in an organized fashion. But at the same time, there are obstacles among the people themselves which make uniting difficult. The homeless encampments are a hodge-podge of competing activity. Certain people live on government assistance or other similar programs. Others scavenge recyclables. Some push drugs. Others see drugs as a threat to the health and survival of encampments at large. Others see trash piles as a primary nuisance that may attract the cops.

In the face of desperate circumstances, a minority of people turn to stealing what little property their homeless neighbors possess. Such thefts can have a devastating effect on trust among the people. It discourages people from approaching others in encampments who they are not familiar with. Even among their own neighbors, people are afraid that they risk theft if



Police brutality, harassment, and arrests are daily realities for the homeless, especially when being evicted.

they leave their possessions unguarded. However, a certain independence and warmth exists as well. These are places where people are not in a hurry to end conversations. This stands in sharp contrast to the formality of guarded and semi-forced “chit-chat” typically found in offices and up-scale residential areas. In one encampment, neighbors help look after a friend who needs a wheel-chair to get around. At another, a nephew checks in every day with his uncle who was forced onto the streets after suffering an injury on a construction site. People often give unused building material or other objects to each other generously. With cash in short supply, a gift economy of sorts operates among the people to fill in some of the gaps.

A key question must be asked—who are the friends of the people in this situation?

Still, even those who have a method down of collecting donations and/or doing odd jobs know that the clock is running down until they will be driven out of their encampment by the city. Even if another spot is found after that, living on the streets and being pushed around takes a toll. A key question must be asked—who are the friends of the people in this situation? A few people united are essential to building a movement that can go against the influence of isolationism, individualism, and inertia within the encampments.





A protest outside the city hall in San Fransisco. Protests like these have put pressure on city governments and given people a chance to publicly voice their grievances against this unjust social system that treats the poor as expendable.

How Will We Win

Winning, at least in the short-term, will require the people, in mass, refusing to move themselves or their possessions. It will take the people themselves, collectively resisting eviction and working together for their own interests. This is the foundation. If this is solid, other sorts of support—such as legal fights, and media attention, can come into place. But without some of the people unified around this goal, there is little foundation upon which to build the struggle.

Without people's organization, the words and ideas of the rich and powerful quickly fill in the blanks where the words and ideas of the people belong. In one recent example of how this plays out, a well-intentioned journalist reported that the towing of vehicles mainly affected one lone individual rather than reporting on the dozens of others who were towed on the same day at the same location as this individual. By writing in this manner, the reporter made it seem as if this one story was the exception rather than the general trend of capitalist development in the area. This allows those with power to pretend to fix the problem by helping one individual who's struggle was highly publicized. Meanwhile, the many others who are in a similar situation are left out in the cold, literally.

A lone superman will not save the day. Nor can we rely on the rich and powerful to change their ways because they feel sorry for us. Instead, action, resistance, and organization are the only way forward to advance the people's interests in struggle.

In recent months, we have achieved a few basic victories. These were the product of effective stand-offs with the police. During these confrontations the police backed off evicting people when faced with the people united in defiance to their orders.

During these confrontations the police backed off evicting people when faced with the people united in defiance to their orders.

In one case, residents had begun to meet after a few social events were organized. A few days after a few protest posters were made and distributed, the cops showed up to evict the people. The protest started when a few people grew overwhelmed by the anger at the police threatening to kick them from a vacant polluted industrial lot.

First, a man stood on top of a barricade he had constructed, and told the cops that in 15 years of work he had never seen the cops make a bad situation better. A few of the cops smirked at him in response. Then another woman demanded to see legal papers from the cops. Another woman paced towards the cop with a protest banner fixed to a wooden cross.

At that point a group of revolutionaries started chanting “hell-no we won’t go”. Then people’s dogs started to bark in response to all the noise. The cops stopped smiling. They paced single-file back and forth for a little over a minute. Then they left.

However, inevitably, as this fighting force grows, there will be new challenges. We should be clear, the state at large can be content with a few holdouts on disputed property sites. The truth is that the process of gentrification is a messy business. Developers and politicians are generally surprised that they can get away with kicking out the masses of people in neighborhoods through corrupt back-room deals without more resistance and protest from the people. Rather than risk enflaming the people, these “city leaders” will be careful to try to win-over a few hold-outs, especially if some people show a willingness to “make a deal” with the city. The city’s main concern is that such a deal will convince some people to give up on or forget about the struggle.

We have to be ready for all sorts of reactions. They may at one time pretend to want to “make nice,” with us.

But when the people actually start doing this stuff on a larger scale, things are going to get serious. They simply cannot deal with multiple groups of people refusing to be evicted, and demanding a right to live with dignity regardless of the property rights of the rich and powerful. Faced with this possibility, the violent heavy-hand of the state will come down fast.



Already business interests are whipping up a storm on media and among politicians, demanding that they “get a handle” on the homeless. In order to facilitate more gentrification in nearby San Francisco, the mayor supported a new law that allows the city to put homeless people in an institution for up to a year if the police cite them with eight infractions, the so-called “conservatorship law.” The same Democratic Party mayor opposed a tax increase on corporations that would have provided increasing funding for homeless programs.

But this is just child’s play compared to what will happen when people start protesting and resisting evictions and gentrification continuously and in mass. The moment they see that we can not be pushed around easily, cost calculations about lost profits will start to flash through their heads. In turn, they will likely panic and try different solutions, none of which will be good for us.

We have to be ready for all sorts of reactions. They may at one time pretend to want to “make nice,” with us. This could take the form of an agreement for the city to provide basic public sanitation facilities for the homeless in one location. These sort of strategies are generally aimed at dividing the people and convincing some of them that the city and the capitalists aren’t really “that bad” after all. They promoting the illusion that these oppressors are actually trying to help people. At another time, they will greet us with a vicious response to protests, in the form of tear gas or worse.

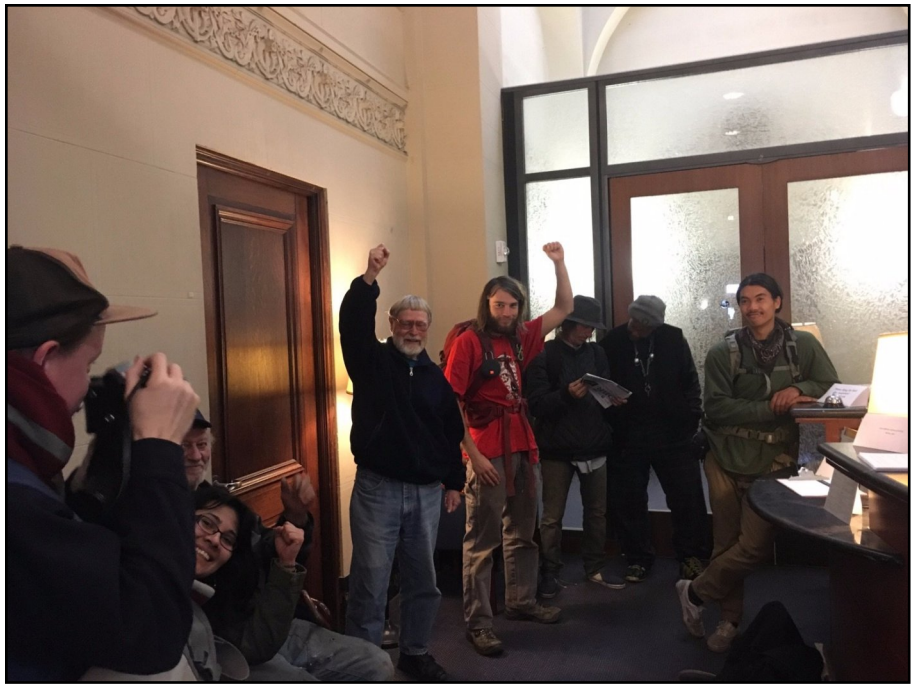


Either way, we must keep a cool head, and react in the way that best “serves the people” by expanding the struggle, and that sees our interest in unifying the people rather than selling out for a short-term “solution.”

If they grant us a small concession like a public restroom, we should in return demand bathrooms for all the people in the city. If they throw tear gas at us, we should not give up, but should unite even more people with our cause by exposing the real way the city deals with the people. No matter what the city and state does, we should do all we can do to take care of the needs of the people through our own actions, through mass discussions and through actions we take care of our needs. We cannot be fooled by the oppressors, and cannot believe that we can “win them over to our side.”

We already see a sign of such flip-flopping on the part of the city and their goons. The cops initially acted puzzled about what to do to “enforce order” in one encampment. When they asked one person to leave a park where he had placed a tent, the man replied he had every legal right to be there. The cop radioed for feedback, paced around for a few minutes and later left. This was a few years ago. Since then dozens of other people have become homeless in the area. One man tried to help neighbors by towing disabled RVs to the area and giving them for free or for low payments to friends and neighbors. In response, the police first towed away his truck, and then towed 20 others which were left unable to flee without the help of his motor. Cops laughed as people’s life possessions were towed away. The same cops told several people “Don’t be seen in Oakland again.”

The flip-flopping didn’t end there. Following angry protests in front of City Hall demanding the return of the towed vehicles, a representative of the mayor claimed to care about the displaced people. Then he did nothing to help them. A few weeks later, a cop handed out poorly made cheese sandwiches to people who the pigs had evicted from their vehicles. People were unsure of what to do. However, upon discussion, people welled up with anger at the nerve of the cops to think they could win us over by a poorly



Repeated protests in Oakland City Hall (like this one) forced the city to admit that they had illegally sold or destroyed people's RVs.

made sandwich. In a way, such hand-outs are a way of testing us. If we smile at an oppressor when he smiles at us one day, it is a little bit harder to stand firm when he is kicking people out of the neighborhood the next day. We should eventually have the clarity to not be so quick to forgive these oppressive pigs. If we throw the cheese sandwiches back at the cops today, we will be even more ready to stand together and resist their orders tomorrow.



A Black Panther cartoon warning young brothers and sisters to “Beware of the Pig” especially when they come offering gifts (the pig is holding out a lollipop).



The strongest tool that our opponents have is their ability to divide the people. A number of the people who are homeless are addicts, or have mental problems. The city will use this to their favor, by pretending that evicting the people from the streets is in “their own interests” because of such problems. Some people will believe the city. The city will justify evicting people from abandoned lots based on health and safety issues. If they cannot point to enough real health and safety issues, they will create them. During the Occupy Wall Street protests, police released prisoners directly into the occupation site to cause trouble.

However, if we educate ourselves about the actual situation, fewer of us will be fooled by such tactics and lies. Unifying the people has taken many conversations over time, and also required regular meetings, both within encampments, and between them. In this way, people themselves have been able to identify those who are reliable comrades in struggle.

struggle against displacement and evictions.

Only a few months ago, people in the encampment by the rail tracks did not know many of their neighbors on the site. But in struggle, people have met not only with these former strangers, but planned resistance with people in different encampments and even from different cities. In this way, what once was seen as the site of an abandoned rail spur is beginning to be seen as a main source of resistance.



A recent press conference outside the Alameda County Building which criticized the city and police for towing people's RVs. These protests have drawn attention to the struggle, and put pressure on the city.



Black Liberation and a Criticism of the Ideology of Black Capitalism

by Jen

In the late 60s and early 70s the Black Power movement grew by leaps and bounds. Many saw revolution as the only viable path for Black Liberation. Over the past decades, a series of capitalist ideologies have become more common. Instead of "All Power to the People" some say the solution is to "Buy Black" and support Black owned businesses. But is this really a way to overcome the white supremacist capitalist power structure? Or do we instead need to return to the revolutionary path?



Black people in America have a vested interest to struggle for liberation from the capitalist and white supremacist patriarchy that is America. This isn't just the case for a clear majority of Black People, but for an overwhelming percentage of Americans, of all nationalities and ethnicities. The political climate that we experience daily has painted the experience of Black liberation to be uniquely only "our" struggle, but there are many other ethnicities and cultures aside from Black families that are struggling to make ends meet and ensure that there is shelter over their heads and food in stomachs.

Based on that, there is a very clear basis to create solidarity with each other, and see that we understand the larger struggle and situation, while still addressing the particularities that set us apart, culturally. This can create a revolutionary movement where all ethnicities come together to write and progress the story of revolution through struggle. One where we all see the basis of how our lives can be transformed by overthrowing this

oppressive system and creating a new one that serves the interests of working people. But doing this requires us to see that our struggles don't just happen to link together at certain points but rather our struggles are bred from this white supremacist capitalist power structure we live in. Therefore, working people of all ethnic and national backgrounds in this country have a shared interest in working together to overthrow this system through a revolution.

In contrast, there are other arguments for Black liberation to be linked to the growing "buy Black" movement and related efforts to "support Black business." This discourse even promotes the idea by Black people simply "changing our spending habits" we can achieve liberation from white supremacy. Eventually, these arguments reveal a divide between elite and working-class black folks. The wealthy and elite blacks are usually thought of more highly because they have been able to "succeed" in this racist system and only want enough reform against racism to create more integration, only enough reform to make their lives a bit more comfortable.





A very incorrect image that portrays Black power as monetary power. In contrast, Black power actually comes from breaking from this capitalist system and joining with our other brothers and sisters who are also fighting to break from these chains.

They would rather vote than protest because the image of Black folk as “respectable” in the eyes of the ruling class holds more importance to them than our collective liberation. While some elite Black folk understand that this system is white supremacist and has no interest in the voice of poor Black folks, they continue to push us towards capitalist solutions like buying Black and voting for the newest Black politician.

It’s important to note, that these are the same folks that often view Black people asking for discounts as taboo when entering a Black business. It’s seen as too much for this aspiring Black business to take in to account that the majority of Black folk are working class and often can barely make ends meet. Also, that this same crowd vouches for electoral politics as a means for change because protesting and creating uprisings in the streets is thought of as immature and not a good image to project to other nationalities. So really, when people talk about “buying Black” they are talking about solidarity that runs one way. Poor Black folks are supposed to shop at the businesses of the more well off, and expect nothing in return. This is the platform of respectability politics and it leads us nowhere.

Often, it’s easy to miss that most uprisings in predominantly Black communities have resulted in positive change for the community. For example, when people rose up in the Watts neighborhood in Los Angeles, CA in 1965, it resulted in increased trust and solidarity among the people in the community. This rebellion also

inspired many of the founders of the Black Panther Party, and Black folks all around the country. Similar things came from the more recent rebellion Ferguson, MI in response to Mike Brown’s slaughter by the police. This rebellion helped to spark the Black Lives Matter campaign and saw the residents of the city protest with zeal and high spirits in the struggle to see their situation transform.

What has prevented us working people from approaching our struggle as a united group are systems and institutions in place that have told us that to get ahead we must see each other as the enemy. The reality is that the working class is exploited and pushed to always meet the needs of the upper class, while having to scramble to address their own socio-economic trials and tribulations. The working class comes in all shades and orientations and has been tirelessly told by the powers that be that everyone is their competition to escape out of this crab barrel that is America. The reality is that we poor people of all nationalities struggle to meet our basic needs, and have an interest in coming together, but the capitalist system tells us we have to be at each others’ throats. Those in power want us to be stepping over each other in vain attempts to get ahead, instead of coming together to overthrow this white supremacist capitalist power structure.

What has prevented us working people from approaching our struggle as a united group are systems and institutions in place that have told us that to get ahead we must see each other as the enemy.

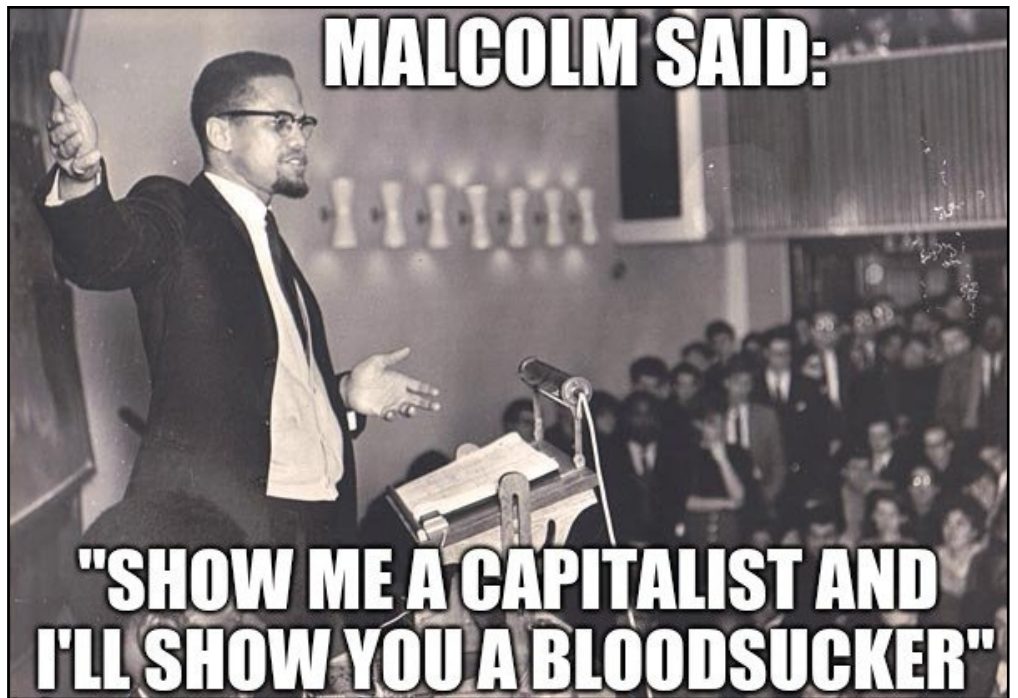
Along these lines, what exactly constitutes Black liberation? Well, in the current climate many would view electoral politics, investing in Black business, refraining from activities that are caught in the politics of Black stereotypes, and becoming a more “respectable and accountable” citizen in this society, as the basis for Black liberation. We have been told to pull up our pants to be received better, to wear a suit if one wants to get ahead in life, and to vote in a system of voter suppression by both parties so that we can somehow take get elected officials in power, when these politicians have always sold us down the river to the highest bidder.



Not surprisingly, these various concepts don't actually set a course for liberation but only divert us. We have been told that we are responsible for our poverty and must do the clean up work for centuries of oppression. Black folk should not be held responsible for racist practices such as "Red-lining", where real estate interests and banks worked together to prevent Black people from getting home loans and the like. This is just one example of how the white supremacist power structure in this country has systematically deprived Black people at every level of our society. Some pretend that through "buying Black" and homeownership Black folks can live the "American Dream," but the reality is that this dream is little more than a fleeting illusion which quickly becomes a nightmare for folks when they can't make ends meet or when the police show up.

Fortunately, there is liberation but its not in the same avenues and sectors of capitalism. It is within the working people. What sets this liberation apart from capitalist dead ends—like "buying Black," the American Dream, and so on—is not having to internalize the same attitudes, roles, systems, and governments that have institutionally suppressed our voices. We can look towards ourselves and not go down that oppressive path again. Those very paths come in the form of working two jobs, when one barely covers the rent, and being convicted for long sentences for petty crimes.

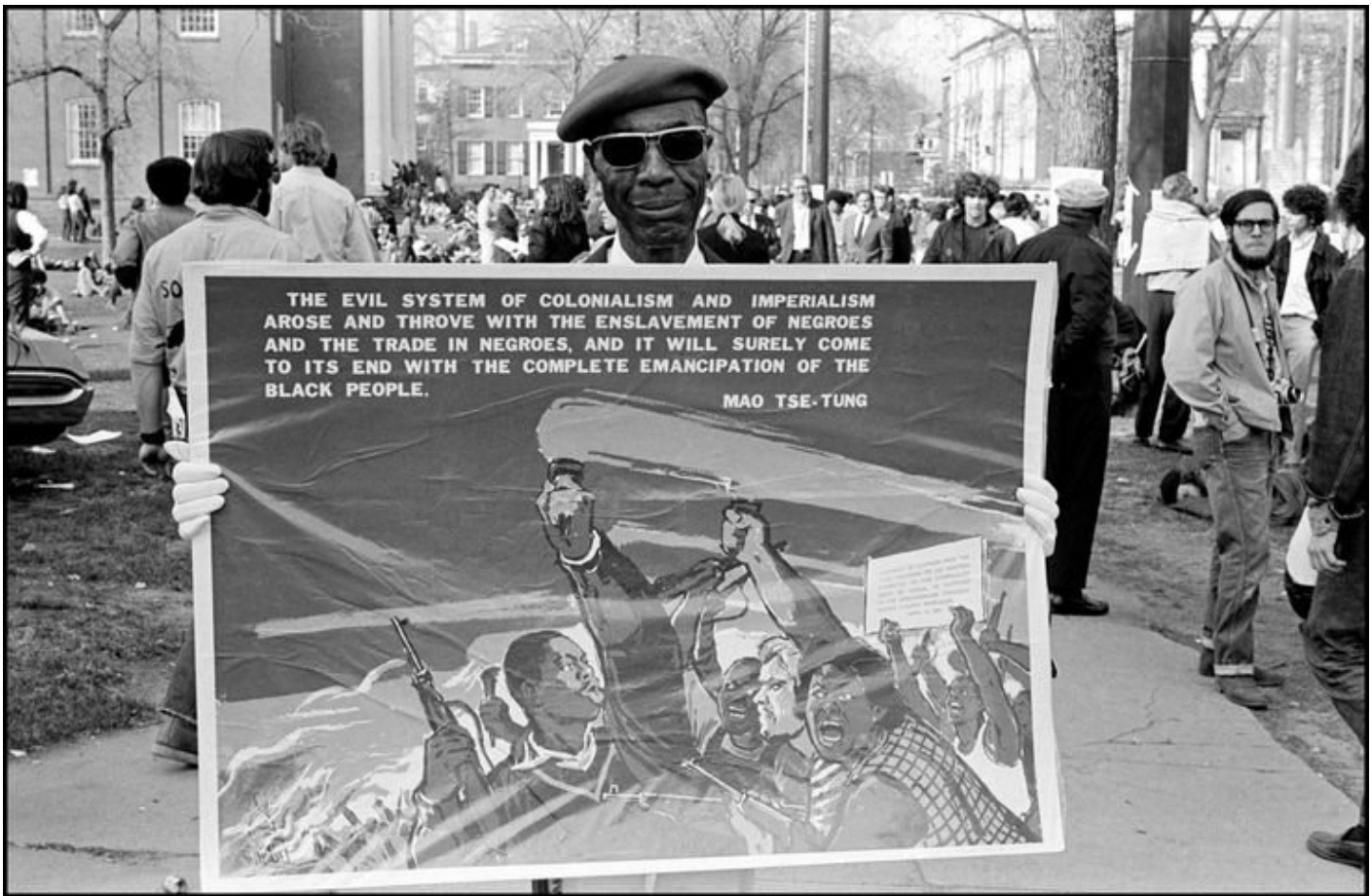
These are just some examples of how the system pushes us and forces us to adopt nihilistic and nasty behaviors. On the other hand, solidarity amongst working folks doesn't have one color, nor one orientation. The image of solidarity is going to be multi-national and filled with a mixed bag of people. The only category that won't really be included is the rich, as this is a struggle that working people will most likely have to take the fore front on. The point of cultivating solidarity with other working folk is to create fewer divisions and less competition with each other.



This helps us to see and pave the most well-planned path to a new world that is run by the worker. Inevitably, in paving this new path, the perceptions, limitations, stereotypes, rules, and status quo will crumble and break down. In the case of Black liberation, adhering to such things as respectability politics, colorism, and hyper-masculinity will be a thing of the past. In the end, the capitalist society that once pushed us to fixate on our short comings and flaws, will not stand up to our confidence and trust with each other as an unbreakable entity.

In the case of Black liberation, adhering to such things as respectability politics, colorism, and hyper-masculinity will be a thing of the past.

Many working-class people are aware to some extent the toll that capitalism takes. While there is theory to help accurately explain the overall struggle of working people, it doesn't take a scientist to understand that the system that we live in is not here to serve the exploited but rather the exploiter. Marx and Engels, as well as other revolutionaries like Lenin and Mao have written works that precisely document the struggle of working people, and sum up the successes and failures of past revolutionary movements.



The most important part of revolutionary theory is the class struggles and antagonisms that have concretely displayed how much the working class—the most revolutionary class that struggles for the overthrow of the capitalists—must go through. Its important to understand that works written by these revolutionary thinkers are not meant to be treated as dogma, but rather practical knowledge that is meant aid the struggle to overcome capitalism. Generally, the consensus among revolutionaries around the world, is that there is a significant amount to be understood from these writings. Revolutionaries in other places around the world like India and the Philippines are putting into practice the lessons summed up by people like Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Mao. In doing so, they are working hard to liberate their people from this oppressive capitalist system, and we can learn a lot from their struggles too.

In Marx's *Capital*, he correctly theorizes how, under capitalism, the working class becomes hired slaves to meet their basic needs. They must sell their "labor power" to create a commodity good for the capitalist. Marx goes in further to display the leaps, bounds, and somersaults that the capitalist will pull to suck the surplus value (profit) from his hired slave, all

in the name of greed and commodity production. Fortunately, and unfortunately, this basic image isn't too much different from the current image of the present capitalism in America—but this helps us in drafting the blue print for actual Black liberation. The unfortunate part is that the capitalist system we live in still keeps us in chains; history continues to repeat itself as different versions of the capitalist hell that Marx and Engels concisely analyzed for us.

In the present day of capitalist America we see that the majority of Black folk are working class and there is an apparent wide gap between them and elite Blacks, with a small but shrinking middle class. Many of the policies and practices that are being pushed out today only really align with the elite Blacks and leave most of the Black working class having to scramble often to "keep up appearances" and make ends meet. This then leaves little room for discussion to have solidarity among working class and elite Blacks. In fact, we have a situation where elite Blacks are pushing the idea that working class Black folks need to be "accountable" and "refine their spending habits."

These are just ways of selling us the lie that there is a way for Black people, as a people, to make it in this racist system.



"If you're not careful, the newspapers will have you hating the people who are being oppressed, and loving the people who are doing the oppressing."

MALCOLM X

Among working class Black folks there are real divides. Many want to cultivate solidarity, but others aspire to internalize various attitudes and behaviors that are bred from capitalism and white supremacy. Most Black businesses, as of late, have been known to be rather austere with their practices of buying and selling products, justifying paying their employees poorly and never having discounts. Even though its small in paving the path for solidarity, simply not asking for full price and being mindful of the overall situation for Black folk—that majority of us are working class—can help in building stronger ties within the Black community.

We have a situation where elite Blacks are pushing the idea that working class Black folks need to be "accountable" and "refine their spending habits."

Unfortunately, the current trend for most Black businesses, and its inevitable, is adopting these practices of internalizing capitalist behaviors, putting the survival of their business over the survival of the community. Not only does internalizing these same capitalist behaviors harm the overall community but it leaves most Black folk to wonder where they can find trust and solidarity that doesn't involve money, and wonder if there is such a thing. Solidarity is a tough topic to fully flesh out because one becomes aware of the many actors and systems that actively stomp solidarity, which must be discussed as well, to

gain a full picture of the situation we are currently in and so that we discover proactive ways to overthrow it.

Now that we have discussed some stumbling blocks that hurt solidarity among classes in Black communities, we must also discuss what is hurting solidarity among Black folk and white folk. Over the last few years, the conversation surrounding 'white privilege' has broadened the overall race discussion in the U.S. While there are some positives to what has come about from these various discussions, one thing that seems to be missing is the subject of the working-class white folk.

Unfortunately, the current trend for most Black businesses and its inevitable, is adopting these practices of internalizing capitalist behaviors, putting the survival of their business over the survival of the community.

For years, working class white folks have been told that they are not on the same level as working class Black folks, and that they are superior, and their vote carries more weight. Politicians and media have been very explicit in this, and it has worked to a certain extent with the Tea Party Movement during the Obama Administration and even going back hundreds of years earlier to the Nativists—the people that thought they were in "America first"—in the mid-1800s who ran racist campaigns against the large population of Germans and Irish that were migrating to the U.S. and blamed them for taking away their jobs and land that they felt entitled to.





One of the Infamous South Boston/Charlestown Busing riots. Many residents were working class whites and felt that having integration of Black and white children in the schools was beneath them. It is important to reflect on how politicians used this rhetoric to manipulate white working class folks to vote for them.

Another very clear example of poor white folks feeling like Black folk are their enemy is with the late 1970's Boston busing riots that occurred in South Boston and Charlestown. Black folk in Boston saw that their children were still being taught very outdated, racist material. After the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was passed, there was a call from the Boston NAACP to update the schools with predominantly Black children with more resources and relevant text books. A Boston Judge thought it would be best to not update those schools but bus the Black children into predominantly white schools, and vice versa. Even though this was still lacking in effort to update these schools with better books, the busing initiative revealed the covert racism of the Northeast—and this is important because many liberals like to pretend that there is only racism in the South. Buses with Black children coming to South Boston High, were egged and vandalized, and white South Boston residents yelled slurs at the Black students as they came to school.

These are just a few examples of how poor white folk have been fed the lie that they are inherently better than other nationalities.

However, the white privilege argument fails to address poor white folk and why they are still poor. The white privilege argument bunches together elite, middle class, and working-class white folk, leaving their differences muddled. In reality, the overall basis of the argument is only reflective of elite white folks being able to prosper off their inheritances and policies that suit them better.

According to a recent study, the majority of white people are living in the suburbs and are poor. Black and white working-class folks have very similar interests to come together and break from the attitudes and behaviors that keep them tied down under this white supremacist capitalist power structure.

Unfortunately, the current situation, especially with the Democrats 'blue wave' initiative, many working-class folks—white, Black and Latino—feel that their only option is to vote for a representative that somewhat voices their political interest. In this country that claims to be the most democratic, you would think that we would have other mediums and effective ways for U.S. citizens to voice their politics and have change.



That's not the case and there is a reason why things are the way they are. The decline of radical movements—like the Black liberation struggle—in the 70s led to the rise of Black electoral politics. Many activists during the time feared being locked down by some government funded program like COINTELPRO—the infamous FBI initiative that worked to internally destroy social justice and revolutionary groups such as the Black Panthers, during the 60s and 70s. Also, the rise of the Black middle class, with a high percentage of Black citizens being government employed, was part of the political shift for Black folk after the early 70s. More and more Black folks started viewing protesting as 'immature' and not a 'respectful' way to bring about change. Almost every political group that has once been radical during the Anti-War movement of the late 60s, began to liquidate the work they had done in exchange for votes.

Black capitalism is represented as a great step toward Black liberation. It isn't. It is a giant stride away from liberation.

This political shift, along with the rapidly growing 'buy Black' movement in the late 60s and 70s, had sparked many Black folk to want to go to in the direction of toeing the middle-class, petty-bourgeois line. Huey P. Newton criticized these trends during an interview with Ebony magazine in 1969:

"A part of the Black bourgeoisie seems to be committed to developing, or attempting to develop, a form of capitalism within the Black community, or the Black colony as we call it. As far as the masses are concerned it would merely be trading one master for another. A small group of Blacks with control our destiny if this development came to pass.

"Such a notion is reminiscent of our earlier history when we had Blacks slave masters. A small percentage of the blacks owned slaves; they were our first Black bourgeoisie. But we have today are their spiritual descendants. And just as the earlier Black slaveholders fail to alleviate the suffering of their slaves, so today the Black capitalists (those few in existence) do nothing to alleviate the suffering of their oppressed Black brothers.



Huey P. Newton, founder of the Black Panther Party.

"But in a greater sense, black capitalism is a hoax. Black capitalism is represented as a great step toward Black liberation. It isn't. It is a giant stride away from liberation. No Black capitalists can function unless they play the white man's game. Worse still, while the Black capitalist wants to think he functions on his own terms, he doesn't. He is always subject to the whims of the white capitalist. The rules of Black capitalism, and the limits of Black capitalism are set by the white power structure."

Newton is correct in saying that this movement would essentially be "trading one master for another" as this movement gives up on Black liberation and instead pushes for having more Black CEOs, developers, capitalists, etc. The color of our skin doesn't eradicate the harmful and oppressive reality of capitalism, and that's what Newton was trying to convey. Black capitalism will only take us further away from liberation as Black folk ditch the blueprints for activism for business plans, and seek to exploit our own people in a more direct manner.



In 1973 Bobby Seale ran for Mayor of Oakland on a ticket with BPP member and FBI informant, Elaine Brown.

Of course, Newton's argument against Black capitalism is a criticism of the Black elite and middle class of his time. Unfortunately, Newton would later shift politically to similar politics, as he and Bobby Seale shifted the BPP towards voting initiatives by 1972.

In an interview *Ebony Magazine* in 1972 (only 3 years after Newton's interview) Seale argued that the party had to shift to an electoral strategy because their membership had suffered 50+ casualties from police violence, with hundreds injured. Seale began his campaign for Oakland Mayor, and saw that this would be a way to sustain membership from their middle-class members, and improve their image, in mind of, again, the middle class. The only people they left out was the Black working class that had been the political basis of the organization. Instead, of developing a strategy to avoid arrests and police killings, they "followed the money" and changed the purpose of the BPP's original aims. This amounted to a betrayal of the Black working class.

It is hugely disappointing to see a once revolutionary group like the BPP suddenly liquidate the struggle and hard work they had done. They had really put themselves out there to finally address Black people's liberation from the oppressors we had been under for 400+ years. Their programs like *Patrolling the Police*, the

Free Breakfast program, and the Free Health Clinics, inspired many. It was invigorating to experience for most working-class Black folks during the time, and after this short span of history nothing has been quite the same regarding Black liberation. The trend now is to get out to vote and hope for someone who is Black. Having more Black politicians might sound rather different from the status quo, and it would be nice to have a Black politician get voted in and lift all the barriers that have kept us going forward as a people. But given this

capitalist and patriarchal system, most Black politicians inevitably toe the same line as their white counter parts and are often pushed to be more racist, patriarchal and austere in their policies and actions.

For example, Obama's presidency was a time of pushing U.S. chauvinism, and ignoring the issues that Black folk faced. Often, he would make comments about how "all American people get the same rights and privileges" or something along this line. It's not bad for a politician to want to address all needs. However, when voting in 2008, most Black folks viewed Obama as somewhat the answer, but Obama didn't deliver. Instead he perpetuated more Black stereotypes, especially surrounding the family.



Obama perpetuated many racist stereotypes about Black folks.



For example, he claimed that absent Black fathers were to blame for issues in Black families, black families and even referred to the racist stereotype of “Cousin Pookie” who has a gambling problem. The reality is that this idea of absent Black fathers is a racist myth. A 2014 report showed that Black fathers are on average actually MORE involved in their children’s lives than white fathers! Obama wasn’t Black folks ultimate answer, and it would have been more considerate of him to represent his people in a more positive light. Instead, given the system we live in, Obama and many other Black politicians feel the can’t acknowledge the reality that Black people are disenfranchised largely by the state—which they are a part of—and instead blame Black folk for a mess that was created by this white supremacist capitalist power structure.

There is no amount of improving your credit score, and schooling that will address the trauma and systemic racism that the state has placed on to marginalized people of this country.

The overall trend of Black politicians is to not address Black folk-specific issues, and to never acknowledge that this system we live in stifles almost every effort towards liberation and only locks folks down. Instead, we see many buy into the concept of “culture of poverty,” which is the racist idea that Black folks are by nature “financially irresponsible” and to blame for their socio-economic situation and that they must not blame the government and capitalism for forcing Black people into poverty. This idea isn’t new and has been one of the key distractions in the way of taking actual steps to Black liberation.

What I mean by saying distractions, is Black folks thinking that if they just be a respectable citizen, who has a high credit score, votes, and makes sure to be

polite and politically correct, than they can say “I’m fine and doing what I’m supposed to do.” All of these supposedly “respectable” things, serve to distract and defer any discussion on the topic of Black liberation. Being politically correct and polite will not address why police brutality is one of the key killers of Black folks, nor will it address the actual historical reasons for Black poverty in this country.

Not only does the argument behind the “culture of poverty” come as an obstacle to liberation, but it lessens the responsibility of the government we live in to address the countless atrocities and injustices it has done to Black folks. There is no amount of improving your credit score, and schooling that will address the trauma and systemic racism that the state has placed on to marginalized people of this country.

On July 4th weekend in the Mattapan neighborhood of Boston, there was one shooting that managed to garner a rather dry and unconcerned response from Marty Walsh, the Mayor of Boston. Walsh basically said that the shooters needed to

not blame the police for the shooting but rather “man up” and take responsibility and be cooperative with the investigators and detectives surrounding the case.



In the wake of the Civil Rights and Black Power movements overt racism became politically unviable for most politicians. Nixon's administration helped to develop a new coded language to spread racist ideology. To this day politicians continue to use similar terms, like “culture of poverty.”



A frequent theme in the Panther's art work was there solidarity with the revolutionary struggles of all oppressed peoples of the world.

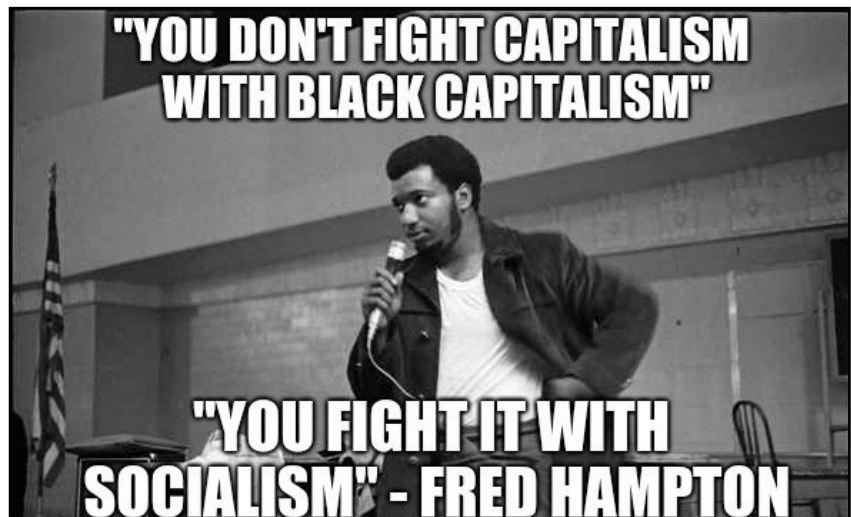
First of all, not only is this rhetoric bred from “the culture of poverty” but also, it is encouraging a predominantly Black population in Mattapan to be more comfortable with the police instead of making this an opening to have the community handle this situation. Cities like Boston basically administrate the inequalities between rich and poor, and in the end are in favor of only helping the rich. The state, according to Engels, isn't meant to resolve the contradictions that come about in class struggle but is just there to perform managerial and bureaucratic tasks, to keep the poor in chains, and make sure the rich continue to profit. Because of this, the proletariat (aka the working people) must be the backbone behind the addressing these needs and resolving the contradictions of our society.

I bring this incident up because the city of Boston did not take effective

steps to address the capitalist and racist societal reasons as to why these folks resorted to gun violence but instead put the blame on them. But this is how it is supposed to be with in a capitalist society, to blame all issues on the individual poor people's choices. In a socialist system, the government would have to really look within itself as to why they are not meeting the needs of all its citizens. But until we as a people finally get the gears working to end the complicity and deferral of responsibility, we will only be taken for a longer ride by these systems and governments.

The topic of Black liberation has been distorted, deferred, and lost for many decades after the 60s. This isn't an accident, because Black liberation is a threat to the dominant power structure and value system of our society. It isn't just a thought experiment, the people's capacities are boundless and can really spark a prairie fire of revolutionary struggle. In order to get there, we must chart our way through these capitalist hindrances and push forward on an unbeaten path. The stumbling blocks come in the form of bureaucracy, politicians, voting, adhering to post-modernist views of liberation/revolution that only enrich the individual but not the masses. We fail each other when we point fingers and place tremendous blame on each other, instead of on the governments and ruling class who have told us to pull ourselves up by our own boot straps.

This is the time to start opening our eyes and being critical of the systems that we are in. I know that when the people are pushed, we push back harder. We must be the definers of our struggle and liberate ourselves, these systems won't do it for us. What has prevent us working people from approaching our struggle as a united group are systems and institutions in place that have told us that to get ahead we must see each other as the enemy.



History of the Black Panther Party

Part 2: Growth in the Bay Area

by John

This is the second of a four part series on the history, legacy, and continuing relevance of the Black Panther Party (BPP). Founded in 1966 in the spirit of the politics of the late Malcolm X, and highly influenced by the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in China, the Black Panther Party was a Black revolutionary organization. For a time they played the leading role in the Black Liberation struggle in the U.S. and inspired people across the country to take up revolutionary politics. This stood in sharp contrast to much of the civil rights movement which pushed for integration into white supremacist capitalist society. In the previous article in this series we covered the founding of the BPP, and in this issue we will analyze their growth and development in the Bay Area up to the point they began to become a country-wide party with branches in many major cities.



After the founding of the BPP Huey and Bobby knew that without winning the confidence and support of the people, their ideas and Ten-Point Program would amount to little. So they set themselves to organizing in the community. Despite starting off with just a few people, they were aware that the social circumstances at the time provided fertile ground on which to grow the organization and the Black Liberation struggle. At the time (much like today), Black folks faced routine and constant harassment at the hands of the police and high rates of poverty and joblessness due to systematic racism and discrimination. What's more, the Civil Rights Movement and the uprisings in Black ghettos throughout the country showed that people were yearning for freedom.

In order to win the confidence of the masses of people, and demonstrate their seriousness about serving the people, the

Panthers knew they had to go among the people. Before founding the BPP both Huey and Bobby had been a part of a number of "radical" groups that were all talk. They had seen how these groups really sought to appeal only to middle and upper-class Black folks but fundamentally were uninterested in going among the working class and poor Blacks, who constitute the vast majority of the Black population in this country. The majority of middle and upper-class Blacks were primarily focused on integrating into white supremacist society and pursuing the politics of "Black Business" which might enrich a small percentage of the Black population, but leave the vast majority in extreme poverty and desperation.

So, the BPP had seen the limitations of groups that talked about the issues in the Black community without actually practically appealing to and engaging with the majority of Black folks, especially the poor and downtrodden.

This isn't to say they discounted the importance of discussion and theoretical work. It was through a series of serious studies and conversations over a period of a few months that Bobby and Huey drafted the Party's Ten-Point Program. However, the Program was drafted specifically with their poor brothers and sisters in mind. They used language and ideas that they knew would appeal to the "brothers and sisters on the block," and they knew the Program would help to clarify the situation in the U.S. and show a way forward for the Black Liberation struggle.

Right after they finished drafting the program and got it printed out, Huey and Bobby went out into the community in Oakland to talk with folks about it. They explained the Program and the Party to Black people in the streets, at bars, and all around Oakland. It took time to clarify things, and sometimes Huey would spend eighteen hours a day just going around and talking with folks. However, these conversations were not fruitless. Huey and Bobby were able to clarify what the Party was about to a lot of people, and folks started joining. The first was little Bobby Hutton, a fifteen year old who was a member of a community program at the North Oakland Anti-Poverty Center where Bobby worked.

The [Ten-Point] Program was drafted specifically with their poor brothers and sisters in mind. They used language and ideas that they knew would appeal to the "brothers and sisters on the block," and they knew the Program would help to clarify the situation in the U.S. and show a way forward for the Black Liberation struggle.

From there the Party grew bit by bit. It was slow going for the first few months, but more people joined as they understood the how serious the Panthers were about putting their program into practice and working with the masses of poor and oppressed Black folks. One thing that was of particular importance was the BPP's insistence on practicing armed self-defense.

Before his death, Malcolm X had repeatedly emphasized the need for Black folks to defend themselves against the constant aggression and violence they face from the white supremacist capitalist power structure, the pigs, and various racist groups like the KKK.

Malcolm X

"Concerning noviolence:

It is criminal to teach a man not to defend himself when he is the constant victim of brutal attacks. It is legal and lawful to own a shotgun or a rifle...The time has come for the American Negro to fight back in self-defense whenever and wherever he is being unjustly and unlawfully attacked."



The Panthers took up Malcolm's legacy and teachings in many ways. They were particularly inspired by his emphasis on the need for self-defense.

Speaking on this subject, Malcolm had said "I don't even call it violence when it's in self defense; I call it intelligence." The Panthers took these words to heart and organized along these lines. They armed themselves, as they had a legally protected right to do, and patrolled the community to watch police officers and ensure that they did not brutalize and kill Black folks. The Panthers didn't attack the police or white supremacists outright, rather they pursued a policy of self-defense. In this way, they helped to expose the racist and criminal nature of the police who constantly break the laws they swear to uphold, and brutalize Black folks daily.

This approach also helped to clarify to the masses that there was a basis to stand up against the racist oppressors and win victories. The early work of the BPP against police brutality and harassment helped to galvanize Black people in Oakland and led many to join the Party. For example, in his book *Seize the Time*, Bobby Seale describes one incident in Oakland which clarified to the masses of people that the BPP was serious about putting their Program into action and practicing armed self-defense.





Bobby and Huey at the BPP headquarters in West Oakland.

Huey, Bobby, and a few other Panthers were confronted by the police outside of the BPP office in Oakland—which they had opened about a month before. They were in the car, when a pig pulled up and started hassling them over their firearms. Bobby described the incident that followed:

Huey just opened the car door, and this is where Huey got mad. I mean you have to imagine this nigger. He got mad because these dogs were going to carry on and they were bracing up like they were bad. Huey didn't go for this at all. Huey got very mad. He opened up the door saying, "Who in the hell do you think you are? In the first place, this man (pointing at the pig) came up here and asked me for my license like he was citing me for a ticket or observation of some kind. This police officer is supposed to be carrying out his duty, and here you come talking about our guns." Huey put his hand around his M-1 rifle and continued, "We have a constitutional right to carry the guns, anyway, and I don't want to hear it."

The pigs backed up a couple of steps, and Huey was coming out of the car. Huey had his hand back in the car, getting his M-1, and you know, if you've ever seen Huey, he gets growly, but articulate. He came out of the car with his M-1. Huey knows his law so well that he wouldn't have the M-1 loaded inside the car. When he came out of the car, he dropped a round off into the chamber right away. Clack, clup.

"Who do you think you all are anyway?" Huey said to the pigs. And the other pigs are on the sidewalk harassing all the brothers and

sisters who have gathered around: "You people move on down the street!" Huey started interrupting. "You don't have to move down the street! Don't go anywhere! These pigs can't keep you from observing. You have a right to observe an officer carrying out his duty." And these pigs, they listened to this shit. See, Huey's citing law and shit. "You have a right to observe an officer carrying out his duty. You have a right to. As long as you stand a reasonable distance away, and you are a reasonable distance. Don't go anywhere." [...]

We were sitting in the car, and Huey made us all stay in the car and be quiet. He was out there, the baddest motherfucker in the world, man. Huey and ten pigs. Three or four of them trying to run off kids on bicycles and tell the people they didn't have the right to stand around, and Huey was going out there, interrupting, "No! Come in the office." Little kids on bicycles got inside the office. We had a big, wide, clear picture window. Niggers just got all over the front of the window, man. They were leaning on it, kissing the window just to listen to this shit. And they would holler, "Go 'head on brother," and "Run it on down. You know where it's at," and "I can dig it," all the while Huey was letting these pigs know where it was at. The brothers observing would see that those pigs were scared of that big gun that a bad black but beautiful nigger had in his hand! Every time Huey would say, "If you shoot at me, swine, I'm shooting back," niggers would have to holler something like, "Tell it, do it, brother." That would let Huey know that he was revolutionizing our culture; educating black people to be revolutionaries; that the gun is where it's at and about and in. A white man two doors down smiled. He was the only one around but he seemed to respect Huey.



The Panthers worked hard to show people ways to stand up against police brutality.



By standing up to the police in an organized and disciplined manner, the Panthers were able to push back against police brutality and inspire people to join the struggle.

Then some people came up after that, after Huey had made this display of going into the office. Other people were standing around and the pigs weren't even moving anymore. And Huey just daring them to do anything. Huey had an M-1 with him, one of the eight round clips in it. What do you do, man? All you do is back up a nigger like that. You do nothing else but that. Anything that happens, this nigger's the baddest nigger you ever seen. Because this nigger is telling ten pigs, "I don't give a damn what you do," and making us all shut up and be disciplined. And we have our shit ready, sitting in the car. [...]

So that was the very major incident that happened with the Black Panther Party in front of the Black Panther Party office. And after that, we really began to patrol pigs then, because we got righteous recruits. I think ten or twelve, maybe thirteen extra members in the Party that day, just came and put applications in. We went down to the poverty office again—I was still working there—and drew up a formal application form for enrollment to get into the Black Panther Party. And from there, what did we do? We just patrolled pigs.

This incident clarified in practice what the Panthers were about, and this stood in contrast to many other groups who called

themselves revolutionary and claimed to look out for Black people, but actually didn't do much other than talk amongst themselves. Given how the pigs terrorized the community daily, standing up to them in this fashion also inspired folks. The vast majority of poor Black people in this country have a real objective interest in coming together to struggle for the revolutionary overthrow of this racist capitalist government. However, many people were so beaten down that they felt hopeless. They had seen time and time again how the white supremacist capitalist power structure in this country systematically disenfranchises Black

folks, how it chews them up and spits them out.

But, when Huey stood up to the pigs in this manner, turned the law around against them, and backed them down like that, it filled people with hope. Bobby's account of the incident highlights how the community members cheered Huey on as he told the pigs off, and their presence was key, because even more than Huey's firm insistence on his right to armed self-defense, the pigs were intimidated by the presence of so many people unified against them. They knew full well that while ten of them could take down one man with a gun, they wouldn't stand a chance against the power of the unified resistance of the people.

When Huey invited the people into the Panthers' office in the middle of the confrontation, he was well aware that he was educating the people right then and there. Not just by his own stand against the police, but also by convincing them that they didn't have to comply with unjust and unlawful orders from the pigs. He was involving them in the struggle too, getting them to stand up to the pigs. And, as Bobby mentions, this was a powerful example. This incident convinced many people, right then and there, that they needed to join the BPP and get involved in the struggle for Black Liberation.



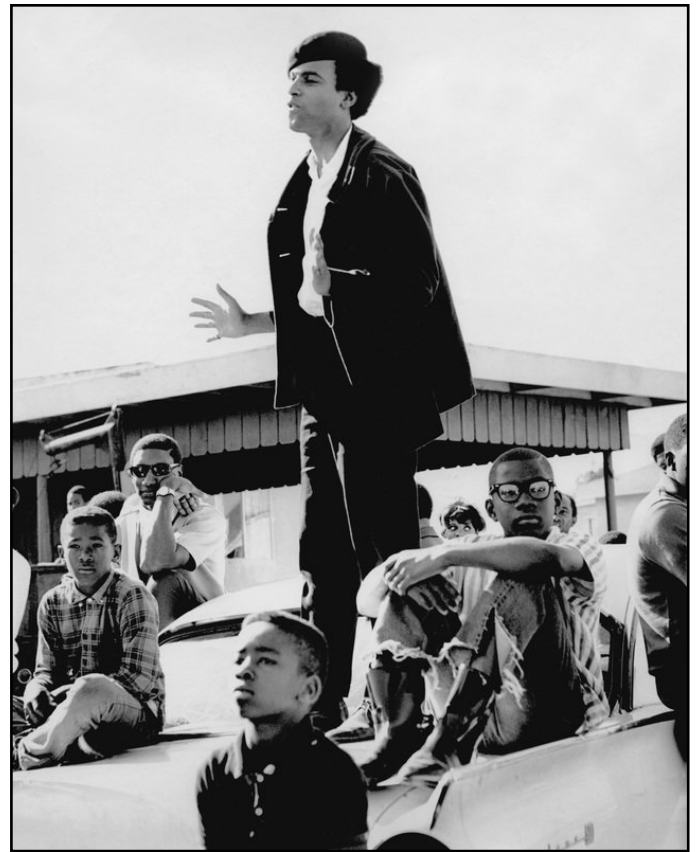
This incident, the ongoing work patrolling the police, and various other efforts in the community spread the word of the Panthers throughout the area. As the Party grew, people around the area began to come to them with issues that they faced. They understood that the BPP was serious about struggling for Black Liberation, and getting organized to fight back against the white supremacist capitalist power structure.

For example, in 1967, the family of Denzil Dowell reached out to the BPP. They lived in the city of Richmond, CA which is a few miles north of Oakland. Denzil had been killed by the police in what appeared to be an execution which the police department was working to cover up. Prior to his death the pigs had been threatening Denzil for weeks, saying that they were going to “get him.” The official story was that he was caught robbing a store, and the pigs shot him once as he ran away because he was trying to climb a fence. But the true story was even worse than killing someone in cold blood just for running away.

The Dowell family called on the BPP because they wanted to publicize the contradictions in the police’s account of the killing of their son and shed light on how Black people are subjected to routine killings at the hands of the pigs. They explained to the Party how the the police report claimed Denzil had been shot once but the coroner’s office said that Denzil had been shot nine or ten times. They then took the Panthers to the spot where Denzil was killed and showed them the bullet holes in the wall where the police had shot him, showing how that they had fired many more than the nine or ten rounds that hit Denzil.

[The people] understood that the BPP was serious about struggling for Black Liberation, and getting organized to fight back against the white supremacist capitalist power structure.

The family demonstrated that the pigs’ justification for killing Denzil—their claim that he was trying to jump a fence to get away—was also a fabrication. The bullet holes and the blood stains were over twenty feet from the fence. Closer to the fence was a second blood stain, where the police had dragged Denzil during the last seconds of his life to make it seem like he was about to jump a fence when they murdered him.



Huey speaking at a protest in 1966 in Richmond, CA against the police murder of Denzil Dowell.

Right then and there, during the middle of the Panthers’ investigation Black folks from Richmond starting coming out their homes to see what was going on. As Bobby Seale put it:

“We were investigating, and a lot of black people in the black community there came out. They had noticed us Panthers, with our guns and everything. I guess there were ten or twelve of us who went out there together and went through the whole process of investigation, of looking

over what had happened, and listening to the information that people were giving that contradicted all the crap that the pigs and newspapers had run down. And the people

were looking.

We were standing on the corner there in North Richmond. There were about 150 people around, some in cars, some standing across the street. Some younger brothers, fifteen, sixteen, some twenty years old, were asking us about the guns, and we were explaining to them about the Black Panther Party. All of a sudden, some sister hollers out, “Uh, oh...here come the cops.”



Bobby speaking at the same 1966 protest in Richmond, CA.

When the sister hollered, Huey jacked a round off into the chamber of his eighteen-inch shotgun with a loud click and clack. When he did that, I unhitched the strap that held the hammer down on my .45, and it clacked too. People started moving back. Some of them went across the street. Some got down and Huey stepped to the curb. I followed Huey and stepped to the curb, a few feet down from him. The pigs were surprised all of a sudden.

They looked and noticed who was ready and standing tall for them. The pigs kept driving, drove right on off—in fact they speeded on up and drove away. Then the people moved on back, and some of them jumped around across the street, figuring there was going to be a shoot-out, but we just stood tall, ready to defend ourselves. We were educating the people that we would die here for them. This was the position we always took with brother Huey P. Newton.

This incident shows clearly how the police in this country view a gathering of Black people as a threat to the power structure. The pigs didn't know that the Panthers were there

with the Dowell family investigating the murder of Denzil, they just saw a bunch of folks congregating and pulled up to harass them. However, the Panthers' response scared them off. Much like in the previous incident quoted above, it wasn't just the presence of the Panthers, but also the large crowd of Black people that intimidated the police. As an oppressive and reactionary force, the police are perfectly capable of intimidating and harassing individuals and small groups. But when a large group of the oppressed and exploited masses get together and get organized, the police are forced to back down, at least temporarily.

While some people were initially quick to run off when the pigs rolled up, other stood their ground, and even those who ran off saw that the organized efforts of the Panthers and their willingness to practice armed self-defense scared the police away. This helped to further clarify what the Black Panther Party was about: They were organized, disciplined, and serious about serving the people. When the police came by, the Panthers didn't go off half-cocked and start a shoot out. Instead they stood their ground and were prepared to defend themselves and the people, including by force if necessary.

From this incident and subsequent conversations the BPP organized a series of rallies in Richmond to expose what had happened to Denzil and to rally the community against police brutality. Denzil's death was not the only instance of police brutality or even police killings; these things were routine events in Richmond. For example, a few months before Denzil was killed two other Black men had been killed by the police.

[The people] understood that the BPP was serious about struggling for Black Liberation, and getting organized to fight back against the white supremacist capitalist power structure.

They were shot all over their bodies, including in their armpits which showed that they had been holding their hands up at the time they were gunned down.

The Panthers used these rallies to draw attention to the systematic nature of police brutality and white supremacist oppression in the area, and to help to organize the people for armed self-defense. These events were a huge success.





Hundreds of people came out, learned about the Panthers, and started getting organized. The BPP talked about their Ten-Point Program, the nature of the white supremacist capitalist power structure in this country, and the need for Black folks to get organized and practice armed self-defense.

During the first rally, the Panthers managed to drive off the police, and at the second one they worked with the people of Richmond to preemptively shut down the whole street and prevent the police from disturbing the rally. This stands in sharp contrast to many groups today who set up “marshals” at their rallies and welcome police “escorts.” These marshals do the work of the pigs for them, they keep the protesters “in line,” prevent them from blocking traffic and the like. Needless to say, the Panthers took a different approach, and it resonated with the people.

When the Panthers had first shown up and started to investigate the murder of Denzil, people were nervous when the police showed up, and many had split when they saw the squad car. But by the time of the second rally in Richmond, the people were militant and organized and they had a better idea about the BPP and what they stood for. They worked closely with the Panthers to coordinate the rally and block traffic so the police couldn't come through. They also had Denzil's brothers and other community members speak about police brutality and the situation for Black folks

in Richmond. Throughout the rally many people applied to join the Party, over 300 according to Bobby Seale.

With all of these developments and the influxes into the BPP, the Panthers started to get some attention from law enforcement, politicians, and other reactionaries. This went beyond harassment at the hands of the police, it also brought them to the attention of the FBI and state legislatures. While the white supremacist capitalists who run this

country had been more than happy to let the Klan and other racist groups use guns to terrorize Black folks for years, once the Panthers started putting armed self-defense into practice, these pigs were quick to move against them.

One form this took was the Mulford Act. This was originally a bill proposed by California Republican assemblyman Don Mulford in 1967. The bill aimed at restricting the ability of citizens to openly carry firearms in public. It was specifically aimed at the Panthers' community patrols. The bill received broad bipartisan support in the California assembly, and even the NRA endorsed it. It was eventually signed into law by then-California Governor Ronald Reagan.

At the time this was one of the strictest gun control laws in the country, and it is significant that so many different groups in the

During the first rally, the Panthers managed to drive off the police, and at the second one they worked with the people of Richmond to preemptively shut down the whole street and prevent the police from disturbing the rally.

racist power structure got together to support it. It indicated that the capitalist pigs who run this country were really concerned about the Panthers. Those who supported the bill used lots of coded language to conceal the racist nature of the Mulford Act, which aimed to limit Black people's ability to defend themselves against racist attacks.



Panthers protesting outside the California Statehouse.

For example, Reagan stated that he saw “no reason why on the street today a citizen should be carrying loaded weapons,” and claimed that that the Mulford Act “would work no hardship on the honest citizen.” While stopping short of explicitly racist language (the development of the Civil Rights and Black Power movement had made it political suicide to throw around the racial slurs the way most politicians had done just a decade prior), these statements were aimed at framing those who advocated for armed self-defense as dangerous and up to “no good.”

The leadership of the Party developed a plan to simultaneously protest the Mulford Act and get national media attention that would clarify what they stood for.

What’s more, Reagan’s statements argue that “honest citizens” have no need to defend themselves from the police, thus implying that those who get killed by pigs deserved to die. Politicians and other reactionary pigs continue to spout similar nonsense today. However, at the time the Panthers were an established organization with a growing membership and so they developed a

plan to push back against the Mulford Act. They knew that the white supremacist capitalist power structure would continue to misrepresent and slander their party. While they had some success in the Bay Area, and the people from the poor Black communities saw through the lies put forward by the politicians and other pigs, the Panthers knew they had to get their message out on a national scale. When they did receive coverage in the press, it was almost all lies, and full of attempts to frame them as “racists” who hated white people, gun nuts who were going to shoot up white neighborhoods, or petty thugs and criminals.

The leadership of the Party developed a plan to simultaneously protest the Mulford Act and get national media attention that would clarify what they stood for. They knew that the Mulford Act was going to be discussed on the floor of the assembly at the state Capitol in Sacramento. So they sent thirty Panthers up to Sacramento to the Capitol to observe the assembly and speak to the media. Huey, Bobby, Eldrige Cleaver, and other leaders drafted a statement known as Executive Mandate Number One that Bobby was to read to the media while the TV cameras rolled. This way, they could get their message out to the public, and at least partially avoid distortion at the hands of the press who are part of the white supremacist capitalist power structure.



The Mandate stated:

The Black Panther Party for Self-Defense calls upon the American people in general and the black people in particular to take careful note of the racist California Legislature which is now considering legislation aimed at keeping the black people disarmed and powerless at the very same time that racist police agencies throughout the country are intensifying the terror, brutality, murder, and repression of black people.

At the same time that the American government is waging a racist war of genocide in Vietnam, the concentration camps in which Japanese Americans were interned during World War II are being renovated and expanded. Since America has historically reserved

the most barbaric treatment for non-white people, we are forced to conclude that these concentration camps are being prepared for black people who are determined to gain their freedom by any means necessary. The enslavement of black people from the very beginning of this country, the genocide practiced on the American Indians and the confining of the survivors on reservations, the savage lynching of thousands of black men and women, the dropping of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and now the cowardly massacre in Vietnam, all testify to the fact that toward people of color the racist power structure of America has but one policy: repression, genocide, terror, and the big stick.

The Black Panther Party for Self-Defense believes that the time has come for black people to arm themselves against this terror before it is too late.

Black people have begged, prayed, petitioned, demonstrated, and everything else to get the racist power structure of America to right the wrongs which have historically been



Little Bobby Hutton (left) and Bobby Seale in the State House after reading Executive Mandate Number One. They are followed by a bunch of reporters who had never before seen anything like this protest in their lives.

perpetrated against black people. All of these efforts have been answered by more repression, deceit, and hypocrisy. As the aggression of the racist American government escalates in Vietnam, the police agencies of America escalate the repression of black people throughout the ghettos of America. Vicious police dogs, cattle prods, and increased patrols have become familiar sights in black communities. City Hall turns a deaf ear to the pleas of black people for relief from this increasing terror.

The Black Panther Party for Self-Defense believes that the time has come for black people to arm themselves against this terror before it is too late. The pending Mulford

Act brings the hour of doom one step nearer. A people who have suffered so much for so long at the hands of a racist society, must draw the line somewhere.

We believe that the black communities of America must rise up as one man to halt the progression of a trend that leads inevitably to their total destruction.



THE SACRAMENTO BEE



VOL. 120—NO. 30,996 Founded 1867 SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA, TUESDAY, MAY 2, 1967—48 PAGES—4 SECTIONS Stocks Final Price 10¢ (10¢ for 10¢)

CAPITOL IS INVADED

Press Corps Draws Ire Of Legislator

By rights, members of the press corps should be regarded as neutral observers in the activities of the state legislature, but a group of militant Negroes who broke into the Capitol building Tuesday night, May 2, 1967, drew the ire of many legislators and members of the press corps.

The group, which included several Black Panther Party members, was seen by many legislators as a group of armed intruders who had broken into the Capitol building and were disrupting the legislative process.

Legislator James B. Hunt, who was in the chamber, pointed to the group as the cause of the disruption and forced them out of the chamber and toward the state capitol grounds.

Legislator James B. Hunt said that the group was "disrupting the legislative process" and that he was "sorry that the group was in the chamber."

The group, which included several Black Panther Party members, was seen by many legislators as a group of armed intruders who had broken into the Capitol building and were disrupting the legislative process.

Legislator James B. Hunt, who was in the chamber, pointed to the group as the cause of the disruption and forced them out of the chamber and toward the state capitol grounds.

Legislator James B. Hunt said that the group was "disrupting the legislative process" and that he was "sorry that the group was in the chamber."



State Police Halt Armed Negro Band

State police Tuesday night halted an armed band of Negroes who had broken into the Capitol building and were disrupting the legislative process.

The group, which included several Black Panther Party members, was seen by many legislators as a group of armed intruders who had broken into the Capitol building and were disrupting the legislative process.

Legislator James B. Hunt, who was in the chamber, pointed to the group as the cause of the disruption and forced them out of the chamber and toward the state capitol grounds.

Legislator James B. Hunt said that the group was "disrupting the legislative process" and that he was "sorry that the group was in the chamber."

11 MIGs Are Destroyed By US Jets

Eleven Soviet-made MIG fighter jets were destroyed by U.S. jets in a dogfight over the Red Sea Tuesday.

The U.S. Navy's F-4 Phantom II fighters were credited with the destruction of the MIGs.

The dogfight took place over the Red Sea, where U.S. jets were engaged in a mission to destroy Soviet-made MIGs.

The U.S. Navy's F-4 Phantom II fighters were credited with the destruction of the MIGs.

The dogfight took place over the Red Sea, where U.S. jets were engaged in a mission to destroy Soviet-made MIGs.

Governor Urges

The media framed the Panthers as invaders, Black racists, and worse. It's likely that they will use similar tactics against revolutionary groups in this country again.

This statement, and the protest at the Capitol ran made news across the country, and spread awareness of the Black Panther Party from coast to coast. The police eventually arrested a number of those who marched into the Capitol on trumped up charges, but even these arrests could not curb the impact that the protest and statement had. The Mandate's clear cut analysis of the situation in the U.S. and the systematic racism in this country galvanized Black folks across the country to get involved with the Panthers. New branches of the Party quickly sprouted up in major cities across the country.

Many folks were sick and tired of the non-violent approach taken by the Civil Rights Movement, and had no desire to passively let themselves be beaten down by the white supremacist capitalist power structure. They wanted to get organized and fight back.

The national media focus on the Panthers showed them that there was group out there that had taken up the spirit of Malcolm X and was serious about fighting for Black Liberation by any means necessary.

At the same time, the growth of the party, the national spotlight, and its spread to new cities brought about new contradictions. Among these was a greater effort by the U.S. government to disrupt and destroy the Panthers. This included the FBI's Counterintelligence Program (COINTELPRO), raids by police departments, frame-ups of key leaders on phony charges, and "vigilante" attacks against Panthers by pigs and members of white supremacist groups. In the next article in this series we will discuss the spread of the Black Panther Party across the country and the related challenges that they faced.

RED STAR

Kavanaugh and the Supreme Court: Two Tools of Ruling Class Reaction

by Charles

The recent confirmation of Supreme Court Justice and sexist pig Brett Kavanaugh has highlighted the fundamentally patriarchal nature of U.S. society. While Democrats mounted some token opposition as a build up to Midterm elections, they did little to actually stop Brett from being confirmed. Since then, Brett the Predator has been welcomed as part of the "Supreme Court Family." This helps to clarify that the Court does not serve the people, but only the ruling class.



Brett the Predator was outraged that he was questioned about his prior sexual exploits, frat parties, and his drinking habits.

Last October, after over two months of hearings, several allegations of sexual assault, and the rallying of conservative rightists, Brett Kavanaugh was confirmed to be the next Supreme Court Justice. Kavanaugh himself is not so special. His support of various anti-people policies is typical among federal judges. Kavanaugh is pretty much in line with all the other judges Trump could've chosen from. In fact, his name was one of many on a list of nominees provided to Trump by the far-right Federalist Society, a group of ultra-conservative lawyers and judges who lobby for anti-worker, misogynist, and racist legislation.

Soon after his nomination was announced, mass protests erupted in response to allegations that he sexually assaulted Christine Blasey Ford when the two were in high school. Soon, even more reports of abuse and assault came out against him from his time in college. As opposition to his nomination grew across the country, the ensuing circus of the confirmation hearings was used as a political tool to build the

hype around the 2018 midterms, for both parties.

Republicans, on the one hand, worked to rally their traditional white, middle-class, evangelical base in opposition to Democrats and the "uppity women" opposing Kavanaugh. They characterized the protests against Kavanaugh as an "unruly mob" who were threatening the foundation of U.S. society. To them, the accusations were nothing more than "character assassinations" of a good rich white Christian boy by "the Left". For their base, they successfully painted the allegations of Ford and others as a plot of the Democrats to block Trump's nominee. They lauded Kavanaugh's academic record at Yale and his "family values" as evidence that he could never be the violent and abusive person described by Ford and several others. The message being sent to the Republican voting base was: Democrats are out to destroy so-called "family values," they hate straight white men and want to destroy them, and you can stop them by voting Republican.

Democrats, in turn, funneled the outrage against Kavanaugh into their own campaigns for 2018. As part of a long-standing strategy of the Democrats to paint themselves as a “progressive” alternative to the Republicans, the Democrats (especially the ones running in the midterms) began to campaign against Kavanaugh and paint themselves as a feminist and pro-woman party. However, they took their sweet time with this, and waited until the weeks before the elections to move against Kavanaugh politically. As a result, the struggles against Kavanaugh were diverted towards the voting booth and as a result, crushed.

The patriarchal white supremacist capitalist power structure of America has never granted anything to the masses of people without the people waging big struggles against the power structure. Everything from the eight-hour workday to civil rights have been won only by the brave struggles led by workers and oppressed people in this country. Because of this, the ruling capitalist class—the bourgeoisie—works constantly to dissuade people from actually coming together and fighting for a better system and a better world.

By diverting action away from building up a wider struggle against patriarchy and into the singular, once-every-few-years act of casting a vote, the Democrats stifled the struggle. Over the last few years we have seen how they have worked hard to funnel the hopes of a larger women’s movement into “get out to vote drives.” The Democrats have been fairly successful in transforming mass outrage against the brutally patriarchal nature of our society into a movement that is dutifully carrying out the interests of the ruling class. Despite some Democrats’ statements in support of feminism, their actions show a consistent policy of massively betraying of the growing women’s movement in the United States. This is to be expected as they are political party supported and financed by many patriarchal pigs from the capitalist class.



The Democratic Party machine worked hard to funnel mass outrage at patriarchy in the election booth. They printed premade shirts, signs and banners with disturbing slogans that portrayed voting as the solution to patriarchy.

Women’s Movement and American Patriarchy

The MeToo movement of the past year built much of the basis for such mass opposition to sexual abuse and harassment, especially by men in positions of power. It inspired many women to get involved in political struggles, and revealed how prevalent misogynist and patriarchal attitudes are among the capitalist ruling class in this country. Many of those who have been exposed by the MeToo movement are members of the ruling class themselves. Big Hollywood capitalist Harvey Weinstein was one of the first men to be exposed as a serial rapist. Weinstein is also a long-time supporter of and major donor to the Democratic Party, helping raise millions of dollars for the Party’s campaigns and individually donating over \$350,000 to the Party himself!

More recently, over 20,000 Google employees walked out against the company’s \$90 million buy-out of Andy Rubin, the co-founder of Android who was accused of sexual harassment. The buy-out and reason for Rubin leaving the company in 2014 were kept secret by Google until they were exposed earlier this year. The widespread presence of sexual abuse and harassment—and misogynist attitudes more generally—within the ruling class isn’t simply the fault of a few individuals, but is an important way the tiny ruling class maintains its rule over the majority of people on the planet.





Serial rapist Harvey Weinstein with his pal Obama and Democratic Senators Lautenberg and Schumer.

Patriarchy is a necessary part of the capitalist and white supremacist system of the U.S. It helps to keep women, especially poor and non-white women, in a subordinate position to oppress them, give them lower wages, and easily fire them if they don't submit to and accept sexual harassment, "jokes," and requests of bosses. For women workers, this type of sexist piggery is often an everyday experience, and even led to a one-day protest of McDonalds workers in Chicago, St. Louis, and several other large cities in September 2018, as workers walked out against sexual harassment from managers and other higher-ups. On top of all this, U.S. culture and media—especially pornography—continually advertises and spreads sexualized images of women which treat them as commodities or sex objects instead of as people. This reinforces and justifies, even subconsciously, the idea that women are lesser than men, and either "deserve" or "asked for" different types of abuse.

While the MeToo movement has done much to expose many individual sexual abusers within the ruling class, and supported women in coming forward to talk about their own experiences, it has many limitations as well. Much of the movement has been co-opted by the Democratic Party as part of its efforts to paint itself as a "progressive" alternative to the status-quo.

In both the MeToo movement and the Women's March which took place after Trump's inauguration, attention was widely diverted away from digging out the roots of patriarchy in our society and from connecting the women's struggle with other struggles. Instead, the

voting booth was said to be the answer to all our problems. In all this, the more revolutionary aspects of the movement were sidelined or washed out. The leadership of these movements said voting for women, or for Democrats more generally, was the solution. In contrast this, a revolutionary approach is needed which works to unite the people in an active struggle against patriarchy as an essential part of the struggle to overthrow the capitalist ruling class of this country and establish a society that serves the people's interests.

The reality is that Democrats are part of the problem. This is reflected most clearly in their own individual acts of abuse and misogyny, such as Bill Clinton's history of sexual harassment during his time both as Governor of Arkansas and as President, but also in their support of policies that actively oppress women. The Democrats pay lip service to the fights for pay equality, maternity leave, childcare, and more, but they repeatedly have shown an unwillingness to wage a serious fight for these issues. Instead, they leave the majority of woman in the lurch, struggling to meet ends meet and raise their kids, while the Democrats live comfortable lives financed by big donations from capitalist pigs like Harvey Weinstein and others.

The reality is that Democrats are part of the problem. This is reflected most clearly in their own individual acts of abuse and misogyny.

The oppression of women by the U.S. state is felt even more by those living under the thumb of U.S. imperialism (both military and financial domination). This includes the U.S. military occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq which have seen U.S. military personnel commit huge numbers of sexual assaults on Afghan and Iraqi women; it includes U.S. bombs being dropped on women in countries across the Middle East and North Africa; it includes the U.S. keeping whole countries under financial control, forcing women to choose between working in a sweatshop for U.S. companies or being forced into prostitution to make ends meet. And the Democrats have historically supported all of these policies.

Even Obama, who ran in large part on the fact that he had opposed the Iraq War, continued and expanded the wars abroad and facilitated corporate plunder of the world on an unprecedented scale. One of his first acts as president was to send an additional 30,000 troops to Afghanistan. He also facilitated the bank bailout which transferred trillions of dollars from poor Americans to banks. With all this, it becomes clear that the Democratic opposition to Kavanaugh was not about ending patriarchy or supporting women, but about their maneuvers to re-take the seats of power from the Republicans.



Supreme Court Justices show their true faces. While some have tried to pretend Judges appointed by Democrats are progressive forces, they too have historically been bought and sold by corporate interests.

Kavanaugh and the Court

Part of the Democratic strategy in opposing Kavanaugh was to paint him as an unwelcome “blemish” on the otherwise “noble” institution of the Supreme Court, and that he would make the Court a “partisan” institution divided between the two ruling class parties. This idea relies on the ruling class myth that the court is an “impartial, nonpartisan body” which mystically hovers above the rest of society and makes decisions only on legal expertise. But in reality, it is part of a legal system which defends the interests of the wealthy ruling class and maintains their rule. The court is undemocratically stacked with representatives of the ruling class, of judges with deep connections to Wall Street and corporate America, but with some different ideas on how to best maintain and expand their power over workers and other oppressed people—which is anything but impartial!

Throughout history, the U.S. Supreme Court has upheld the worst and most backwards aspects of U.S. society. Until the Civil War, the Supreme Court routinely upheld the rights of slaveholders (with many of the “Justices” themselves owning slaves); for nearly 100 years afterwards, it defended and maintained Jim Crow apartheid. The Supreme Court has also routinely worked to expand the power of capital over labor. In the latter half of the 1800s, decisions were passed to expand the legal rights of corporations.

The idea of “corporate personhood”—that corporations have the same rights as individuals under the Constitution—was first decided in the Supreme Court in the 1886 decision *Santa Clara County v. Southern Pacific Railroad Company*. This granted huge power to companies in the courtroom, especially in cases of labor disputes, as they were treated not as companies with huge amounts of power in sway in a growing capitalist economy, but as a person on equal legal footing with the wage worker being exploited by the capitalist.

Throughout history, the U.S. Supreme Court has upheld the worst and most backwards aspects of U.S. society.

More recent cases have shown the Supreme Court continues to act solely in the interests of the ruling class. In the 2010 *Citizens United v. FEC* case, the Court ruled that corporations, non-profits, and corrupt unions that sell out workers could spend unlimited sums on political advertising and political donations to super PACs on the basis that these institutions have the same legal right as individuals to “free speech.” This only furthered the reach of corporations essentially buying elections.





The Supreme Court of the United States of Corporate America.

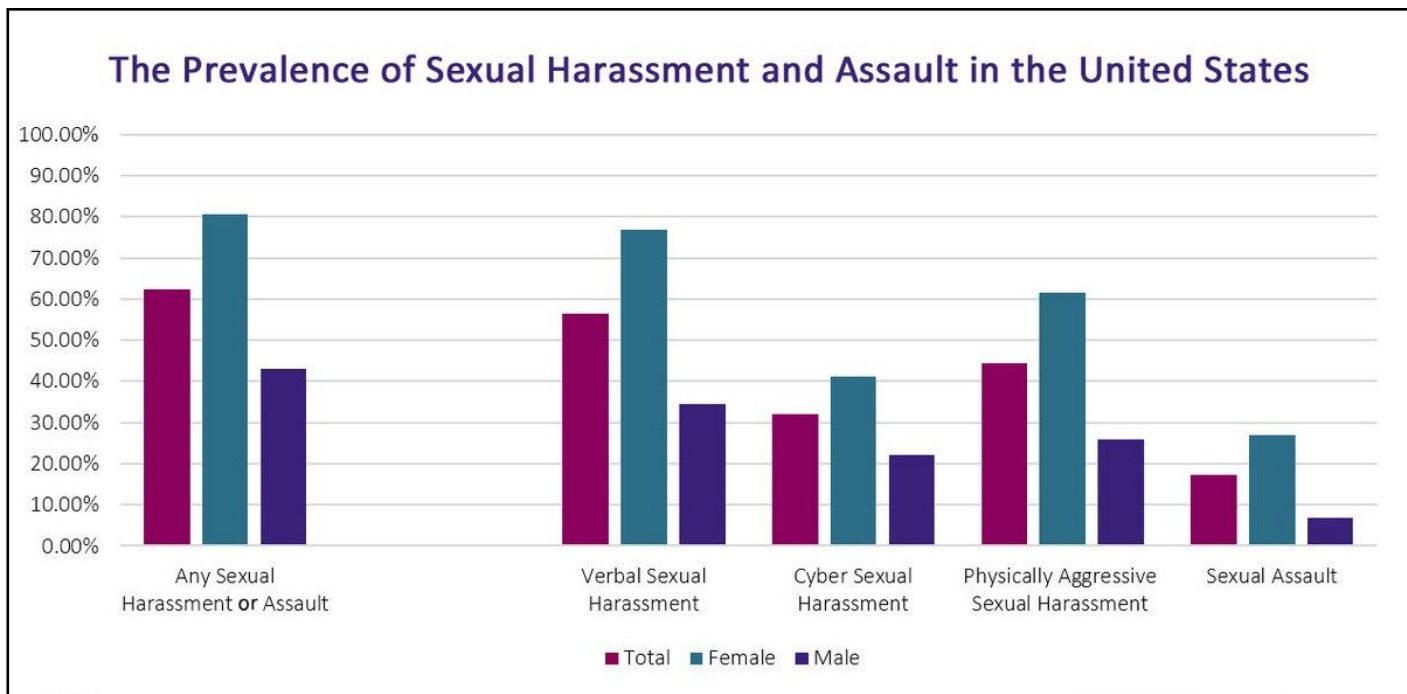
In June 2018, the *Janus v. AFSCME* case was a gutting of public sector labor unions, at a time when class struggles and the labor movement is at an all-time low in the U.S. While the unions in question in the *Janus* case are largely toothless, bureaucratic messes which routinely betray workers, the ruling expanded the power of the ruling class to prevent workers all over the country, unionized or not, from coming together and collectively struggling against injustices and exploitation in the workplace. The court—which had actually added one of the supposedly more “progressive” judges between *Citizens United* and *Janus* (Elena Kagan)—even argued that in *Janus*, union dues were a form of “political advocacy”, but in *Citizens United*, the political ads and donations by super PACs were not! These decisions did not come from some abstract legal opinion, but out of the class interest of the rich people who run this country.

There are a few exceptions to the Supreme Court acting in the blatant interests of the ruling class, which the political pundits focus on to obscure the Court’s real history. These include *Brown v. Board of Education* and *Roe v. Wade* in the last century. What is conveniently ignored by defenders of the Court in discussing these cases, is the massive upheavals of people protesting in the streets and waging major struggles which greatly influenced the ruling

class to make changes in attempts to restore the masses’ faith that “the system works.” For example, with the *Brown v. Board of Education* case, the civil rights movement and Black liberation struggle were gaining steam, and were putting immense pressure on the United States both domestically and internationally.

Only through struggle did landless men, women, and Black people win basic rights and freedoms.

The ruling class during the Cold War was worried that the continued practice Jim Crow and growing internal rebellion would harm the image of the United States in the eyes of other countries, and spark revolutionary developments at home. So, they began to roll back the legal apartheid system beginning with the *Brown* decision. This was a major victory for the people of this country, won not by kindly asking the Supreme Court to do the right thing but by courageously and resolutely fighting against the current power structure for liberation. The struggles for women’s liberation that saw their peak in the late 60s and 70s also contributed to the *Roe v. Wade* ruling.



The patriarchal nature of U.S. society is reflected in how many people experience sexual harassment and assault.

Thanks in large part to these struggles and many more, the U.S. system currently allows certain democratic rights and protections for people. Only through struggle did landless men, women, and Black people win basic rights and freedoms. But these are also constantly under attack by the ruling class through Congress, the Presidency, and the Supreme Court, and all other levels of the state. Today, both parties routinely purge voter rolls (largely of poor and nonwhite voters), gerrymander districts back-and-forth, attack basic rights to free speech, expand government surveillance to dystopian levels, and more. The rights won through struggle are stripped and repealed over time, since in the long run they are incompatible with the interests of the ruling class having power over the majority of people.

Kavanaugh has already been accepted by the ruling class now that election season is over. The wide struggles against him have been dissolved, as Democrats move away from the issue and even embrace the new member of the Supreme Court. In fact, Sonia Sotomayor, who was nominated by Barack Obama and considered one of the “most progressive” members of the court, welcomed Kavanaugh as “a member of the family”! The bourgeoisie used Kavanaugh to build up electoral fervor, and then worked to silence the movement against him to prevent it from turning against the power structure.

For the movements like MeToo to

develop as part of a wider revolutionary women’s movement, and not have their victories systematically rolled back and squashed, we must break from their reformist tendencies. Instead of just funneling people into the voting booth every few years we need to question the role of capitalism and the U.S. state in women’s oppression. We must grow struggles to expose perpetrators of rape, abuse, and harassment, not just for the movie stars who were the first to voice their accusations but also for working women who experience routine harassment and abuse from their bosses, landlords, abusive relationships, and more. Patriarchal ideas which are engrained into our society and internalized by many men and women should be criticized and talked about openly. We need to smash this system which says that women should be subordinate to men. This cannot be done through the halls of the U.S. state, through the Democrats, or through a movement coopted by the ruling class. It can only be done by working women and men, united in struggle against the current rotten power structure.

With a revolutionary movement by and for the people, we can organize and win victories against the ruling class, not just to fight for legal rights, not just to elect a different “lesser evil” every few years, but to organize and fight for people’s power, against capitalism, white supremacy, and patriarchy.

Naxalbari: The Rebirth of the Revolutionary Movement in India

by Sarah



Tens of thousands gathered in the jungles of central India to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Naxalbari Revolt.

51 years ago revolutionaries in India joined with peasants in an armed revolt against landlords and the larger social system in the country. Today this revolt, after many twists and turns, has grown into a country-wide revolutionary movement. At present the Indian government has deployed over 300,000 troops in the jungles of Central India. The area is in a state of civil war. In the midsts of this war, revolutionaries are working to build a new India, one free from oppression and exploitation.

In 1967, in the village of Naxalbari, in the state of West Bengal, a militant struggle took root among the peasantry. They demanded land to the tiller, an end to onerous taxation and crushing debt, and they refused to back down from their demands, even when the state unleashed a brutal reign of terror upon the people. This struggle, although it was ultimately defeated, blazed a new path forward for the revolutionary movement in India, so much so that those who continue the struggle today are often called “Naxalites.” Naxalbari was not the first militant peasant struggle to erupt over land and demands for an end to onerous feudal exploitation, but it was the first struggle to connect the basic demands of the peasantry with

a need for the seizure of political power. It demonstrated the possibility of creating zones of people’s political power in the countryside, where the armed peasantry would rule and exercise its will over the landlords, moneylenders, and thugs. Naxalbari itself kicked off a wave of militant peasant struggles throughout the country, and it inspired the revolutionary movement which continues to this day.

Background to the Struggle

The struggle in Naxalbari broke out during a period of intense revolutionary struggle internationally and deep domestic problems in India. In China, the Great Proletarian Cultural





During the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in China millions of students got involved in the political struggle to keep China on the socialist road and prevent the restoration of capitalism.

Revolution had just recently been launched by Mao and others, and students, workers, peasants, and young people all over China were rebelling against unjust authorities and creating new revolutionary ways to organize their schools and workplaces. This also launched a new wave of support in China for revolutionary movements around the world. Mao and others issued statements in support of the Black liberation struggle in the U.S., the struggle in Palestine, and many other revolutionary movements around the world. They also coordinated material support for many People's struggles, including by supplying arms and training. The Chinese revolutionaries also worked to propagate some of the basic lessons they had learned in their revolutionary war of independence, and in the 20 years of revolutionary struggle since they liberated China. The lessons from the Chinese revolution would prove to be crucial for the Naxalite movement, and Chinese revolutionaries were also able to offer support at key moments.

In India, the Congress party, which in West Bengal had ruled since the partition and "independence" of India in 1947, was facing new challenges to its legitimacy. Congress was initially set up under British rule to serve as a dead-end for the Indian independence struggle. The party was more than happy to cooperate with the British to ensure that India's independence would only be a sham independence, instead of the complete break with

the British which was necessary. India officially became an independent country, but all laws were carried over from the existing British administration, and the property of British capitalists was protected above all else. In the years after 1947, the year when India became independent, British capital investments in India actually increased every year. British capitalists continued to invest in factories, mines, shipping infrastructure, and more. This let them take advantage of the poverty and lack of development in India, where they could pay lower wages than in Britain. The profits they generated were owned

by the British capitalists, and they left India constantly, a blatant continuation of the same parasitic relationship the British had with India before independence.

Mao and others issued statements in support of the Black liberation struggle in the U.S., the struggle in Palestine, and many other revolutionary movements around the world.

To pull off a sham independence like this, after the Indian people had been demanding independence for decades, the Congress party had to work constantly to deceive the people. For a time they were able to hold things together and maintain their rule by force and coercion. But by the late 60's India's impoverishment had deepened, and for the broad masses of people the situation was either the same or worse than it had been before "independence." The situation for the peasantry, in particular, was desperate. They faced brutal feudal exploitation by feudal landlords in the countryside, and also were being displaced by land-grabs for big capitalist projects throughout the country.





The corporate plunder of India has left many peasants landless and hopeless. Some would rather die than become beggars in the city.

Big capitalists also benefited from the poverty in the countryside. The poor and landless rural population were often left with no means to support themselves. They were so desperate for any way to survive that they would work for almost any wages. This large population of unemployed people started to make their way to India's growing cities, providing a large labor pool that the capitalists could draw on. The existence of a large mass of unemployed people also provided a way for the capitalists to keep wages low, by constantly threatening to

replace the workers they currently employed with the unemployed masses outside the factory gate.

Additionally, the majority of the profits made by big capital firms in India at the time were destined to leave the country, because the firms in question were either owned directly by British and American capitalists or they were indirectly controlled by them. Although a few loyal toadies of the foreign capitalists, such as the Tata family, were allowed to become very wealthy, this system of capitalist imperialist exploitation resulted in a growing impoverishment of India as a whole. The peasantry, who are the very bottom-most class in India, were hit particularly hard.

This system of capitalist imperialist exploitation resulted in a growing impoverishment of India as a whole.

The combination of feudal exploitation and imperialist domination was hitting the peasantry very hard, and their situation was becoming more and more desperate. The promises that the Congress Party had been making since Partition, to redistribute land, support basic welfare for the peasantry, and work to increase their standard of living, were exposed more and more as the lies they were.



The Indian government had repeatedly promised to eliminate feudalism and carry out land reform to distribute land to the impoverished peasantry, but all of the state's laws and efforts were little more than halfhearted gestures which brought about almost no change in the situation for the peasantry and the poor. The land-ceiling acts, passed in each state in the wake of Partition, totally outlawed the collection of feudal rent from the peasantry, and established a maximum amount of land that could be legally owned by a single person. Land held by landlords above the limit was supposed to be redistributed to the peasantry free of charge. If this law had actually been applied it would have resulted in a massive redistribution of land, and many thousands of square miles of land would have been seized from big landlords. But this law didn't end up redistributing almost any land, because landlords were able to dodge the law, keep their land, and maintain their dominance over the peasantry. In many areas the landlords simply split up their holdings and distributed them to their close relatives, so that although the legal owner of the land was different the landlord retained effective control. In other areas they bribed the officials, and in some areas the law was simply never enforced. The exploitation of the peasantry was becoming intolerable, and in many areas the number of peasants who had no land or not enough to support themselves was increasing.



CPI (Marxist) leader Jyoti Basu being arrested for a protest in 1966. He would become Chief Minister of West Bengal after the 1967 elections.



Jyoti Basu meeting with Indian billionaire capitalist Ratan Tata a few years later. After betraying the people's movement Jyoti and CPI (Marxist) became very popular with Indian capitalists and foreign imperialists.

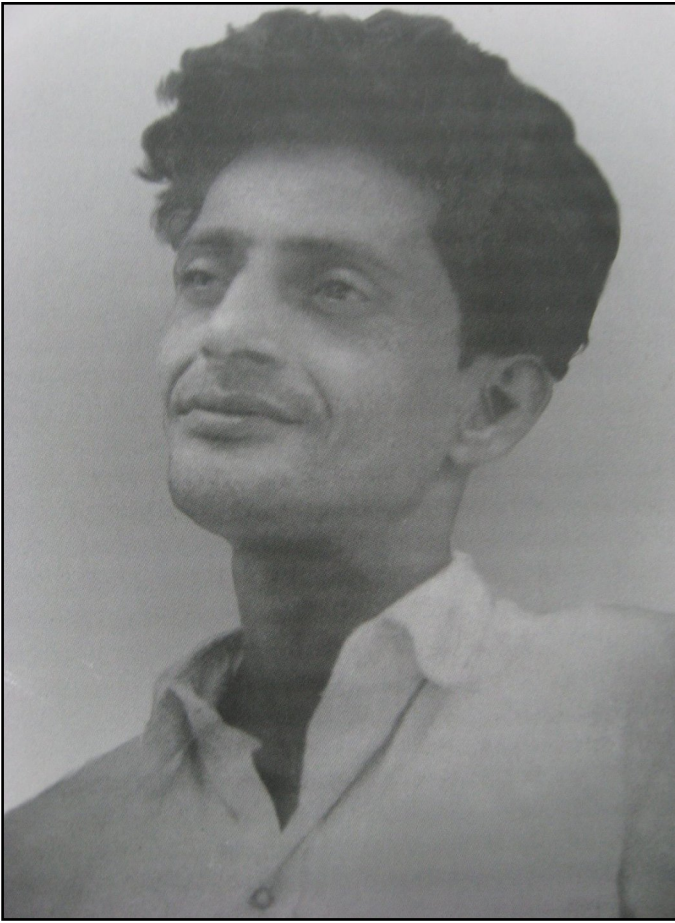
The masses of peasants and workers were growing more and more disillusioned with the Congress Party's leadership of the country, and many saw the need for a different path forward. In 1967, in the Indian state of West Bengal, a new coalition government was elected called the United Front. This was the first non-Congress Party government elected in West Bengal since Partition. It was a coalition between several electoral leftist parties, including the Communist Party of India (CPI) and the Communist Party of India (Marxist), or CPI(M), which played a leading role in the coalition. This new coalition government promised to enact the land reform which had been promised over and over again to the peasantry but never actually carried out. These promises took advantage of the mass outrage against the corrupt Congress Party, and the new coalition sailed to electoral victory on the strength of the people's anger over their conditions and the inaction of the government.

West Bengal was, at the time, ruled by an alliance between rural feudal forces, big landlords, and comprador capitalists. All of these groups totally opposed land reform, the landlords because they made their living off the labor of the poor and impoverished peasants, and the big capitalists because having massive numbers of unemployed landless peasants in the countryside kept them supplied with a ready pool of cheap labor for their factories and mines. To really address the land question, and distribute excess land to the peasantry in order to guarantee a basic standard of living, the CPI(M) and the United Front government needed to be prepared to challenge these classes.

The feudal forces wielded especially immense power in the countryside, through networks of loyalty and patronage, and the rural police forces—although technically employed by the state government—often in fact played the role of a feudal enforcer for the rule of the landlords. The simple fact is that the CPI(M) leadership, while they were fine with promising land reform to the peasantry in order to get elected, was not even remotely prepared for or interested in really challenging the rule of these feudal and comprador capitalist elements in West Bengal.

The position of the CPI(M) leadership, however, was not shared by all of the members. Many in the CPI(M), especially in local organizing committees, genuinely supported the peasant struggles, and wanted to use the electoral power to support rural peasant struggles in whatever way possible. But the party leadership ended up siding with the landlords and big capitalists against the poor and oppressed people of West Bengal. They prioritized their reelection and their control of the state government over the people, and the party's promises of land reform turned out to be no more trustworthy than those of the Congress party. When the peasants got organized, rose up against feudal exploitation and oppression, the CPI(M) failed to do anything significant to prevent the police from attacking the peasants. Those who disagreed with this path ended up leaving to form a new party, dedicated to the rural armed struggle and forged in the fires of militant peasant struggles all over India.





Charu Mazumdar was one of the leaders of the Naxalbari movement and key figure in charting a way forward for the revolution in India.

The Struggle in Naxalbari and Beyond

Just as the United Front government, with all of its promises of land reform, was taking power in West Bengal, a militant movement, led by local members of CPI(M), was taking off in the countryside. Across the Darjeeling area, a strip of territory bordered by Nepal to the West and Bangladesh to the East, peasant committees and armed self-defense groups were formed. Instead of waiting for the government to agree to carry out land reform the peasants and the militant CPI(M) members who joined them saw that they needed to be ready to take matters into their own hands. The government, dominated by landlords, was never going to agree to carry out land reform, so the peasants had to arm themselves, seize excess land and crops from the landlords, and redistribute it to the poor and landless peasants.

These actions, however, would not go unnoticed or unanswered by the landlords. They would use all means at their disposal to strike back at the rising tide of the peasant masses.

In many places the police were under the effective control of the landlords, and the landlords often had hired goons who would beat up or murder peasants who got out of line. The peasants needed a way to deal with the terror that the landlords would reign down upon them if they dared to lift their heads and struggle for an end to their brutal exploitation.

Simply put, the leaders of the movement had to consider the question of political power.

This question forced the leadership of the rural movement to broaden the scope of the struggle. It was not enough to just consider the question of how to redistribute land, and how to rouse the peasant masses to strike back after years of injustice by the landlords. They had to also have a plan for how to defend themselves over the long term, and to guarantee that the white terror of the landlords wouldn't simply destroy and undo any land redistribution that they carried out.

They had to create a form of people's political power in the countryside which could effectively defend territory that it controlled from attacks by the forces of the landlords and the big capitalists.

Simply put, the leaders of the movement had to consider the question of political power. They had to create a form of people's political power in the countryside which could effectively defend territory that it controlled from attacks by the forces of the landlords and the big capitalists. This area could also provide a base from which to launch actions elsewhere and spread the movement to new areas. This had to be built by seizing power in specific areas by annihilating or chasing out the landlord and other feudal forces. After seizing power, they had to defend the area against attacks by the reactionary forces, work to spread the struggle to other areas, and work to address the issues facing the peasantry in the areas already under control.



The success of the Chinese revolution was built on the Chinese Communist Party's ability to mobilize the peasants in revolutionary struggle. In India, revolutionaries are following a similar path.

For carrying out all of these tasks it is essential to have the widest possible involvement of the masses in the struggle. The success of this program of area-wide seizure of power is entirely dependent on the level of support by the people. If the people do not support the struggle, the movement will flounder and waste away. But if the people support the movement and participate in it actively, the areas under control will see the development of new revolutionary forms of organization, peasants will be inspired to join the armed groups to defend their People's government, and the revolutionary movement will be able to spread to other areas. The fundamentals of this revolutionary strategy were first developed during the Chinese Revolution by Mao and others. After a long, difficult struggle, the Chinese revolutionaries were eventually able to seize power across the whole country.

In a country like India, where the vast majority of the population is rural, it is possible to seize political power in the countryside because the state forces are relatively weak there. Even so, at first a newly-formed People's government cannot repel a head-on assault by the police or the army. It must rely for a long time on tactics of guerilla warfare such as ambushes, and can only occasionally concentrate forces for an attack on the police forces. This means that in practice the areas of political power do not have

hard borders, like a nation-state does, but are instead somewhat porous. The police and army forces are allowed to penetrate deep into the territory, before they are surrounded and overwhelmed when and where it is advantageous for the revolutionaries.

Before the events in Naxalbari in 1967, a section of the CPI(M) started to develop a political program of arming the peasantry, carrying out land reform, and area-wide seizure of power. They looked to the revolutionary war of liberation in China for inspiration. A central figure in this group was Charu Mazumdar, a revolutionary leader from West Bengal who published several key articles calling for a break with electoral strategies and urging a strategy of rural revolution. Just after the election of the United Front government, a conference was held at Siliguri, a city located in the Darjeeling district of West Bengal, on March 18, 1967.

They looked to the revolutionary war of liberation in China for inspiration.

The conference was called by the CPI(M) Siliguri district committee, and it brought together militant peasant activists from across the district. The conference, attended by Charu Mazumdar and other revolutionaries in the CPI(M), resolved to form peasants' committees to seize and redistribute land from landlords, and to arm the peasants to enforce their demands and defend themselves from the retaliation of the landlords and police. This conference marked a decision to set off on a new revolutionary road, one that promised difficult struggle and sacrifice, but also one that represented the only real path forward for the liberation of the mostly rural population of India.




Shanti Munda
Tribal woman leader and Naxal

The entire crop had to be given to the landlord.

Shanti Munda, one of the few participants of the Naxalbari uprising still living today, explains the political reasons behind the rebellion.

Following the Siliguri conference, during March and April 1967, Peasants' Committees and armed self-defense groups were formed in all the villages of the the whole Darjeeling area. Around twenty thousand peasants got involved, and they started to carry out the program they had decided on at the conference. They canceled outstanding debts, occupied the landlords' lands, burnt land records, and executed particularly brutal and oppressive landlords. They also set up an administration to manage things in their villages, an initial form of People's Power. These actions represented a huge step forward for the revolutionary movement in India. The initial resistance of the exploiters, the landlords and their goons, was broken by the militant action of the peasantry, and some of the most hated and extreme forms of oppression were attacked head-on. The peasantry's demands for land were satisfied by redistributing land seized from the landlord, and the Peasants' organizations and committees set up throughout the area provided ways for the peasants to start to exercise democratic control over their villages and their lives. However, these actions drew the attention of both the police and the leadership of the CPI(M), who both tried to shut down the struggle, albeit in different ways.

As soon as the CPI(M) leadership in the capital of Calcutta got wind of what was going on in the Naxalbari area they tried to convince the local leaders of the movement to break off the struggle and surrender to the police. The leadership of the party, although they had claimed to support land redistribution in order to

get elected, were in fact only willing to support land redistribution done by the government. They opposed the peasants to taking matters into their own hands. Because the government land redistribution programs had accomplished basically nothing since the independence of India in 1947, a militant peasant movement was the only way the demand for land was going to be addressed. So for the CPI(M) leadership to say that the peasants were

“going too far” amounted to a total betrayal of the peasantry and of their struggle. The leadership of the CPI(M), as part of the United Front government, enjoyed positions of power and prestige. Faced with the reality that supporting the peasants' brave struggle in the countryside would cost many of them their political careers and comfortable positions, they chose to turn their backs on the masses and act out of their own self-interest. When they did this they sided with the reactionary feudal and capitalist ruling classes of West Bengal and betrayed the people.

A militant peasants' movement was the only way the demand for land was going to be addressed.

After this betrayal by the CPI(M) leadership, the local leaders in Naxalbari did not give up the struggle and surrender, but instead became more resolute in their decision and condemned the actions of the leadership. Many others in the party supported the Naxalbari movement and detested the spineless actions of the leadership. An organization called the Naxalbari Peasant Struggle Aid Committee was formed in Calcutta by dissident members of CPI(M). The decisions by the leadership were discussed and debated at all levels, and many in the CPI(M) began to think that they needed to leave and form a new, truly revolutionary organization to carry forward the struggle.

There was even international criticism of the CPI(M) leadership, when Chinese radio broadcasts called the CPI(M) and the United Front government a “tool of the Indian reactionaries to deceive the people.” This betrayal by the leadership reached its full extent in June, 1967, when the leadership failed to oppose or prevent a massacre of nine peasants by the police at the end of May. This police terror continued, and by July 20th all of the leaders of the movement were either arrested or driven into hiding. The



Members of the People's Liberation Guerrilla Army (PLGA) at the 2004 founding of CPI (Maoist).

movement was effectively crushed by this police repression, but its importance would stretch far beyond just the village of Naxalbari or the state of West Bengal. Naxalbari kicked off a rural revolutionary movement which, through many twists and turns, carries on the struggle today.

Although the struggle at Naxalbari was ultimately defeated it was incredibly important for the development of the revolutionary movement in India. The response of the CPI(M) leadership to the struggle exposed the electoral leftist parties, like CPI(M), for the charlatans that they were. Many peasants in West Bengal voted for the CPI(M) and other parties in the United Front government hoping that these so-called “leftist” parties would represent their interests and finally make basic concessions to improve their standard of living. This same government then went on to attack the people brutally when they raised their heads and struggled against the brutal oppression that they faced. For dissident members of CPI(M) this showed the need for a new and truly revolutionary organization. A group was formed in November 1967 called All India Coordinating Committee of Communist Revolutionaries (AICCCR) which was primarily composed of members of CPI(M). They eventually left CPI(M) and in 1969 formed a new party called the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist). Over the next decades there were many setbacks, splits, mergers, and advances, and various groups carried on the

revolutionary struggle touched off in Naxalbari. Then in 2004 the two largest Naxalite groups at the time, the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) People's War Group and the Maoist Communist Center of India, merged to form the Communist Party of India (Maoist). The formation of this group marked the founding of a large revolutionary organization carrying on the legacy of Naxalbari and capable of operating all across the country. It was a major step forward for the revolutionary movement and the people in India, but the formation of this new revolutionary party would not have been possible without the decades of struggle that had already taken place, and without the new revolutionary direction inspired by Naxalbari.

The Naxalbari struggle also showed how area-wide seizure of power could work in India and inspired people all over India to follow in its footsteps. Right after Naxalbari there was a wave of militant land struggles all over India, where peasants took up the demands for land redistribution. However, many of these struggles did not take up the question of political power, and just struggled against landlords and feudal goons to secure land without working to create areas of People's political power. For many people all across India the struggle at Naxalbari was inspiring and prompted them to take action, but the importance of building People's power in the countryside was not necessarily clear. However, the activists involved in Naxalbari

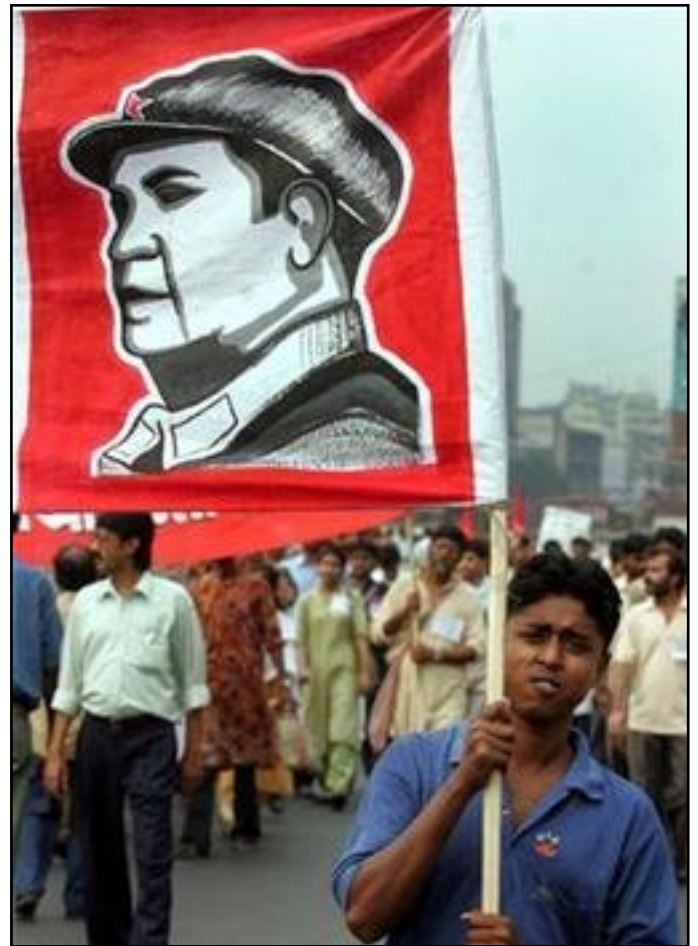


itself and those who formed organizations like AICCCR and later CPI(ML) saw the People's political power as an integral part of the struggle in the countryside. This political power both protects the gains won in the struggle and plays a key role in the development towards a revolution across the whole country.

The struggle at Naxalbari was itself short-lived. The revolutionaries and the peasant masses who came together at Naxalbari to struggle for a new society, free from feudal and imperialist domination, were betrayed by the electoral party which had promised to support them. The police were able to round up and arrest the key leaders, and the movement fizzled out after just a few short months. After that, the gains that had been won in the struggle there were rolled back, and the landlords who were expelled or who ran away quickly came back and reasserted their power. So, in one sense, the movement at Naxalbari ended in failure, and the struggle was defeated.

But in another sense Naxalbari was an immense success. At the time, across all of India, peasants in the countryside were living under grinding exploitation and worsening poverty. The struggle at Naxalbari shone like a beacon across the whole country, showing that it was possible not just to resist momentarily or to strike out in desperation, but to come together, get organized, and force the landlords and police to obey the peasant masses. This idea spread like wildfire all across India, and inspired thousands of students, workers, activists, and intellectuals to go to the countryside and join with the struggles of the peasantry. This was the seed of the revolutionary movement which continues to this day. Today in what is called the Red Corridor there are hundreds of Janatana Sarkars or People's Governments exercising political power in the countryside, and they are defended by the People's Liberation Guerrilla Army and the People's Militia. The revolutionary movement in India is up against a lot of challenges, not the least of which is the all-out campaign of repression by the government, but they are steadily making progress. Millions of poor peasants and tribal people are involved in peasants' organizations, the Janatana Sarkars, women's organizations, and more.

These are big advances for the Indian people. The strength, courage, and conviction that the Indian revolutionaries have shown over the last fifty years of struggle shows what people are really capable of when they cast aside fixed



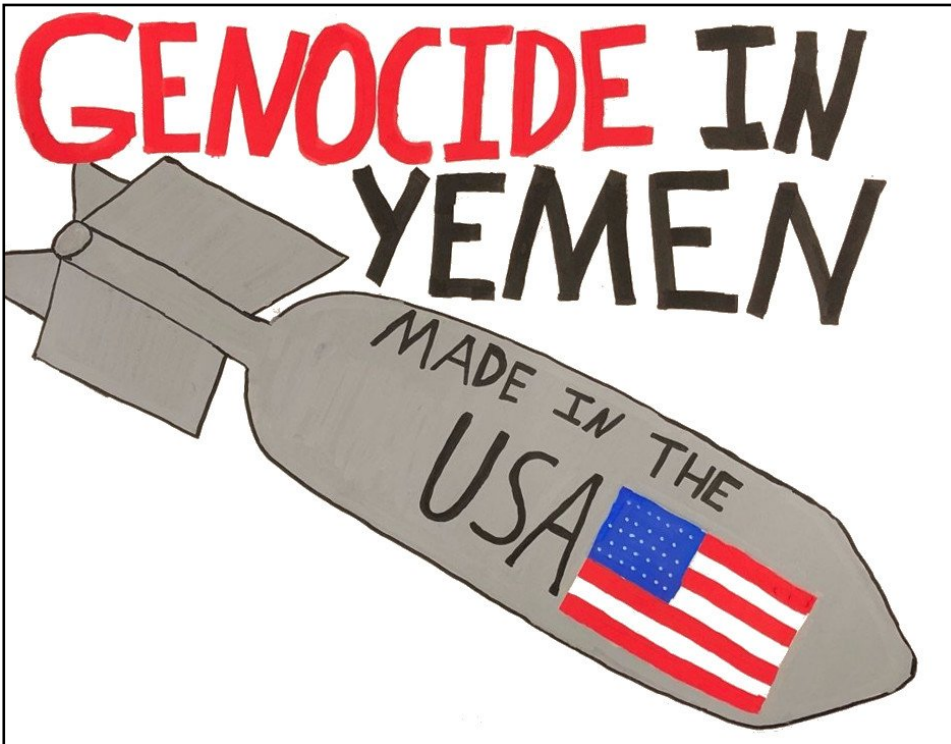
A recent protest in Kolkata, West Bengal. Maoists have been organizing both in the cities and the countryside in India.

notions of what is “possible” and decide instead to set out on the revolutionary path, the path for a better world and an end to oppression and domination. The gains made in India inspire us here, and show us the determination and bravery we will need to summon to set out on the same path ourselves. But at the same time our struggle is very different here. We will not be able to form rural bases in the countryside, and the struggles facing people daily in this country are not access to good agricultural land and feudal domination, but low wages and racist oppression. Still, we need to support the Indian Revolution in many ways, both because the Indian Revolution is part of the same overall struggle to liberate humanity from oppression and exploitation, and because if the Indian Revolution succeeds it will make it easier for revolutions to succeed all around the world. For this reason we say:

**Long live Naxalbari!
Long live the Indian Revolution!**

Op-ed: Americans Must Oppose the War in Yemen

by John



A recent study found that at least 16 million Yemenis are on the verge of starvation, with that number likely to rise to 20 million if immediate action is not taken to end the war. While the bombs are being dropped by the Saudi-UAE coalition, the U.S. is really orchestrating the overall war effort. The people of this country face a question: Will we sit by and allow the rulers of this country to starve tens of millions of people to death?

Over a hundred and fifty years ago Karl Marx warned the English working class it would be their own enslavement if they did not support the struggles for Irish and Indian independence (which were at the time two colonies of the British Crown). Today, the U.S. government maintains neocolonial domination of countries like Yemen, extracting massive profits at the expense of billions of people around the world. When the people in oppressed countries like Yemen rise up in protest against these oppressive relations, the U.S. generally responds with brutal crackdowns, new repressive measures, and even outright invasions. In the case of Yemen, the U.S. is sponsoring a genocidal war run by its allies Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Through this war they hope to maintain control of the country and beat-down the resistance of the Yemeni people which shook the country in the Arab Spring, and continues to this day.

Much like during the days of the British Empire, if the poor and oppressed people of this country do not support the Yemeni people and other oppressed people around the world, it will

be our own enslavement, both ideologically and politically. We cannot sit by idly while the government of this country condemns 16 million or more Yemenis to death for no crime other than being born in their country.

We cannot sit by idly while the government of this country condemns 16 million or more Yemenis to death for no crime other than being born in their country.

We cannot allow this government, or any government for that matter, to engage in the wholesale destruction of a people for any reason, and certainly not just to protect its own profits and interests. The people of this country have a political obligation to the people of Yemen to raise our voices in opposition to the war there, and to demonstrate in action that we will not allow the U.S. government to carry out this genocide.





The U.S. run war in Yemen has brought untold devastation to the Yemeni people. Houses, schools, funerals, water treatment plants, agricultural fields, wells, hospitals, and school buses have all been bombed over and over again

To do otherwise, to sit by idly and ignore the ongoing famine, crisis, and war, is to passively and nihilistically accept the brutal status quo of the present world order. It is to resign ourselves to the fact that 16 million people can be wiped off the face of the earth to further the interests of a few wealthy elites in Washington, London, Riyadh, and Dubai. To allow this genocide to be carried out without raising a hand or lifting a finger in opposition is to allow our thought to become shackled with the prevailing prejudices of the day.

To sit by idly and ignore the ongoing famine, crisis, and war, is to passively and nihilistically accept the brutal status quo of the present world order.

We can mobilize a protest when innocent people are gunned down by right-wing extremists in this country, but to do nothing when the right-wing extremist government of this country (whether Democrat or Republican) conspires to slaughter tens of millions of Arab

people is to accept the racist myth that the lives of poor Yemenis are worth less than those of American citizens.

This form of U.S. chauvinism and “America First” ideology is nothing but a colonial mentality of the contemporary world. Nominally, the people of Yemen live in an independent country. But what sort of independence can they have when in fact their government has served as a lackey and pawn for U.S. interest for decades? And what sort of self-determination can they practice when the U.S. responds to protests in the country with assassinations, drone strikes, coups, man-made famines, and sponsorship of a genocidal war?

How can we convince ourselves that we live in a free and democratic country when the wealth and prosperity of this country is concentrated in a ever-smaller number of hands, and built on the blood, sweat, and tears of the poor people of this world? What sort of country invades other countries in the name of spreading freedom and democracy? What sort of country spies on each and every one of its citizens in the name of national security?

To allow this genocide to be carried out without raising a hand or lifting a finger in opposition is to allow our thought to become shackled with the prevailing prejudices of the day.

The answer is straightforward, if only we cast aside the prevailing prejudices of our time. Our country is not a truly democratic country, not one in which the vast majority of people have basic freedoms from oppression, hunger, and want, or the ability to democratically decide the course of their lives or the policies of the country.





The war in Yemen has been particularly cruel to children. Tens of thousands of kids have already starved to death, and countless others have seen their homes and families destroyed.

Instead, the rulers of this land drum up our support for repressive measures at home and bloody invasions abroad by bombarding us with racist myths and colonial ideology. We are told that the genocidal war in Yemen is needed to curb Iranian influence in the region. If a few million Yemenis die in the process, that is just “the price of peace in our time.” And in view of the rulers of this country, the lives of Arab people, especially poor Arab people, are cheap and expendable. We need only remember the recent history of this country and the invasion of Iraq to recall this. These are the racist and colonial views of the leaders of the most powerful and blood-thirsty empire in the world today, the American Empire.

The question for us, the broad masses of people of this country, is if we are willing to accept and adopt these biases ourselves. If we sit by idly and accept this colonial logic then we too will be shackled, both mentally, politically, and ideologically. Just look at the Patriot Act and other legislation on domestic surveillance. These massive attacks on the basic constitutional and democratic rights of the people of this country have been justified based on racist lies and fear-mongering. We are taught to see all Muslims as potential terrorists, as

jihadists in the making. We are told to fear them, to watch them closely, and “if you see something, say something.” And now, increasingly, we are all treated as potential criminals and terrorists.

We should see, we must see, that if we do not rise up in support of our oppressed brothers and sisters in Yemen, and around the world, we too will become shackled. The rulers of this country, who keep so many in chains, seek to rally us in support for their genocidal policies and their neocolonial practices. They claim that they will keep us

safe from the poor people around the world, if we only surrender the rights and freedoms which we and our ancestors fought so hard to win. They tell us that the poor people around the world hate us and want to kill us, when really they hate the rulers of this country who oppress them.

[The rulers of this country] claim that they will keep us safe from the poor people around the world, if we only surrender the rights and freedoms which we and our ancestors fought so hard to win.

If we cannot see through these lies, then we too will be enslaved, and we too will be condemned to a life of abject poverty and suffering while the rulers of this country laugh all the way to the bank.





RED STAR

A PUBLICATION OF
THE
REVOLUTIONARY
UNITED FRONT

<https://www.RevolutionaryUnitedFront.com>

RevolutionaryUnitedFront@riseup.net