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Fight Police Terror!

***No Support to
Capitalism's Racist
Anti-Worker Police!***

by Evelyn Kaye

***A PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION
Pamphlet***

(June 1999 edition)

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Contents

Beyond the Slogans: From the Struggle Against Police Brutality to the Struggle Against the System that Oppresses Us All	1
Fight Police Terror! No Support to Capitalism's Racist Anti-Worker Police!	6
What is Proletarian Interracialism?	26

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E-mail: LRPNYC@earthlink.net

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Beyond the Slogans

From the Struggle Against Police Brutality To the Struggle Against The System that Oppresses Us All

In the fight for justice for victims of police brutality, in the fight to free Mumia Abu-Jamal, we need to understand what is behind these attacks and what the solution is. After all, we know that even if we are successful in a particular struggle, there will still be more attacks.

This article will present an overview of the revolutionary socialist answer to the capitalist attacks. Revolutionary socialists believe that behind all these attacks stands the rotting capitalist system. We will explain:

- why we believe capitalism is driven to intensify exploitation and racist oppression;
- why it will take a revolution to achieve a society free of exploitation and oppression;
- why the chief barriers to effective struggle are the Democratic Party politicians and the union bureaucrats ; and
- why a revolutionary party must be built by the workers and poor if we are to avoid being sold out.

The main article in this pamphlet, "Fight Police Terror," presents our analysis of what's behind the rise in police brutality. It examines the reforms being proposed by Democratic politicians and others. And it shows how revolutionaries propose to build a mass struggle against police brutality and other attacks that can win real victories today — while also building our forces toward our goal: the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism and building of socialism.

Finally, the article "What is Proletarian Interracialism?" explains how revolutionary socialists seek to unite working-class struggles across racial lines by prioritizing an uncompromising struggle against racism.

THE SYSTEM BEHIND THE ATTACKS

Capitalism is based on the exploitation of the working class. Even in good times, capitalism relies on racism to divide the working class and thereby prevent a united struggle against the system.

But over the years, it's gotten worse. Economic crisis is spreading internationally. Economies from Eastern Europe through Asia have collapsed, and the U.S. capitalists know that if they are to avoid a similar fate they must intensify their exploitation of the masses. This means even lower wages, more part-time jobs, worse conditions and the looming threat of mass unemployment. Along with this they've ravaged government benefits. In order to carry out this growing program of austerity, cutbacks and layoffs, racism and repression have become even more vital tools for the bosses.

The current attacks are part of the ruling-class assault on social gains won by the mass struggles of the 1930's and 1960's. Capitalists were forced to concede union rights, access to some good jobs, welfare, social security,

Medicare and Medicaid and other programs. Designed to blunt the worst injustices of capitalism rather than end them, these programs nonetheless contained important gains.

But the last twenty years have seen an escalating assault on these gains by both the Republican and Democratic parties. The ruling class hasn't stepped up these attacks only because they're mean and racist. They are driven to such action because their economic system, capitalism, is in crisis.

The struggle today often appears as poor versus rich. But this view points only to the suffering of the poor and oppressed and not to the collective power that the majority of poor people have — as *members of the working class*.

Karl Marx pointed out that capitalism created a working class whose role in the system drove it to oppose capitalism. The vast majority of workers don't have a stake in maintaining capitalism because they don't own any means of production or businesses; they aren't bosses. Instead, workers have to sell their labor to the bosses as wage slaves. Yet without the working class, capitalism cannot build or move anything — in fact capitalism fundamentally depends on the working class for its existence.

Beginning with mass struggles, the working class can begin to feel its power, and learn over time that it has tremendous power — not just to defend itself against immediate attacks, but to do away with the capitalist system entirely. With the participation of trained revolutionary workers in the form of a vanguard political party, the working class can become sharply aware that capitalism must be overthrown.

THE QUESTION OF LEADERSHIP

The current leaders of the unions and other mass organizations of the working class can be pressured into doing more than they are presently. LRP supporters have put forward various motions in the unions, demanding mobilization for Mumia and against police brutality. (See the main article on page 6.) Even to most effectively mobilize such pressure from below, a revolutionary group is needed in the unions.

Moreover, for the power of the unions to be really mobilized, the current pro-capitalist union leaders must be replaced. What is needed is a leadership composed of revolutionary socialists who are committed not to capitalism but to the interests of the working class — because they are committed to overthrowing the system. The League for the Revolutionary Party (LRP) is dedicated to building such a new leadership for our class. This leadership must come from among us, the working class (both employed and unemployed), and particularly the youth — and it is starting to develop. A small but growing number already see the need to get rid of this system. Because of their experience of racism, young Blacks and Latinos are very prominent in this new generation of revolutionaries.

While we have strong political differences with many reformist and fake-socialist groups, the LRP encourages the broadest unity in action with all groups and individuals around common goals, such as in the campaign to free Mumia. The bigger the participation the greater the chance for victory. As well, such struggles give independent revolutionary-minded workers and youth the chance to test the credentials of the various groups involved.

UNITY & POWER: FOR A GENERAL STRIKE!

Importantly, revolutionaries must be able to show the way forward in all struggles and connect them to the goal of socialist revolution. To this end, we support and participate in progressive struggles today, no matter their size. But as the attacks deepen, many people see the need for a more powerful and united response. That's why we specifically work to popularize the idea of a *general strike against the capitalist attacks*. We raise the need for a general strike against specific incidents of police brutality, as well as against budget cuts and other attacks by the bosses.

A general strike would base itself on the organization and power of the working class and would shut down the whole economy. It would unite workers as a class, and also give the opportunity for the most oppressed communities to assert their power and demands. Such a massive act could bring the ruling class to its knees.

When faced with the threat of massive struggle, the capitalists look to make concessions that will calm the masses and give them hope in the possibility of reforming the system rather than overthrowing it. But the rotten capitalist system cannot afford to end the conditions of poverty and exploitation. With a strong revolutionary party effectively explaining this, workers will learn the need for revolution through the experience of their mass struggles for reforms.

And by demonstrating the power of workers and oppressed, a mass strike would show more and more workers that they have the power to overthrow capitalism and build socialism.

THE SOCIALIST ANSWER TO THE ECONOMIC CRISIS

Socialism is not an idea dreamed up in some thinker's head — it is the logical conclusion of all previous economic and social development. In particular, capitalism has laid the basis for socialism through its massive expansion of the power of industry and science, and the creation of a truly global economy. But under capitalism these developments are turned against us, and are the very forces currently driving the spreading international economic crisis.

The immediate trigger for the current world crisis is an enormous over-production of goods: capitalism has produced more cars, electronic products and food than can be sold profitably. But the surplus goods are not given or sold cheaply to those who need them. Because no profit can be gained from them, they sit rotting in warehouses. While millions starve, capitalists dump grain into the oceans so that the surpluses don't drive prices down.

Crises of overproduction are inevitable under capitalism because the system is anarchic, unplanned and grossly unequal in its distribution of wealth and power. The current crisis is intensified by the reassertion of the tendency for the capitalist system's profits to decline. In its early years, capitalism could offset this tendency through the geographic expansion of markets, and through its cyclical crises that purged inefficient industries. But since the turn of the century, the spread of imperialism across the globe has ruled out further territorial expansion except through inter-imperialist wars of conquest. Monopolization and statification of capital prevent cyclical crises from cleaning out the system as in the past.

The post-World War II boom in profits was based on the drastic intensification of exploitation through cataclysmic defeats of the working class: depression, counterrevolution, fascism and war. Even during the prosperity period, the system's profits never rose to the levels of the previous century. Now even those days are gone, and the capitalist crisis of falling profits has reasserted itself. (For further analysis, see our pamphlet *The Specter of Economic Collapse*.)

The tendency of the rate of profit to fall derives from the capitalists' increasing replacement of workers' jobs with labor-saving technology. This gives some companies a temporary advantage over others and raises their profits. But the exploitation of human labor is the central source of profit. By reducing the proportion of workers in the production process, capitalism lowers its overall profit rate.

Just as overproduction would be a boon to humanity if production were directed to meeting the masses' needs rather than private profit, so too, technological gains, which could increasingly free people from hard labor, create mass unemployment and hasten depression under capitalism.

Scarcity is the source of most of the world's suffering. Capitalism encourages workers to fight one another as individuals, races, nations or ethnic groups — over scarce jobs and resources.

A SOCIALIST WORLD OF PLENTY IS POSSIBLE

But the productive power that has developed could provide abundance for all and free humanity from the dog-eat-dog world of combat over the crumbs capitalism offers. In a world of plenty, the material basis for every form of oppression would be removed. Over time, racism, sexism and all oppression would die out. A classless society of freedom and prosperity would emerge: *socialism*.

This understanding of capitalism and the possibility of building a new socialist society was developed by history's most famous revolutionary thinker, Karl Marx. Marx also explained that to create socialism, the working class must seize the big businesses and banks from the capitalists who own them. A workers' state would direct production toward human need, not private profit.

The capitalists defend their wealth and power through their state and government; they claim a monopoly of armed force through their police and military. The long history of repressive regimes and bloody counterrevolutions around the world proves they are ready to use their weapons against the masses. To break the capitalists' power, the working class (including working-class soldiers) will have to make a revolution that destroys the capitalist state and replaces it with a workers' state.

The great example of a socialist revolution is that of 1917 in Russia. Led by Lenin's Bolshevik party, the Russian revolution made great strides in overcoming capitalism. But building socialism depended on breaking out of Russia's isolation and economic backwardness through world revolution. There were other revolutionary upheavals at the time, but they were betrayed by phony socialists who remained tied to capitalism. Under these conditions, the Russian workers' state inevitably degenerated and was eventually overthrown from within by the counterrevolutionary bureaucracy

under Joseph Stalin.

The Stalinist society that called itself socialism was in reality a state-run capitalist system. Other political revolutions which occurred later, as in Eastern Europe and China, followed the Stalinist model. But ten years ago, Stalinism collapsed internationally. Rather than being a defeat for socialism, the unraveling of Stalinist societies has shown the fragility of capitalist power and points to the need for international proletarian socialist revolution.

THE LEAGUE FOR THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

The LRP is committed to helping more and more of our fellow workers here and abroad build an international revolutionary party in order to take forward the struggles of today and prepare for the great revolutionary upheavals of the future. We are training ourselves in political theory and the tactics of the struggle. We actively participate in the struggles of our fellow workers, helping take them forward, and winning an audience for our revolutionary ideas. We publish a magazine, *Proletarian Revolution*, as well as pamphlets like this and leaflets to spread our ideas. We urge all readers to study our publications, and contact us to discuss these revolutionary ideas.

*Free Mumia! Free All Political Prisoners!
Down with Capitalism's Racist Death Penalty!
Stop Police Brutality! Stop Anti-Immigrant Attacks!*

Build the Campaign to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal!

The campaign to free Mumia Abu-Jamal is entering a decisive stage. With avenues for appeal fast running out and the state anxious to execute this courageous freedom fighter, everyone's support is needed.

Check the web site www.mumia.org for links to useful articles, campaign news and contact numbers of local coalitions to defend Mumia in various cities.

To send contributions to Mumia's legal defense, make your check payable to Black United Fund/Mumia Abu-Jamal/LDF, earmark it for "Mumia Abu-Jamal Legal Defense" and mail it to:

Black United Fund, 2227 N. Broad St.,
Philadelphia, Pa. 19132-4502.

Fight Police Terror!

No Support to Capitalism's Racist, Anti-Worker Police!

by Evelyn Kaye

Police brutality has been a prime spark for struggle in Black and Latino communities historically. Blatant injustices sparked riots in city after city in the 1960's, several times in Miami and elsewhere in the 1980's, and in Los Angeles in 1992. Such eruptions — which upset the holy law and order protection of private property — threaten social stability.

Thus the ruling class is quite aware of police brutality. But for them, "the problem" is not that police brutality is racist, vicious and unjust. No, for them the problem is that the movement against it could threaten the stability of their system. Thus in order to keep things under control, the capitalist class has learned to utilize a layer of pro-capitalist preachers, politicians and labor leaders who in turn are in the position to influence and contain the masses and the movement.

In this article, we will examine strategies and tactics for the struggle in that light. We will see what is useful and what is not among the reform proposals that are being put forward. We will address the goal of building a fighting movement that will not be diverted and derailed. Many of our examples will be taken from the recent struggle around the police murder of Amadou Diallo, which has had a great impact on the national scene.

DEEPENING CRISIS

In every city, police brutality is on the rise — including cities with Democratic mayors like Chicago, Newark and San Francisco. At the same time, economic crisis is spreading. Full-time jobs are replaced by low-wage part-time jobs; union jobs by workfare. Health care, education and other services are being slashed.

In all of this, Black and Latino workers have been hit the hardest. After all, racism is not just at work when it comes to the deadly behavior of police; it is a tool that keeps people of color down in every walk of life. In fact, there is a profound connection between the rise of racist police brutality and the deepening social and economic crisis in general.

In a society dominated by the few who make their profits by exploiting a vast working class, the rulers must hide the class nature of the system by dividing and conquering the masses. Racism is their key to doing this. As things get worse, more police brutality is needed to keep oppressed people of color in a permanent state of intimidation. It is part of the racist nature of this society.

DIVIDE AND CONQUER

In recent years, the mortal crisis of the system has been deepening. The economic crisis is truly global. The prospect of financial collapse and

economic depression haunts the world. Depression conditions already prevail in much of Africa, Latin America, and many Asian countries as well as Russia and sections of East Europe.

In the U.S., the claimed "recovery" and "prosperity" have largely been confined to the top; the capitalists have made the workers pay for the crisis. Real wages have gone down; job insecurity has gone up. McDonalds jobs and street-selling are hardly an answer. Educational opportunities have worsened. While Black and Latino workers have been hit the hardest, white workers — even those who thought that they had it made — have also suffered. Under such circumstances, the bosses and their government moved to whip up racism with the lies that Blacks, Latinos and immigrants are "getting the good jobs through affirmative action" and are "living high on welfare off our taxes." Turning workers against each other is their way of forcing down wages and stopping united mass action against the system.

With a worsening economy, the bottom line is that capitalism must forcibly increase exploitation to protect profit rates. Obviously Blacks, Latinos and immigrants get it the worst. But even better-off white workers have to be hit. The ruling class knows that as white workers suffer more under the economic crisis, their discontent with the system will also increase. The last thing the bosses want is a united working-class fightback against capitalist attacks.

In order to prevent this, they must control the response of white workers as well as the more oppressed workers. They tell whites that Blacks, Latinos and immigrants are the enemy, not the bosses; that all Blacks and Latinos are dangerous criminals who deserve the treatment they get from the police. They tell whites that they have no reason to join with people of color in common struggle against police brutality and other racist attacks. They hide the fact that all workers are part of the same class.

The bosses want to prevent an upsurge of Black struggle, and they also want to prevent united mass action against the system by any means necessary. They try to use racism to accomplish both aims.

Nor does the divide-and-conquer ploy end with white vs. Black. This inhuman system always tries to turn Blacks and Latinos against each other. It attempts to turn American-born Blacks against foreign-born Blacks. The capitalist-inspired war of all against all is going to worsen if we don't put a stop to it — and to those who profit by it.

IMMEDIATE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF STRUGGLE

The system has a lot of tools at its disposal, but it is not all-powerful. It can't always succeed in its aims. The current situation has demonstrated this to some degree. Reaction to the murder of Amadou Diallo reverberated around the country and internationally. Due to sustained struggle, victories were gained within two months, especially the most immediate popular demand for the prosecution of the cops; they have been indicted for 2nd-degree murder. There is no question that this was a direct result of the weeks of protests. The partial victory represented by the conviction of two of the five officers who had brutalized Haitian immigrant Abner Louima in 1997, and the subsequent additional indictment of two other officers for coverup, were also results of intense pressure.

During the same time period, a similar scenario of mounting evidence of cop racism — along with mounting reaction and protest — has developed in New Jersey. Incident after incident of racial profiling of Black and Latino drivers even led Republican “stand by your officers” Governor Christine Whitman to finally publicly admit and denounce the practice — a short while after she had to fire the superintendent of the New Jersey State Police, Carl Williams, for making racist remarks during a press interview. In late April, a grand jury indicted two New Jersey state troopers (John Hogan and James Kenna) for tampering with key evidence in the 1998 shooting of four Black and Latino college students on the New Jersey Turnpike for the apparent “crimes” of “driving while Black” and “driving while Brown.”

The struggle in New Jersey has done a lot already to make the question of racial profiling a national issue. The aim of racial profiling is to target people of color and also to deny hard-won constitutional rights. Whether through road stops by the New Jersey state troopers or street stops by the Street Crimes Unit (SCU) in New York City, the excuse of investigating minor infractions is used as a supposedly legal opening for trying to search and nab “suspects” for bigger crimes like illegal weapons or drug possession.

ATTACKS CONTINUE

The recent indictments and impending prosecutions are victories of the mass struggle. Yet they are bitter victories at best. “Justice” is usually quite blind when it comes to racist killer cops. In special cases, the system is under enormous pressure to deliver an indictment and even a conviction — or face the likely consequences of a mass riot. Still for every Volpe that may be convicted, how many are not?

We still have far to go. When it comes to the police, a life and death matter, victories have been limited, temporary and incomplete.

This is demonstrated with great frequency, unfortunately. In New York and New Jersey, the cops have not been held back for long, despite all the recent protest. On the same day that Volpe pled guilty, a sixteen-year-old Black youth, Dante Johnson, was lying in critical condition after an encounter with the Street Crimes Unit. According to his family, the youth, having missed some parole sessions, simply ran from the cops in fear, as do many, when they approached him. The *New York Times* reported on May 28:

Police Commissioner Howard Safir said that the shooting of an unarmed 16-year old boy by a member of the Police Department's Street Crime Unit appeared to have been an accident. ... Commissioner Safir said, “You have to wonder why they're running, why they're out at 12:00 at night hanging out with a group of people with criminal records.”

Blaming the victim is how the system deals with these outrages! Ironically, the shooting of Dante Johnson occurred as Mayor Giuliani was testifying before the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights about the vast improvements he had made in the NYPD.

In Orange, New Jersey on April 11, a young Black man, Earl Faison, died in custody less than an hour after he was arrested as a “suspect” in the killing of a Black police officer. He was the fourth Black man falsely arrested after the death of the cop. On June 2 in Parsippany-Troy Hills, three white and one Hispanic policemen fired 27 shots at an unarmed Black motorist,

Stanton Crew, who they claimed was driving erratically. So they killed him.

It's not better elsewhere. On May 6 the local District Attorney in Riverside, California, announced he was refusing to indict the four white officers who had shot a young Black woman, Tyisha Miller, more than twenty times as she slept in a parked car. New protests again broke out again in Los Angeles after an Hispanic policeman shot and killed Margaret Mitchell, a homeless woman who had supposedly lunged at them with a screwdriver.

And in Pennsylvania, the Federal Marshal's Office and the Philadelphia D.A.'s office refused to indict the marshals who managed to murder Phillip McCall, a Black man, in the course of arresting him for a parole violation in May 1998 while he was baby-sitting for his grandchildren. In Philadelphia also, police officer Christopher DiPasquale, who shot a young Black man, Donta Dawson, in the head while he was sitting in his car in October 1998, had charges dropped against him by the judge at preliminary hearings on two occasions. (DiPasquale had also been involved in the 1994 death of Moises Dejesus, who died in police custody.)

There are so many atrocities and violations of basic rights that could be listed. Therefore we must take serious stock of where to go from here.

THE TRUE ROLE OF THE POLICE

The very existence of modern capitalism depends on the protection provided to the system by its armed bodies of men, its police and army. Without these forces, the system of capitalist class rule, where a small group of wealthy capitalists own the means of production and force the masses at home and abroad to toil for them in order to survive, would be overthrown pretty fast.

Capitalist society grants the police and army a monopoly on the use of force. Only they may bludgeon, subdue, mace, or even kill legally. This exclusive right bolsters their powers to search, seize, detain, question, arrest or investigate people that the system deems “suspicious.” Their actions are bolstered by stretchable legal concepts like “reasonable suspicion,” “probable cause,” “questionable circumstances,” and “articulable grounds.” It doesn't take the skills of a rocket scientist to make up a justification for aggressive action utilizing such legalities.

People of color in the U.S. experience the local police as an occupying force. No wonder. The aggressive forces of the police are naturally turned against those layers of society that they believe most threaten the stability of the system. At the memorial service for Amadou Diallo at the Islamic Center in Manhattan a week after his murder, Mayor Giuliani was received as an enemy. One protestor put it this way: “It's like Netanyahu [the right-wing former Israeli Prime Minister] going to the wake of a Palestinian killed by Israeli soldiers.” (*New York Post*, Feb. 13.)

Many people note that the police are separate from the masses; in this racist society the most obvious difference is often between the race of the officer and the race or nationality of his victim. In actuality the main difference is one of class. The cops, although many come from working-class backgrounds, function as a separate body of armed men, agents of the bourgeoisie, who enforce capitalist law and order against the will of the

majority of the population, the workers and oppressed, in order to maintain the stability of that system.

In relatively peaceful times, as in the U.S. today, the essential role of the police is not so obvious. People know that the cops exist to enforce the laws protecting private property, but they also accept that police are supposed to protect the citizenry from harm. But protection of civilians is only an incidental function of the police, not their main one.

The class nature of the police becomes more evident during times of great protests and strikes, when the capitalist economy is endangered by working-class action. In the turbulent strikes of the '30's and '60's, white workers as well as Blacks were beaten down and shot by police. When large labor struggles break out in the future, as in the past, the real role of the police will become more obvious once again. In fact, when masses of workers go into motion against the interests of the ruling class — in the U.S. or anywhere in the world — the police always defend the bosses. They arrest, they beat and they shoot at will. In times of upsurge, the cops show their true colors: in fact their main task is protecting the system from harm, not protecting the working and oppressed masses.

It is the same when the U.S. military bombs or invades a weaker nation, whether it be Somalia or Haiti, Iraq or Serbia. It may claim its role is humanitarian, but the U.S. is always there to protect world capitalism and assert its imperialist domination.

SEEING THROUGH THE MYTHS

Capitalist politicians, Democratic as well as Republican, can never tell the whole truth about the police. If they did they would be exposing the system they support. That's why they always push the "bad apples" line while pledging allegiance to the "good" police. For example, at the National Emergency March against Police Brutality in Washington, D.C. on April 3, Rev. Al Sharpton said, "This is about the shedding of innocent blood by police all over America. We are not anti-police; we are anti-police brutality."

But the problem is not just with some cops. We know that the whole police force is rotten — and the system behind it is, too. As revolutionists, we believe that some steps can be taken now, but we know that revolution is the only way to end police brutality. And as more people understand the true nature of the police they will come to revolutionary conclusions too. So when struggles against the police break out, the politicians, Democrats especially, flounder around and re-shuffle a shopworn list of "reforms," hoping that will forestall a more profound resistance. Yet no matter how radical or militant their rhetoric may sound at times, they peddle the illusion that the cops can be reformed.

A case in point. After two months of mass demonstrations against the Diallo murder, a coalition of Democratic Party politicians like Sharpton, labor union leaders like 1199 (the Health Care Workers Union) President Dennis Rivera and religious figures like Cardinal O'Connor formed "New Yorkers for Law, Order, Peace and Justice (NYLOPJ). Behind closed doors, they erected a ten-point program which includes, among other things, an across-the-board raise for cops, and an increase in benefits for them too! As their program states, "Law enforcement officers are entrusted with an

extraordinary responsibility and they should be compensated accordingly." Compensated for what? For brutalizing Blacks and Latinos, harassing youth, protecting scabs during strikes?

One old demand that is being revived now is the call for a civilian review board (CRB). The debate is usually over whether a CRB will operate as part of the police department or be "independent." Most left reformers prefer the "independent" kind. But those in cities that are established as entities "independent" of the police department invariably find that they cannot even gather basic information because of lack of cooperation from the police. They can't get funding and are sabotaged in every possible way. Even under the best-case scenario, such boards are window-dressing: they consist mainly of appointed or (rarely) elected bourgeois politicians and business representatives; they are allowed to review complaints, and then their suggestions are almost always ignored.

A study by Human Rights Watch did not find any civilian review boards successful. Most were considered extremely weak in practice, no matter what their mandate was. In only rare cases does a Review Board have subpoena power, which gives it the right to demand that witnesses appear and testify in front of it. Even then it is invariably defeated by the police and other sections of the government. One of the better examples, the Minneapolis Civilian Police Review Authority (CRA), still produced a negligible result. As Human Rights Watch noted about that board:

In fact, disciplinary action by the police chief following an allegation of excessive force submitted in a signed CRA complaint is rare ... it would appear that few complaints result in disciplinary action. (*Shielded From Justice: Police Brutality and Accountability in the United States*, Human Rights Watch, 1998.)

The ineffectiveness of civilian review boards is symptomatic of the fact that capitalism will not allow any board to be independent of the system, which would mean having its own actual power to actually punish cops. The only forces which have the power to decide and enforce punishment are the courts, which are firmly tied to the capitalist state which in turn depends on the police. That is why not one existing civilian review board has prosecutory power. They can only make recommendations to the chief of police.

Because the police serve the system, the system will never satisfactorily punish its own police. Local prosecution *anywhere* of police officers for excessive use of force is extremely rare. In New York, prior to the Louima case only three cops had been convicted for on-duty killings since 1977. And when cops can opt for a judicial decision without a jury trial, their chances of conviction are tiny. This is how Officer Frank Livoti got off for the chokehold death of Anthony Baez in the Bronx. (He was later prosecuted and convicted on federal charges.)

In Chicago, only a handful of brutality cases have been prosecuted against cops in the past two decades. The same is true in all other major cities. (See *Shielded From Justice*, cited above.)

MORE COPS OF COLOR?

A more popular demand — in fact one now endorsed even by racist Mayor Giuliani — is for the recruitment of more Black and Latino cops.

Representatives from 100 Black Officers In Law Enforcement, along with both Black and white politicians, advocate active recruitment of young Blacks and Latinos into the police force.

It is certainly true that the pervasive racism of white police is outstanding. Even Black and Latino cops are afraid of them, and with good reason. Black police captain Robert Wheeler 3rd, recently promoted to second-in-command of the infamous SCU in New York, commented:

In general, I've heard Blacks and Hispanics tend to stay away from plain-clothes work because of the possibility of friendly fire. If you move from place to place in plain clothes, and end up in a precinct where nobody knows you, there's some danger. (New York Daily News, March 21.)

Thus the police authorities admit that even Black and Latino cops are not safe from killer cops. But the danger is all the greater for unarmed Black and Latino youth. Racist attacks by police can be restricted by the presence of officers of color in certain specific and individual incidents. But in more and more incidents, the facts tell a different story.

Workers and oppressed people must be absolutely clear about the essential nature of the cops and not be fooled by their skin color. The police — white, Black and Latino — serve the capitalists, and as long as they are doing their job, they are the enemy of the workers and oppressed. Indeed, a number of Black cops have lost their lives or suffered major threats as a result of the racism of their "fellow" white officers. But that does not prevent them from acting like cops when their police duty calls.

POLICE KILLINGS IN CHICAGO

We have already pointed to the fact that Hispanic officers were involved in the shootings of both Margaret Mitchell and Stanton Crew. And this month there occurred two almost simultaneous but unrelated police killings in Chicago. On June 4, LaTanya Haggerty, a 26-year-old computer analyst, was shot by a Black policewoman, Serena Daniels, after a car chase. Daniels claimed she mistook Haggerty's cell phone for a gun. Then on June 5, another Black cop shot Robert Anthony Russ, a 22-year-old Northwestern University student, after he allegedly refused to get out of his car. (Chicago Mayor Richard Daley again blamed the victim. He called for stiffer laws against people who refuse to get out of their cars!)

Clearly the notion that police of the same color or neighborhood are automatically more sensitive or less brutal is a dangerous myth. Some Black cops go out of their way to be vicious. Many housing project residents in New York can testify about the dangers of Black and Latino cops: so can many Caribbean people in Crown Heights, Brooklyn, who have been abused by prejudiced Black and Latino cops as well as white.

Cops are at the forefront of the racist capitalist system's attempt to subjugate oppressed people and protect the private property system. Even the "honest" cop who is not particularly corrupt or racist — indeed a rarity — has to pledge to carry out laws and policies that *are* racist, unjust and suppressive when they sign on. And that is the main point. It is not a question of the individual character of the officer (although the police force does tend to attract the most reactionary elements). The reason that cops are cops, regardless of skin color, is because of their function, because of the

system they serve and the laws and policies they carry out — which are racist and anti-working class and anti-poor.

FEDERAL PROSECUTION?

The low rate of prosecutions on the local level has popularized the demand for federal prosecution of criminal cops. Federal prosecution, for example, did lead to the conviction of Officer Livoti after a Bronx judge had released him, as well as the convictions in the Louima case.

Thus the demand for federal prosecution can be supported. However when revolutionaries support the demand we do so in a way which combats the illusions that many people may hold about the federal government, illusions which are purposely propagated by liberal politicians. The fact is that the federal record of prosecution is only marginally better than the local record. In addition to the delays involved in federal prosecution, as with local prosecution the punishments hardly ever fit the crimes.

Of the 22 cases considered by federal prosecutors for New York City in 1996, only five were prosecuted (presented to a grand jury to seek an indictment, but not necessarily indicted or convicted.) In the previous three years, ninety-four cases were considered, with nineteen leading to prosecutions. In Philadelphia, in 1996 two cases were considered but none were prosecuted. Between 1992 and 1995, fifty cases were considered but only thirty were prosecuted. It doesn't get much better anywhere else. (Again, see *Shielded from Justice* for more details.)

Human Rights Watch summed it up this way:

Even in the rare cases in which police officers and others are convicted on federal criminal civil rights charges, they spend little or no time incarcerated. In 1994 and 1995, twenty-five defendants, out of ninety-six convicted, were sentenced to three months or less in prison (including serving no time at all.) Forty-eight, or half, were sentenced to twelve months or less.

If one needs further proof of the federal government's disinclination to punish police, consider this. The Civil Rights Division of the Justice Department prosecutes defendants for hate crimes, abortion clinic terror, church arson and so forth; in these areas, its conviction rate is nearly 100 percent. Yet when it prosecutes police for official misconduct, including brutality, its success rate is far less: 78 percent in 1994-95 and 64 percent in 1996. Police misconduct cases are prosecuted with the lowest success rate of all civil rights offense cases — and civil rights cases are prosecuted less than any other offense prosecuted by the Justice Department to begin with.

One of the few cases where the federal government stepped in with any positive results was with the case of Rodney King. After a local jury exonerated the cops — who had been caught on videotape mercilessly beating King in 1991 — the city of Los Angeles broke out in riots, which were echoed with significant protests in other cities. In April 1993, two of the cops were convicted — but only for using "excessive force." They got thirty months imprisonment, and the other two cops were completely let off. Even this small victory only happened after massive rioting.

ANOTHER STUDY?

Prosecutions of individual criminal cops are necessary but clearly insufficient. In the Diallo case, reformists like Al Sharpton, NAACP head Kweisi Mfume and Ron Daniels of the Center for Constitutional Rights called for various federal investigations, hearings and studies regarding the NYPD and the national epidemic of police brutality. This is an attempt to pretend they have an answer to the problem — in the face of a mass movement which wants big answers. But such federal investigations, hearings, and studies have not resulted in one single victory against police brutality. Thus while we can support the specific federal prosecution of cops, we certainly cannot support blanket calls for federal intervention as an overall solution. Believing that the benevolent federal government will step in and clean up whole police departments is pure illusion without a grain of substance.

Governmental power in this country is divided between the federal, state and local levels, but this division of power is nothing more than a method of organization for capitalist rule. When working-class people protest, the capitalist strategy is to pass the buck. The city government tells you it lacks funding from the state, the state tells you it lacks funding from the federal government, and Washington tells you that it simply didn't know what the state or the local government was doing, or somehow it couldn't control it. The laws that the police carry out anywhere are the laws that defend and preserve capitalism and private property. The funding they get comes from the federal budget as well as the state and local budgets. It all works together for one purpose. The racism that pervades city police forces is hardly absent at the federal level. (See below for a review of what the federal government did during the civil rights struggle of the 1960's.) And the powers of the government on all levels is overwhelmingly used against workers and the oppressed. This is not about to change under capitalism. Make no mistake about it.

Nevertheless a popular demand (one of the ten points in the program of NYLOPJ, for example) is the demand for federal investigation.

The fact is there have been countless federal commissions — with their investigations, hearings and studies of police brutality — in this century, and the results are always the same. The Chicago Commission on Race Relations, established to investigate a riot in Chicago in 1919, noted that the riot was caused by "the tendency of the police to use force when arresting blacks." The Harlem Riot Commission Report of 1935 discovered this:

The police of Harlem show too little regard for human rights and constantly violate their fundamental rights as citizens. . . . The insecurity of the individual in Harlem against police aggression is one of the most potent causes for the existing hostility to authority. . . . It is clearly the responsibility of the police to act in such a way as to win the confidence of the citizens of Harlem and to prove themselves the guardians of the rights and safety of the community rather than its enemies and oppressors.

Sound familiar? Studies in the '60's proved that little had changed. The 1961 Report on Justice by the United States Civil Rights Commission concluded that "Police brutality . . . is a serious problem in the United States." In 1967, the Kerner Commission reported that police violence was out of

control. Then there was the St. Clair Commission, the Mollen Commission, the Christopher Commission, and so forth. Same recommendations for more "sensitivity," more "training" and more oversight.

All these reports were left to gather dust. We won't get a solution through more government investigations.

In the wake of the Los Angeles riot in 1992, the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 was passed. It included a statute under which the Justice Department could bring civil action against a police department engaging in a "pattern or practice" of misconduct, in order to direct that particular department to end abusive practices. In two cities, Pittsburgh, Pa. and Steubenville, Ohio the federal government then actually made deals with the police departments under such "pattern or practice" provisions. Both cities agreed to improve training, do better tracking of the use of force by officers and other measures.

In Pittsburgh the federal investigation had followed an American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) lawsuit filed against the police in 1996, in the aftermath of the uproar over the suffocation murder of Jonny Gammage in 1995. (Gammage, a cousin of former Pittsburgh Steelers player Ray Seals, was "driving while Black" at the wheel of a Jaguar in a white suburb. He was "apprehended" and killed. Two local trials of cops were declared mistrials and a third cop was declared not guilty. There is currently a campaign for federal criminal prosecution of these cops under federal civil rights statutes.) After the federal investigation led to a legal agreement for reforms, everyone claimed things were better. The federal government was supposedly monitoring the practices of the department there from then on. But did the federal monitoring do much good? On December 21, 1998 any illusions about this were publicly shattered. Police officer Jeff Cooperstein shot and killed Deron Grimmit, an unarmed Black parolee who was fleeing police, apparently fearful of what they would do to him in the course of their "routine" traffic stop.

In September 1996, the City of Philadelphia signed an agreement with the NAACP, ACLU and the Police-Barrio Relations Projects to forestall federal civil rights charges under the pattern or practice provisions. The reforms included the appointment of a task force, more monitoring of police use of force and the "racial bias" of police in activity like stopping pedestrians and drivers. Donta Dawson was a victim of the abject failure of these reforms. As well, the reforms being discussed for New Jersey right now involve the same type of federal monitoring that has already failed in Pittsburgh and Philly!

RACIAL PROFILING

Reformists often call for federal monitoring and the efficient collection of data in order to prove or disprove whether racial profiling is occurring. Of course, the people affected already know that racial profiling is going on. And the American Civil Liberties Union and others have already published lengthy reports documenting it. A stalling tactic is at work here! Nevertheless much hoopla was made by the NAACP over a recent executive order by Clinton directing police officers to collect data on the people they stop or arrest. Clinton stated:

While public confidence in the police has been growing steadily overall, people of color continue to have less confidence and less trust, and believe they are targeted for action. We must stop the morally indefensible, deeply corrosive practice of racial profiling. We all have an obligation to move beyond anecdotes to find out exactly who is being stopped and why.

In other words, another study — and then maybe a study of the study? Still, the NAACP's Mfume called the order "a good first step" toward erasing racial profiling. But we can predict that no future collection of more data or other federal activity will eliminate racial profiling. The system will find a way around any rules against racial profiling with even more impunity than the way it blatantly breaks its own paper laws regarding equal treatment in other areas of life.

Clinton's sincerity on the question of racial profiling should be especially suspect. He was a strong advocate of racial profiling when he was governor of Arkansas, approving a plan which gave state troopers the incentive to stop and search cars based on a profile of a typical drug courier as an Hispanic with a Texas license plate. When a lawsuit and federal consent decree ended the program, Clinton criticized the court's ruling. Roberto Garcia de Posada, executive director of the politically moderate Hispanic Business Roundtable, noted that Clinton has been a strong supporter of racial profiling against Hispanics in the past. He commented, "He does not have the moral authority to lead a national campaign on this issue. If President Clinton truly meant what he said ... he should apologize to all those Hispanics who suffered this 'morally indefensible' practice, which he publicly supported." (*Washington Times*, April 9.)

THE TRUTH ABOUT THE SIXTIES

The demand for federal study and monitoring and even federal takeover of local police is the last best hope of local politicians who are trying to restore faith in the system and the reformability of the police. This notion of federal salvation is heavily tied to attempts to rev up support for the Democratic Party. Thus at the Wall Street rally in New York on March 3, Al Sharpton called on Bill (and Hillary) Clinton to step in: "It is time for you to act like JFK did and help us deal with this outrageous situation."

But the truth is that in the 1960's a very reluctant White House under John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson took only minimal steps after being threatened with massive marches and the huge revolts that swept the nation's ghettos. The Kennedy administration was responsible for a number of executive actions and initiatives in the area of voting legislation, as well as the Voting Rights Bill, which were concessions to the civil rights movement. These responses were the least it could do in response to a mass movement that always threatened to become more radical, an eventuality they wanted to head off. But the Kennedy administration was also active in endorsing the FBI policy of evading clashes with the segregationists while spying on Black anti-racist groups. Such FBI activities grew under the Johnson administration. No wonder that Sharpton, an admitted FBI informant himself, paints a pretty picture of such dirty deeds.

Indeed, much of federal intervention into the Black struggle was absolutely insidious and earned the just hatred of young Black and white activists,

who learned to oppose the federal government in general and the FBI, the federal police, in particular. A few examples will suffice here. (For more, see *Racial Matters: The FBI's Secret File on Black America, 1960-1972*, by Kenneth O'Reilly, and *Black Resistance, White Law* by Mary Frances Berry.)

Jack Newfield, now a writer for the *New York Post*, recalled his experience in the civil rights movement this way:

As civil rights activists in 1963 we liked Kennedy as little as the Southern Governors did. We saw him recommend Harold Cox, James Eastland's college roommate, to be a judge in the Fifth District Court, where he was to call Negro defendants "chimpanzees" from the bench. ... We saw Negroes trying to register to vote in Greenwood, Mississippi, urinated upon by a white farmer, while lawyers from the Justice Department calmly took notes destined to be filed and forgotten. We agreed with James Baldwin, who pronounced Kennedy, after their stormy confrontation, insensitive and unresponsive to the Negro's torment.

The author of *Racial Matters* points out that the definitive attitude of the federal government was shown by "Robert Kennedy's decision, and the FBI's enthusiastic response, to prosecute a group of civil rights activists while continuing to uphold the Bureau's noninterventionist policy with regard to the people terrorizing those activists."

About the federal government's slow and reticent response on issues of Southern racism, historian Howard Zinn summed up:

The simple and harsh fact ... is that the federal government abdicated its responsibility in the Black Belt. The Negro citizens of that area were left to the local police.

Black political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal knows this history. Writing from death row, in a recent article "The Folly of Calling The FBI," Abu-Jamal said this about the history of federal intervention into the Black struggle:

When Black folks are beaten down by cops all around the United States, and when they are shot down in their cars as in the cases of Donta Dawson of Philadelphia, or Malice Green of Detroit, or the beautiful young sister (Tyisha Miller) who was shot over 15 times in her car in Riverside, California recently ... one of the first things that many Black leaders do, is to announce that they are asking for the FBI to come in to "solve" the case.

... Such a call sounds strange when one considers that the FBI played a significant and an openly dangerous role in the history of African-American struggles for freedom in America, and they were deadly enemies of such leaders as Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, Marcus M. Garvey, and of such groups as the Black Panther Party, RAM, SNCC, the Republic of New Afrika, and the like. In truth, the history of the FBI shows that they have waged a secret war against Black America, and frankly, it seems kind of stupid to look to them for relief from other state forces who are waging a part of their long white supremacist war against Black folks.

The politicians who call for federal prosecution and even more blanket forms of intervention are not stupid. Since they defend the capitalist system, they have no alternative except to call on and even glorify the federal forces

when the local forces have been exposed — even though they are forces of the same capitalist state.

Nor are the ranks of demonstrators stupid. Understandably people are going to demand prosecution, and if they can't get it effectively from the local courts, then they'll demand it from the federal government. The minimal success there may feed illusions in federal salvation. But revolutionaries always argue that an independent working-class alternative must be built because dependency and illusions regarding any wing of the bourgeois state — and certainly the FBI! — is a deathtrap for any movement.

CLINTON AND THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY

Republicans are seen as leading the war against workers, and especially Blacks, Latinos and immigrants. But the Republicans don't operate alone. A barrage of "get tough on crime" policies have come from Washington.

The Democratic president, Bill Clinton, has taken the lead in putting thousands more cops on the streets and pushing "anti-crime" bills which really serve to produce more police violence against Blacks and Latinos and stiffer sentences for even minor crimes. (In his March 13 radio address, President Clinton outlined five steps in what he called the "21st Century Policing Initiative" to be sent to Congress. The proposal included another 50,000 more cops.) His "achievements" also include legislation dictating life imprisonment for third felony offenses ("three strikes and you're out"), immediate deportation of immigrants with any criminal record, and harsher sentences for young offenders. He has been responsible for record numbers of executions. There were a million people imprisoned as of 1994; three-fourths of a million were added to prisons in the four years from 1990 to 1994. As of 1998 there are 1.8 million behind bars.

And of course even though Blacks make up about 12 percent of the population they are the majority of prisoners. As of 1996 the rate of incarceration for Blacks was 8 times that of whites. This intensifying racist pattern of imprisonment goes on at the same time that millions of jobs have been lost in the inner cities and schools and hospitals and other institutions that serve the poor working class are being shut down.

We must also note that many prison statistics, including the above, don't count the increasing numbers of immigrants imprisoned in INS "detention" centers, an area in which Clinton has heavily boosted. As Amnesty International reports, Clinton's 1996 act (the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act) allows "the summary return of people seeking to enter the USA without valid documents. Under these expedited removal provisions, even asylum-seekers who manage to convince officials they have a 'credible fear' of returning to their country are generally detained until their case has been finally decided, which may take months or even years."

The number of those detained under the authority of the INS has soared, rising by 75 per cent between 1996 and 1998. In early 1998 the INS had "bed spaces" for an estimated 15,500 and the INS anticipated that this would rise to 24,000 by the year 2001, when it is expected that most of the detainees will be held in jails. Immigrants are treated like criminals from the get-go, especially if they are people of color. (See *United States of America, Rights for All* by Amnesty International) As well, the number of horrific

incidents of shootings and tortures of immigrants at the Mexican-American borders has escalated.

Despite his rhetorical friendliness to Blacks and other people of color, Clinton's overall policies — from the slashing of welfare to the bombing of Iraq and Serbia — have exacerbated chauvinism and brutality.

DEMOCRATIC PARTY: GRAVEYARD OF BLACK STRUGGLE

The key question facing the movement is whether to continue relying on the Democratic Party. Just as it is critical to understand the role of police in society in order to fight them, it is necessary to understand the essential role of the Democratic Party in this system — in order to learn why an alternative party must be built.

Black people first turned to the Democratic Party in big numbers in the late 1920's, coinciding with waves of emigration from South to North. When the depression of the '30's hit, the working class, including Blacks, responded to mass unemployment and huge cuts with general strikes, sit-downs, factory take-overs and other mass action. At that point the Democratic Party, led by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, was forced to create some beneficial government programs — in order to stabilize the threatening situation in which an aroused working class was becoming more and more revolutionary in its views and acts. Social Security and unemployment insurance came into being as part of this strategy of stabilization.

In the 1960's, Blacks became the vanguard of struggle. The change from the '30's was that Blacks had by then become a core part of the industrial working class as well as a key political and social factor in every major urban center. So this time the Democratic politicians had to dole out more concessions in response to Black militancy as well as working-class and youth unrest in general. A new host of programs like Medicare came into being, and the Democrats found a whole layer of Black middle-class politicians who could be relied on to keep things under control so that there would be no more riots. The myth of the Democratic Party as the "friend" of Blacks and Labor was played up to the hilt.

After 12 years of Republican administrations, the Democrats won the White House again in 1992 in large part in response to the Los Angeles riot. The ruling capitalists feared that Republican President George Bush was so insensitive to the plight of Blacks (not unlike Mayor Giuliani) that he would inspire further resistance. So they moved to support Clinton. That way they got a President who they hoped could keep Blacks in line by dappling the political structure with a few more Black faces and kind words, while still carrying out a deadly program of cutbacks that would knock thousands of families off welfare, put thousands of immigrant workers in detention centers, and get more Black and Latino youth beat up and shoved into jail by racist cops.

The Democratic Party is the capitalist institution whose purpose historically has been to squash mass movements by buying off leading elements and thereby carving out a pro-capitalist middle-class leadership layer within the struggle so as to push passive electoralism and reliance on the system. The Democrats operate by the same divide-and-conquer method that typifies capitalism as a whole — instead of treating all workers as one

class of people, which in fact we are, it grants benefits to different "constituencies" — ethnic or racial groups, women, gays, or whoever — so as to encourage fights between different oppressed and exploited groups over who will get more of the sops being doled out. (For more analysis, see our pamphlet: *The Democratic Party: Graveyard of Black Struggles.*)

It is thus no accident that voter registration and appeals to the Clintons are key elements of the Democratic Party strategy on police brutality today. But since Clinton and the Democrats offer so little, it is getting harder for minority politicians to convince folks to stay in line with them. Police brutality then becomes an issue around which Democrats can posture. Thus the April 15 March for Justice and Reconciliation in New York featured a podium full of Democrats — speaking about nothing except their lousy ten-point program. There was no discussion of the jobs crisis, the hospital crisis, the schools crisis or anything else — even though major union leaders like Dennis Rivera and Lee Saunders of DC 37 (the city workers' union) spoke. It was notable as well that neither Sharpton nor Rivera said a word about Mumia Abu-Jamal, despite their professed support for the cause.

TURN THE OTHER CHEEK?

The role of the Democratic Party is to contain and control the anger of the masses over police brutality, to contain it and then to divert it into voting for Democrats. To successfully accomplish this goal, the more effective politicians must reflect some of the feelings of the masses. In this period, no figure has been more successful at this than the Reverend Al Sharpton, in large part because of his consistency in identifying himself with the burning issue of police brutality — as well as the fact that the alternatives to him that people know about are so pathetic. (For example, the Reverend Calvin Butts, another figure in the Diallo campaign, had not only already compromised his reputation by backing the pro-death penalty Republican Governor Pataki but on April 20 publicly embraced Giuliani at a church meeting called for "conciliation.") Congressman Charles Rangel is another sellout who, in the wake of the Diallo shooting, publicly chimed in with the NYPD to protest a timely front cover *New Yorker* cartoon depicting cops taking practice shots at citizens. Nevertheless, all these folks joined together to carry out a prolonged campaign of civil disobedience under Sharpton's lead.

Sharpton is credited by many for keeping pressure on for more than seven weeks after the Diallo murder, but his strategy came at a cost. He has done everything possible to corral the movement and make it as limited and passive as possible. In the wake of the torture of Abner Louima in 1997, ten thousand people marched across the Brooklyn Bridge to City Hall in a display of militancy and solidarity. Sharpton, at that time running for the Democratic Mayoral nomination, cut the movement off by speechifying for voter registration and basically telling everyone to go home. He put forward no perspective for continuing the struggle.

With the Louima case still fresh in people's minds, he couldn't pull off the same tactic with the Diallo murder. But he had no interest in building a militant mass movement which might get out of hand. So he launched a civil disobedience campaign oriented to politicians, movie stars and other

luminaries rather than attracting the involvement and leadership of the working people themselves. As one journalist observed:

Although sit-ins are a form of civil disobedience, the manner in which the Diallo protests are conducted — the would-be arrestees are waved over to a pre-determined spot by NYPD brass and the line up to be handcuffed — is really an exercise in civil obedience. The protestors even provide the cops with a list of that day's arrestees, the better to speed the booking process.

The staged arrest-ins showed their class bias. The experience of middle-class folks in three-piece suits shaking hands with polite cops and getting voluntarily booked for several hours (a few were held overnight) does not compare with that of working people when they are thrown in jail — especially Black and Latino youth, who inevitably get roughed up or worse. Civil disobedience is by nature a method alien to workers and oppressed people who know that getting arrested and dealing with cops is serious business. It was particularly repugnant that Sharpton chose this strategy in the light of the fact that immigrants, especially under Clinton's law, can't afford to get arrested for anything without facing deportation! Indeed, so pro-establishment and pro-Democratic Party was the campaign that even the notoriously racist former mayor Ed Koch volunteered to get arrested.

In leading his parade of celebrities, Sharpton invoked the history of the civil rights movement. He is now making an effort to become the "new" Martin Luther King, a national civil rights leader. To this end he is now advocating coordinated simultaneous civil disobedience actions in major cities across the country. But his self-comparison with Martin Luther King, Jr. is false and a gross insult. Despite his reformist politics, Martin Luther King and his followers risked life and limb in fighting to overturn discriminatory laws through sit-downs and peaceful marches. It is true that King's passive strategy couldn't win what was necessary, despite the valiant efforts; the period of ghetto revolts and general militancy and radicalization that followed was able to win much more. Nevertheless, there is a huge chasm between civil disobedience under the guns of the KKK and choreographed symbolic arrests.

THE NEED FOR MASS ARMED SELF-DEFENSE

Part of the radicalization of the Black struggle in the 60's was the move from passive civil disobedience to the recognition of the need for armed self defense. Marxist revolutionaries advocate armed self-defense against police attacks. Like Malcolm, we believe that the right of Blacks and others under attack by the racist state to defend themselves is unquestionable in principle and necessary in reality. Toward this end, the League for the Revolutionary Party has always raised the need for defense guards against racist and anti-working class attacks. We say that in the near future it will be possible to call for such guards in specific situations, which in turn can represent the embryos of a future workers' militia. Black struggles in the past showed the effectiveness of short-term armed defense guards like the southern Deacons for Defense and Robert F. Williams' armed defense units in Monroe, North Carolina. These examples should be studied and learned from. (See our pamphlet *Armed Self-Defense and the Revolutionary Program.*)

The LRP is known as an organization which advances a working-class revolutionary program and stands for united action of the entire working class against the capitalist attacks. But in situations like the immediate police brutality attacks, we do not believe that Blacks, Latinos and immigrants should wait for white workers to join the struggle to start organizing to defend themselves. No, we advocate the development of Black armed self-defense today. However, we also believe that as people of color move forward in militant struggle, white workers will also be won over. The vital goal of militias organized at the workplaces will become possible.

As a matter of principle, we defend the right to bear arms. The liberal "gun control" pap is meant to keep only the cops armed — and other criminals as well. But the emphasis has to be on collective action. The history of struggle has also shown that successful armed self-defense must be organized as part of a conscious political struggle. When working people start arming themselves and learning to defend themselves, they will not only be taking on cops who are armed and organized in large numbers. They will also be dealing with a sophisticated imperialist world power with major political parties that have more than a century of experience in selling out mass struggles. It is a question of arming ourselves politically, on the theoretical as well as the strategic and tactical levels — as well as military training.

FIGHT FOR A GENERAL STRIKE!

In this pamphlet we have argued that police brutality can't be solved by reforming police departments. We have also argued that the current leaders of the movement are not providing real answers. But this analysis should not demoralize those who want to fight police brutality. If the working class is not convinced that revolution is necessary, does that mean there is no way of fighting back today? This is far from the case because people, all of us, learn and raise our political consciousness through the course of struggle. And real struggles can be successfully built and developed today. Cops can be forced to retreat. Mumia Abu-Jamal and other framed-up prisoners on death row can be freed. A mass movement against police brutality can be built. The question is, how can revolutionary-minded workers and youth take the lead in building an alternative?

Mass action is key. There are concrete steps that revolutionary-minded people should band together and do to start turning this situation around. Hundreds, sometimes thousands, of people turn out for protests — but there should be hundreds of thousands.

As part of the drive to maximize our forces, we must take the issue of fighting racist police brutality into the working class's most powerful organizations, the unions. Union leaders have barely lifted a finger to mobilize the ranks of workers in the struggle against police brutality. In many cities, unions represent large numbers of Blacks and Latinos (both U.S.-born and immigrant) who are the main victims of police brutality. Yet unions tend to follow policies that cater to the better-off white workers in the unions. In New York, the recent uproar over the Diallo murder forced the union leaders to start moving, which means that more pressure can be successfully brought to bear on them.

Of course, like the Democratic politicians, the union leaders have moved

in to corral and limit the movement. Following the staged arrests of labor figures like Dennis Rivera, he and others joined the NYLOPJ, which is intended to derail the movement. It is no accident that the April 15 demo in New York was far smaller than expected, in response to this conservative turn. But revolutionary workers in the LRP have started a fight in the unions to overturn this coalition and its rotten ten-point program.

For example, an emergency Delegate Assembly attended by over a thousand 1199 and Local 144 health care workers at the Roseland Ballroom was convened on April 12 over the issue of budget cuts in health care. An LRP supporter raised the following motion:

Whereas the brutal murder of Amadou Diallo represents a threat and an attack on the rights and well-being of every worker in New York,

Whereas president Dennis Rivera and the 1199 leadership have joined the struggle against police brutality and are participating in the New Yorkers for Law and Order and Peace and Justice rally on April 15, which includes the obscene demand that the salary and benefits for police officers must be improved,

Whereas police violence is a systemic problem that requires a swift and determined response by all workers,

Be it resolved that:

- 1) 1199 calls on all unions and workers to pledge to launch a one-day general strike immediately when any such police atrocities occur.
- 2) 1199 opposes any calls for improving salary and benefits for police officers, and opposes the call for hiring more cops.
- 3) That President Rivera announce the passage of this motion at the rally on April 15.

The LRP supporter talked about how police brutality had affected her family. She also argued in detail the connection between the budget cuts hitting hospital workers, the capitalist drive to lower workers' standard of living and the system's need to escalate police brutality to keep workers down. While her motion initially received widespread applause from the audience, a union vice president spoke against, signaling the delegates that they should vote it down. Scandalously, none of the other leftists at the assembly rose to defend the motion. Delegates who support the Workers World Party and the International Socialist Organization remained silent!

The motion was defeated, but this fight will surely continue. Openings provided by the union bureaucracy must be utilized. Even the AFL-CIO, long paralyzed over the decades of attacks on New York workers, issued a statement pointing out that it owed it to its large constituency of Black and Latino workers to take a stand against police brutality. Tremendous pressure should be exerted to force the unions to take serious action against police brutality, and to drop all demands that placate the repressive police.

We especially have to continue the fight, in the unions as well as the community organizations, for a *one-day general strike* to be called immediately when the next atrocity occurs — the city should be shut down! A general strike, based on the power of workers to shut down the economy is counterposed to the passive civil disobedience and consumer boycotts perennially called by reformist leaders and ignored by the ruling class.

If unions were to put themselves on record now in favor of a general

strike against the next incident of police brutality, it would strike fear into the hearts of the rulers and do a lot more to rein in police terror than many days and nights of marching.

THE SOCIALIST ANSWER

Even though the cops cannot be reformed under capitalism, a fighting mass movement can force the government to rein in its hired thugs; it can point the way to the full struggle that is necessary. For years the League for the Revolutionary Party has propagandized for a general strike against the capitalist attacks. Police brutality does not exist in a vacuum — it is inseparable from the whole range of attacks which the capitalist class is launching against us. In the 1960's, riots spread from city to city, mainly sparked by incidents of police brutality. But once started, the ghetto explosions hardly limited themselves to one issue. Demands for decent jobs, health care and education came out of those struggles too.

We are open about the fact that today our aim in any general strike is to spread it into a more widespread struggle whereby the working class will begin to recognize its own power. Through such struggles, more and more working people and youth will become convinced not only of the need to fight police brutality but will see the link between their immediate experiences of police brutality and the need for a working class fight to free political prisoners like Mumia Abu-Jamal, who are victims of the same racist police. They will see that the fight against the police is also a fight against the system that inhumanly denies the masses basic needs like decent jobs, housing and education. Fighting for such mass action and fighting within the mass struggle for the spreading of a revolutionary view is the alternative to pro-capitalist electoralism, and it is a key element in our strategy.

Agreement on general strike action doesn't demand that all participants agree in advance with a goal of revolution: workers and youth of varying political views can agree that a general strike is a powerful response to the immediate attacks upon us. If revolutionaries are open about our views from the start, the actual struggle will go a long way to proving that we are right. Black and Latino workers and youth must take the lead in carrying out such a strategy. More white workers will learn that fighting racism is an integral part of any successful fight against the bosses' attacks and the only way that working-class unity can be forged.

The working class must overthrow the capitalist state, which couldn't exist for a day without its police and armies. The capitalist state must be replaced with a workers' state which would have its own armed power, based on the masses of working people rather than on an elite separate force of mercenaries hired by an exploiter class. The workers' armed power would serve to protect the working class for a change; it would actually prevent crime as well as stop racist and anti-social acts.

Capitalism has proved itself to be a diseased system, not worthy to rule the planet. The world economy's productive forces have reached the point where all forms of want can be eliminated. Humanity can build a socialist society of abundance and peace. A socialist revolution would put the exploited and oppressed masses on top, running society in their interests, planning the economy to produce for their needs and not for profits.

BUILD THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY!

None of this can happen if a revolutionary working class party is not built. It is no accident that the current leadership of the police brutality movement do what they do. They fear building a truly mass working class movement out of their control because they support the capitalist system. They know that capitalism can't end police brutality and they also know that capitalism can't provide jobs for all, health care and education for all and everything else that masses will demand once they are in motion. But an authentic interracialist revolutionary party can and will fight for all these things. Such a party must make itself a tribune of all oppressed people to prove that it is fit to lead.

Revolutionaries today, even if we are now small in number, have a decisive role to play in the struggles breaking out. Imagine in New York if a good-sized contingent of revolutionary-minded and militant workers had demanded strike action when Diallo was shot. The LRP, with our modest forces, was able to raise the issue in two big unions. We also put out this pamphlet, which has been well received among workers and youth at many events. But much more of an impact could have been made by a larger group, which could have shown more of our fellow workers that there is an alternative to the Democrats and union hacks and made it much harder for the struggle to be sold out.

Revolutionaries also have a special role to play in the fight to free Mumia, where we have also been fighting in the unions and other organizations for real mass mobilization. The biggest problem facing our struggles today is not that the working class is weak or that the working class cannot be won to militant action — but that it needs a new leadership, a revolutionary leadership. Those workers and youth who can already see this must join together to intervene in all the critical struggles that are happening — and point the way to real victories for our class. Through the kinds of struggles that revolutionaries advocate, and through the intervention of revolutionaries in mass struggles, a new party and leadership will be built. More and more of our fellow workers will raise their political consciousness. It won't happen all at once but the active fight to build the party has to go on now. We urge revolutionary-minded workers and youth to join with us in carrying out this urgent task.

*Stop Police Terror! Stop Racist Anti-Immigrant Attacks!
Democrats and Republicans: Two Parties of Racist Law and Order!
For Mass Armed Self-Defense!*

*Workers' Socialist Revolution Is the Only Solution!
Build the Revolutionary Party of the Working Class!*

What is Proletarian Interracialism?

by Sy Landy

The Black struggles in the 1960's and early '70's smashed legal segregation and opened up some previously closed occupational and educational opportunities for racially oppressed people in this country. However, the upheaval did not succeed in winning "integration" — the achievement of a colorblind egalitarian America. What is more, even the gains that were won, especially for the poorer sections of the Black working class, are under mounting attack. And the rising tide of police brutality threatens all oppressed and exploited people.

History has now proven what authentic Marxists predicted long ago. *Integrationism* is impossible under American capitalism. Now, nearly everyone knows that the integrationist ideology of the middle class civil rights leadership and the goal promised by white liberals and the Democratic party was a myth. However, the "community control" notions put forward by others have also proven false in practice. No matter whether such schemes were put forward by advocates of *nationalism, separatism or multi-culturalism*, none of them won any real power for the ghetto masses. Nor could they.

The grim reality is that just as much as humans need air to live, American capitalism needs racism to survive. Historically, the small ruling class has learned that the way to retain its power over the massive and potentially very powerful working class is through racist divide-and-conquer tactics.

INTERNATIONALISM AND INTERRACIALISM

The League for the Revolutionary Party (LRP), reflecting its Leninist heritage, has always championed proletarian (working class) internationalism in its uncompromising struggle against all forms of nationalism and chauvinism. In today's world the LRP has also fought for *proletarian interracialism* as the only outlook capable of overcoming and destroying the racist pestilence inherent in capitalism. An internationalist and interracialist world can only be achieved through proletarian socialist revolution.

Biologically, there is only one race, the human race. However, the existence of races as a historical and social fact of life cannot be ignored if racism is to be fought. The idea of separate races was spawned by the rising European-based capitalism as a justification for early imperialism and then New World slavery. At the dawn of this century, the dawn of the epoch of imperialism and capitalist decay, it was further elaborated in defense of the racist practice which had become an inescapable bedrock necessity for American capitalism. The revolutionary achievement of a non-racial human world could only come through a strategy which recognizes the material reality of the racial division in the U.S. today.

The socialist revolution in the U.S. can only occur if it is led by a genuinely interracialist working class vanguard party. However, we must squarely face the fact that the racial outlook of many white workers has been the major deterrent to class solidarity. White racism within the working class

has been a crucial factor throughout much of American history. And, while it is often mixed with a certain sympathy and respect for Black people, racism persists to this day among large numbers of white workers. Therefore, it is with good reason that many Black workers are highly suspicious of whites and white-dominated institutions, even those which profess solidarity.

Race consciousness and the belief that Blacks have to unify in their own defense is justifiably popular among Black workers. And that need will not begin to go away until white workers recognize that it is in their own real interest to fight the racial attacks on Blacks and Latinos and prove their commitment to the struggle. A genuinely interracialist working class vanguard cannot be built by denying the existence of the racial divide and the reality of special circumstances facing Black Americans.

LENIN'S METHOD

We believe that authentic Marxists can learn the strategy for achieving both working class unity and Black self-defense by looking to the methodology worked out by Lenin earlier in this era.

Lenin fought for an internationalist outlook which he insisted had to remain uncontaminated by even "the purest" forms of nationalism. The advanced workers' party in each nation had to be part of the international party. However, Lenin knew that a non-national world could not be achieved by ignoring the real differences which exist between nations under capitalism. He did not equate the struggles of the nationally oppressed with the nationalism of the imperialist powers. Internationalists could not dismiss such struggles because they were often led by pro-capitalist nationalist ideologues; that would inevitably mean to side with the oppressors rather than the masses of the oppressed in reality.

To convince the superexploited colonized masses that proletarian internationalism was the only real answer to capitalist imperialism, communist revolutionaries had to be the best defenders of the right of self-determination for oppressed nationalities. That meant, as Lenin demonstrated, that such people had the right to choose secession, i.e. national political independence. However, while steadfastly defending their right to choose for themselves, Lenin constantly pointed out that given the economic dominance of capitalist imperialism, no such nation could really be free or equal. Only an internationalist union of revolutionary workers' states could take the necessary steps toward true equality.

The achievement of such a world federation would be a decisive step in the struggle to destroy every last vestige of the inhuman reactionary society which dominates the globe today. However, as Leninists openly stress, a federation of nationally-based working class states would be but a means to communism's far greater goal, an authentically communist world which would be truly human; a society of abundance for all people; a society in which all classes, nation states and borders will have disappeared. And a society in which, finally, the horror of racism will be eradicated once and for all. And not only racism but the very idea of separate races.

THE RIGHT OF SELF-ORGANIZATION

The underlying approach of Leninists to the national question does not

get tossed out of the window when the oppressed people are not a separate nation, as is the case with American Blacks. The interracialist revolutionary group defends the right of the mass of racially oppressed people to advance their struggle through self-organization, if they so choose. While championing this right, Bolshevik-Leninists relentlessly expose the pro-capitalist capitulations of both integrationist and separatist misleaders and point to the necessity of building the unified proletarian interracialist and internationalist party to lead the masses' revolutionary struggles.

It is not only a question of defending *the right* to choose separate self-organization; at present we often advocate *the formation* of Black self-defense groups. A united working class armed defense of Blacks against police brutality and KKK-style assaults is the strongest and most preferable answer. However, in most situations today, the masses of white workers do not yet have the consciousness to see the need, let alone act upon it. It would be criminal to suggest that Blacks or other oppressed people under armed attack wait until united working class militia are possible before mobilizing in their own defense. So, while advocating immediate Black self-defense organizations, in the unions and other institutions we challenge their current misleaderships to mobilize broader defense efforts in our ongoing efforts to raise the consciousness of all workers on such matters.

Because of a capitulatory crew of labor bureaucrats, the American working class these days has been taking it on the chin without much of a fightback. Strikes have been few in number, in sharp contrast to both past history and what is inevitably going to happen in the coming years. However, only a short time ago, a very significant omen of the future occurred — the bitter national UPS strike. The UPS bosses tried to set full-time workers against part-timers and divide the workers by race. White workers united with the many young Black and Latino workers instead, and together they won an important, if temporary, victory.

The relationship between Black and white workers in the United States is now very different than it was in the past. Strength is not simply a question of numbers. Something cataclysmic happened to race and class relations in the early 1970's. Not only had the ghettos erupted, scaring the capitalist rulers no end, but as well for the first time in American history, white workers followed the leadership of Black workers in major strikes. Given that dramatic reversal, and given the strategic position that Black and Latino workers now occupy in major industries and the central cities, the fate of workers of color is no longer as much in the hands of the more numerous white workers as it was in the past.

Interracialism is no benevolent gift condescendingly granted to Black workers by a white majority. Racism primarily hurts workers of color, but as well it undermines the income and the strength of all sections of the proletariat. White workers can be won to the fight for revolution and Black liberation when Black workers chart an uncompromising path which challenges the system which exploits us all. Decades ago, Leon Trotsky predicted that the revolutionary proletarian vanguard would be led in the U.S. by Black workers to an extent well beyond their proportionate numbers. And it is true: Black workers are now, in fact, key to the formation of the interracialist party capable of overthrowing the bestial capitalist system.

More Information ...

For information about
League for the Revolutionary Party
meetings, activities and literature:

write to us at:

LRP, P.O. Box 769, Washington Bridge Station, NY, NY 10033

call us at: 212-330-9017

or e-mail us at: LRPNYC@earthlink.net