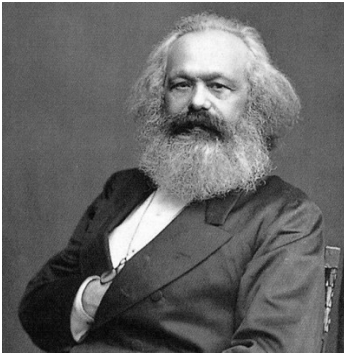


# Towards Marxist-Leninist Unity



## A Journal of Discussion and Debate



Vol. 2, No. 2  
September, 2020

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To see the reasoning for publication of TMLU, please see the article “Why ‘Towards Marxist-Leninist Unity’” in the first issue on the web-site below. Though we believe that a Party must have ideological unity, we include progressive articles from groups with varying views.

Please note that we reprint many articles without our asking for permission. Clearly the authors are in no way responsible for other views in this publication.

Comments, criticisms and articles are welcome. The next issue of TMLU will probably appear shortly after the November elections so material should be sent in by mid-October.

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## The World Economy is in Crisis

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) recently released its forecast that for this year the decline of the world economy is “worse than the great depression.” They continue to justify this as “caused by the Covid-19 pandemic”, a “pandemic” that continues to serve as a great pretext to prevent for “health reasons” the mobilized and organized response of the workers who do not want the crisis placed on their backs. Meanwhile the financial oligarchy wants to continue maintaining and strengthening “confinement,” “masks,” the “healthy distance” and the “New Normal”, wage reductions, layoffs, the increase in productivity, as anti-crisis measures to save their profits.

Such a situation alerts the great capitals of the world to act with promptness, strength and depth, to prevent their ship from sinking, hardening and developing new measures that prevent the spontaneous or planned reaction of the exploited.

The capitalist-imperialist system has already suffered from a serious terminal illness – exhaustion, decay and decomposition – for some time now. The “Covid-19 pandemic” has added to and exacerbated this trend. Faced with this scenario, and even with a pandemic, the class struggle will continue to become more tense and the world imperialist order will be broken at any weak link in its imperialist chain.

According to IMF calculations, the global economy will shrink by 4.9% compared to the 3% estimate made in April this year. That is, we will have an economic crisis throughout 2020, accompanied by the Covid-19 pandemic. Spain and Ita-

ly will lose 12.8% of their Gross Domestic Product. Latin America will have “a loss of 9.4%, almost double” the previous forecast. Argentina has been in crisis since 2016, before the “pandemic,” and in 2020 its GDP will be -9.9%; Brazil and Mexico will fall 9.1% and 10.5%, respectively. Other countries will have negative numbers, such as Canada: -8.4%, USA, and South Africa: -8% and Germany: -7.8%. The economies of China and India will not be negative, but will fall by at least up to 3%, according to the forecast for March-April this year (S&P); the first months of this year the Chinese economy contracted 6.8%. Russia's fell -8.5% in the second quarter, according to Rosstat. India grew only in the first quarter by 0.7%, which was lower than the 0.9% in the last quarter of 2019.

This situation of capitalism in its highest imperialist stage and the measures taken against the “pandemic” configure a new, much more elaborate and complex scenario of actions and organization of forces, in which the owners of capital seek new conditions of capital accumulation, unleashing contradictions in the proletariat, to distract it and divert it from its class objective, from its emancipation, creating a confrontation between those who believe in the coronavirus and those who do not (the same proletariat is being used to track down those infected and denounce them), in which the vaccine will also appear as a complement to the social control they want. For its part, the conscious proletariat seeks to reveal these objectives and confront them in order to defeat them.



# Schools and the Pandemic

Around the U.S., and in much of the world, schools have been closed because of the pandemic. Classes have been held “on-line.” Last June 5, the *New York Times*<sup>1</sup> published an informative article that pointed out how the “on-line” classes accentuated the existing class differences in education. The petty-bourgeois (“middle class”) students learned about as well as in “in-person” classes, while the working-class students, and particularly Black and Latino students, fell behind: “by September, most students will have fallen behind where they would have been if they had stayed in classrooms, with some losing the equivalent of a full school year’s worth of academic gains. Racial and socioeconomic achievement gaps will most likely widen because of disparities in access to computers, home internet connections and direct instruction from teachers”. This is to be expected as the working class students are less likely to have a parent who is “working from home” who can make sure that their children are actually studying. They are also less likely to have good computer equipment to work with.

In addition, many working class children rely on school breakfast and lunch for a somewhat nutritious meal that they now cannot get. And you cannot study well when you are hungry.

Now in New York City there are plans to open the schools under a “blended” model for the almost 70% who do not opt for fully on-line classes. Thus in one way or another they will spend 5 days every two weeks in school, and the other 5 on-line.

Maybe half a loaf is better than none, so working-class students will only fall behind by half as much as if they were doing “on-line” schooling full time. But this will lead to even more chaos for parents whose children are too young to stay home by themselves, so that they will have to find baby-sitters who can meet the child’s school schedule.

There are other alternatives, even if they are not perfect. In earlier years, when New York City schools were extremely overcrowded, some schools operated in two shifts, say from 7 A.M. to noon, and from noon to 5 P.M. This could be done now, allowing the students who did not opt for on-line cases to go to school 5 days a week and still maintain “social distancing.”

Meanwhile, there is an increasing push for charter schools and on-line private universities – note the increasing ads for these on TV.

This is all increasing the class differentiation in education. As jobs become more and more mechanized, the degree of skills needed for the majority of these jobs is decreasing. Why does a cashier at McDonalds need to have more than basic literacy and the ability to count when she (and the majority of these jobs are held by women) only needs to press an icon on a screen for a Big Mac and count out the correct change for the customer. (This is if her job is not completely eliminated by the kiosks that allow the customers to enter their orders themselves.)

Of course, there is another section of employees, a sort of “technical intelligentsia,” who are needed to set up and program these machines. This group will need a much higher degree of education. This is mainly the role of the charter schools and private universities, whether in \-person or on-line, though probably increasingly the latter.

Thus the use of on-line education will increase the class divide in education. It appears that the ruling class is trying to use the pandemic to limit, or even entirely eliminate, public education in a similar way that it used Hurricane Katrina to eliminate public housing in New Orleans. (In Bolivia the reactionary government used the pandemic to eliminate public education for the whole school year, while allowing private on-line education institutions to continue.)

Of course, as Marxist-Leninists our aim for education is entirely different. We want the working class to be able to receive a full, free scientific education, from pre-K through university. This must include not only education in technical fields and the natural sciences, but also the social sciences and world culture. We want a working class that is prepared not only to overthrow the capitalist system but also to build a new, socialist system as a transition to classless, communist society!



<sup>1</sup> [https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/05/us/coronavirus-education-lost-learning.html?campaign\\_id=9&emc=edit\\_nn\\_20200709&instance\\_id=20148&nl=the-morning&regi\\_id=103537717&segment\\_id=32978&te=1&user\\_id=f39b3c85bafd4849638a91164186284c](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/05/us/coronavirus-education-lost-learning.html?campaign_id=9&emc=edit_nn_20200709&instance_id=20148&nl=the-morning&regi_id=103537717&segment_id=32978&te=1&user_id=f39b3c85bafd4849638a91164186284c)

# Vaccines<sup>1</sup>

Various countries and companies are racing to find a vaccine for the coronavirus, as they expect to make billions of dollars for the pharmaceutical monopolies from this.

Russia recently announced that it is already producing such a vaccine. Of course, the bourgeois press in the U.S. immediately denounced this, claiming that Russia did not do mass testing on humans. Trump is pushing for mass distribution by November 1, just two days before the presidential election.

Meanwhile, the government has given \$456 million to Johnson & Johnson to develop a vaccine,<sup>2</sup> as well as even more money to other big pharmaceutical companies. But &J have also been in the news lately (and in lawyers' ads on TV), because the talcum powder that they have been producing for decades contains asbestos, which can cause cancer. They have had to stop selling it in the U.S. and Canada (but not in other countries). They have certainly known about this all the time.

If they produce a vaccine, will we have to wait decades to find out the ill effects?



*Would you trust a vaccine from this company?*

## Vaccine Court

Normally the FDA (Food and Drug Administration) approves medicines, which are declared fit for human use. If they turn out to be unsafe, the manufacturer can be sued. But this is not the case for vaccines.

Most people have never heard of the vaccine court (officially the National Vaccine Injury Compensation Program). According to its creators, "The National Vaccine Injury Compensation Program is a no-fault alternative to the traditional legal system for resolving vaccine injury petitions. It was created in the 1980s, after lawsuits against vaccine companies and health care providers threatened to cause vaccine shortages and reduce U.S. vaccination rates, which could have caused a resurgence of vaccine preventable diseases."<sup>3</sup>

What does this mean in reality? In the rare cases where people sue and win in the vaccine court, we the taxpayers have to pay, not the vaccine companies.<sup>4</sup> Thus the manufacturers of vaccines are immune from liability for any ill effects of their products.

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### Book Available: When and Why Socialism in the Soviet Union Failed

Available from Red Star Publishers ([www.RedStarPublishers.org](http://www.RedStarPublishers.org)) in both pdf (free) and print edition (\$7). Originally written by the KPD(ML) of Germany in 1996, it has been translated into English for the first time in 2020. This 217 page book is an attempt from a Marxist-Leninist viewpoint to get at the roots of the development of revisionism in the Soviet Union, beyond saying that "Khrushchev was a traitor" (though he was). Despite a number of political errors, it is one of the few attempts to deal with this question, which is of utmost importance to the communist movement.

Red Star will also shortly be putting up (in pdf form) several worthwhile books on the Soviet Union during Lenin and Stalin, including John Scott's *Behind the Urals*, Fannina W. Halle's *Women of the Soviet East*, Anna Louie Strong's *I Change Worlds*; and possibly Langston Hughes's *I Wonder as I Wander*.

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<sup>1</sup> Just to be clear, I am not an "anti-vaxxer." I consider myself a vaccine skeptic, who does not know whether or not most vaccines are safe.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.fiercepharma.com/pharma/j-j-scores-1b-contract-from-u-s-to-deliver-100-million-coronavirus-vaccine-doses>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.hrsa.gov/vaccine-compensation/index.html>

<sup>4</sup> See for example: <https://www.thekarlfeldtcenter.com/the-dark-truth-of-americas-vaccine-injury-compensation-program/>



## Reparations for Glyphosate Use in the United States

Glyphosate, developed in the 1970s, became popular in the manufacture of herbicides for weed control in crops. Since that time, several hundred products have been developed that, to this day, are used in the agricultural industry. However, since 1980, several scientific articles have questioned its use because

glyphosate is a highly toxic element for different organisms, considered as the cause of several forms of cancer. Despite this, the manufacturers ignored the evidence and still recommend its use today. Bayer, on its official website, provides information about the potential benefits of its use.

The lawsuits against the use of glyphosate have not been long in coming. For several decades, in various parts of the globe, communities have spoken out against its use, even before the state order. However, the economic power of pharmaceutical companies has been so powerful that it has financed campaigns in favor of the use of glyphosate and has even forced governments to maintain legislation in their favor. The resistance of the peoples and the multiple demonstrations against this chemical product is what has kept this power at bay.

In the areas along the Ecuador-Colombia border, as a result of spraying glyphosate on illegal coca crops in Colombian territory, the crops suffered irreversible damage as did the health of thousands of inhabitants of the area. In 2008, the Ecuadorian government filed a complaint against the Colombian government for the use of this product on crops. After several negotiations, Colombia established a corridor of several kilometers to prevent the fumigations on its territory from affecting Ecuadorian crops, thus the demand was unsubstantiated. The peoples' struggle also succeeded in getting the Constitutional Guarantees Court to prohibit the use of glyphosate,



although it did not make any economic reparation for the peoples affected.

US farmer filed a class action lawsuit against Monsanto for the increase in cases of cancer in areas where this herbicide was used. This lawsuit has not been resolved for several decades. Bayer, buyer of their product and due to pending liti-

gation Monsanto, has decided to pay between \$8,900 to \$9,600 million in a massive settlement for all plaintiffs, also protecting itself from future legal proceedings, for which it has allocated \$ 1,250 million. This case is relevant because it is the first time that the victims have been economically compensated for the use of this chemical in crops for human consumption.

This triumph of the plaintiffs in the United States will open a window of opportunity to demand reparation for entire communities affected by the use of this harmful element in Latin America.

The use of glyphosate continues to be very popular in several areas, especially among large agricultural producers, due to its low cost in relation to its action for crop management. Its permanent use causes serious damage to the health of its workers and the inhabitants of surrounding areas, it is likely that it even contaminates water sources. The struggle of the organized peasants to resume better production practices will make it possible to take care of the land and the health of consumers, while defeating the transnational companies that manufacture these products.

The sentence against the pharmaceutical giant Bayer is an acknowledgment of the bad business practices that its predecessors carried out, and it becomes an opportunity to achieve the reparation that the affected peoples require.

## New York City Shootings

Shootings by police have continued unabated after the killing of George Floyd, as has immunity for the cops involved. One case is that of Jacob Blake in Kenosha, Wisconsin, on August 23, who was shot seven times in the back. The cop and two other police officers were put on “administrative leave,” basically a paid vacation.

However, in New York City, there has been a sharp rise in shootings of civilians by civilians. In August of 2020, there were 242 such shootings, more than 2 ½ times the 91 shootings in August of 2019. The great majority of these incidents have been “unsolved.”

What is different from last year? There were the numerous mass demonstrations with calls to defund or dissolve the police, or for community control of the police. At the risk of being called a “conspiracy theorist” (the term commonly used now for any theory that the ruling class doesn’t like), I will suggest that the two facts are elated.

It is very easy for the police to let street criminals or gang members know, through their snitches or “confidential informants,” that they have free rein to carry out their shootings and killings, that the police will not pursue them seriously. This allows the police to show how much they are “needed,” that they should not be defunded but on the contrary their funding should be increased.

What is even more unfortunate is that the great majority of these shootings are in Black and other oppressed nationality neighborhoods, which have suffered most from police brutality.

It should be noted that this possibility has also been expressed, in a much milder form, by New York City Public Advocate Jumaane Williams.

For those who think that this is just a coincidence that these shootings came right after the calls to defund the police, let us call them “coincidence theorists.”

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## The 2020 Presidential Election

Anyone with any progressive political consciousness knows that Trump is an arch-reactionary. He welcomes the support of armed reactionary forces (both police and civilians), even those who shoot Black people and others who are opposed to police brutality. He is also a misogynist (woman hater), anti-immigrant, Islamophobe and anti-LGBT, and agitates others to express this same hatred.

But the Democrats are no better. Where they occupy City Halls across the country, they have also used the police to crack down on anti-brutality demonstrators. Obama deported more immigrants than any other resident, and most of the wall was built way before Trump. The chief thing that they attack Trump on is over the phony “Russia-gate” issue. This shows that, if anything, they are more eager to instigate an inter-imperialist war.

We cannot support either Biden or Trump. We have major differences with the Green Party candidate, who refuses to recognize that internationally we must concentrate our fire on our “own” imperialism. For example, in Syria he equally criticizes President Assad and the U.S. puppets, including ISIS, who want to overthrow him. However, in these circumstances we think that we should “hold our nose” and vote for Howie Hawkins.

One other point of importance in the present elections is that both the Republicans and Democrats have called for not recognizing the results of the election if they lose. Trump has said this publically for a long time.

But Hillary Clinton said the same thing. In a recent interview, she said: “Joe Biden should not concede under any circumstances,”<sup>1</sup> although we have not seen Biden say the same thing himself.

Given that there is expected to be a very large number of absentee ballots, which cannot be counted immediately, there is likely to be a prolonged period of chaos until the results are known.

In these circumstances it may be necessary to the recognition of the results once all the votes are counted, regardless of which candidate wins.



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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/2020-election/hillary-clinton-says-biden-should-not-concede-2020-election-under-n1238156>

*A group of people from several different organizations have been working on a platform calling for a third, workers' party. The draft call for this is printed below. We hope that forces that are interested can get in touch through the email below.*

## **Call for an Independent Workers' Party**

Join organizational efforts and discussion by emailing: [workersdemocracygroup@gmail.com](mailto:workersdemocracygroup@gmail.com)

The struggle in the United States and around the world that erupted onto the streets in 2020 after the murder of George Floyd has proven that—as workers, black and brown people, immigrants, women, LGBTQ+ people, indigenous communities, and youth—we can no longer breathe. The people in the heart of the imperialist center have radically transformed the political body of the country, revealing fractures in the US state and ushering in a new, fruitful moment for organizing and empowering our communities. This moment demands new, bold, and wide-sweeping action for all progressive organizers and activists.

In this tumultuous and historic context, the US is set to have an election that has disillusioned many and represents yet another “lesser evil” choice for progressive forces. On one side, an aspiring right wing authoritarian who deploys government troops against peaceful protesters and separates immigrant families in brutal conditions, on the other a “tough on crime” moderate who repudiates national healthcare, police reform, and environmental action. The recent history of the United States has proven that this “lesser evil” incrementalism has done nothing but push the Democratic Party to the right, to such an extent that George Bush, responsible for the murder of hundreds of thousands in Iraq, is now a venerated figure within its ranks. We cannot stand for this any longer. The people of the United States, fighting for their lives and livelihoods on the streets against deadly and militarized police departments, demand another option—a third, working class party in which the people can exercise their democratic will without coercion and fatal compromise. This is an especially critical task for us as organizers in the US, the chief exporter of imperialist violence and oppression around the world.

We, diverse activists and organizers from popular and working class forces, call on all progressive forces who share our vision outlined in the platform below to forge a real, progressive third party. This historic moment calls us all to elevate our unique struggles into one political formation around which the quickly learning masses can gather and struggle. When we exercise our democratic will together, we do not subvert our unique struggles for systemic change and justice, but rather call more people into our struggles for meaningful, lasting change. The people of the United States have waited too long for a true working class party, it is our full intention, with the solidarity and power of our organizations working together, to have anti-imperialist, pro-worker electoral candidates that the generation of Breonna Taylor and George Floyd can organize around and begin to fundamentally challenge and change American governance. Let us gather together in a conference to discuss this burning issue, and build a common platform.

### **1) End police brutality; defund the police, community control of the police.**

After 2001 and the war on terror, police departments became very militaristic and involved in almost every aspect of life in the US. While even the smallest administrative units have unnecessarily armed police forces with special equipment, police occupy schools, hospitals, and communities, especially poor and working class communities. The police budget has to be cut by state governments, and reallocated for educational, healthcare, and social purposes. Also departments should be demilitarized, Pentagon police aid programs have to be removed. To build the mass power necessary to see these aims realized, we must fight for community control of the police, a robust system of democratically elected, civilian councils that control discipline, funding, and the policy making of police departments.

### **2) Abolish I.C.E; end all discriminatory border policies, Full citizenship to refugees**

The U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (I.C.E.) is a product of the post-9/11 anti-immigrant atmosphere and policies. However, the U.S. discriminatory policies have a long history. The U.S. interventionist policies cause destruction and dispersion of the countries today where most refugees and immi-



grants come from. The fights against imperialism and for the rights of immigrants are one. Borders should be open for all who seek refuge from the war and poverty, much of it created by imperialism. An issue that determines millions of workers' lives like migration shouldn't be a nebulous electoral propaganda source between Republicans and Democrats.

**3) Jobs for everyone at a decent wage and livable income for those who are ineligible for work.**

Today's fragile economic situation, built on austerity after the 2008 crash, intensified the economic turmoil for the people during the COVID-19 pandemic. Today, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 21 million U.S. citizens are unemployed. Millions are either jobless, or have to work more than one job due to insufficient pay. The elderly and the mentally or physically handicapped do not have enough income to cover their expenses on meager disability payments, and are forced to work. We demand jobs or income now. \$15 an hour is not enough to live a life with dignity and basic amenities in 2020 and beyond. American workers, working longer hours than they ever have, must receive fair, equitable wages.

**4) Right to organize and strike for all workers. Organize the South.**

Since the Trump administration came to power, legal attacks have intensified against unions. The National Labor Relations Board has become the sword of the current government against workers' organizations. Rights to organize and strike are already weak or not in favor of workers after the Reaganite and anti-communist attacks on unionism in the 20th century, leaving workers without protection against austerity policies. On the other hand, the U.S. has seen the biggest rates of worker strikes during the last three years since 1986. However, unions do not do enough to defend workers' rights, and workers don't own their unions in many respects, as we saw during the UAW strike. Many unions, though certainly not all, were indifferent to George Floyd protests until forced to reckon with them (as with the AFL). We must fight to spread and democratize the unionization movement. Repeal Taft-Hartley, unshackle unions, and give workers their unions back!

**5) Free healthcare for all.**

The pandemic has been a testament to how weak the healthcare system is, and how it brutalizes working class communities. Healthcare is not a test board for companies and the government that can be changed in every presidency. Healthcare services should be nationalized and free of charge, period. Full treatment and access has to be recognized for all regardless of their background.

**6) Free education for all.**

All universities, high, elementary and primary schools should be scientific, full access and free of charge. Universities must not be funded by grants from the US military and the military-industrial complex, so that true scientific research can be conducted that benefits and not harms the people. All the student loans must be forgiven, so that graduates can pursue their area of study without the omnipresent shadow of debt.

**7) Alternatives to incarceration for non-violent offenders. Prisons should be for rehabilitation, not revenge. Abolish prisons for profit. Free all political prisoners.**

The war on drugs explicitly attempted to criminalize entire areas of the country, abandoning even the most basic concept of justice. It has resulted in mass incarceration, which many private companies seek to continue because it is a source of free labor and the intensification of gentrification. Cases where a wrongful conviction was carried out must be reopened. Long non-violent sentences must be revisited, lowered, and in some cases cancelled. Losses caused by imprisonment to those families should be answered both financially and socially. The exception in 13th Amendment, allowing slave labor in prisons, should be removed.

**8) Cancel all rents until the end of the crisis. Rents should be reduced to 25% of income.**

The pandemic has hit working class communities with more problems. We are either an "essential hero" or jobless and at risk of homelessness. Rents have risen arbitrarily over the last decade while landlords provide decreasing service and upkeep. With our current wages, we cannot afford our rent, particularly

during a pandemic when job security has been seriously imperiled for millions of people. All rent must be cancelled until the crisis lessens and jobs are more secure. Rent controls must be instituted, to bring under control the rapid and needless increase of rent.

**9) Full housing rights to all!**

Homelessness can be resolved simply by filling the millions of vacant homes in the USA. Everyone has to have clean, safe, and usable housing. The values of people's lives shouldn't be measured by credit scores, and corporate leeches must stop feeding on the hopes of the working class by issuing usurious housing loans.

**10) End any form of imperialist intervention. Stop all wars. Close all military bases abroad and withdraw all troops, cease support to mercenaries.**

The U.S. global supremacy caused nothing but pain, terror, and destruction. The trillions spent for war can be used for education, healthcare, and social infrastructure in general. Peace must be established, the U.S., under true working class control, can be a force for peace in the world and not death and destruction as it has been for centuries.

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## **Letter from an Italian-American on Removal of Columbus Statues**

Mayor DeBlasio's commission took an easy political but unprincipled way out when the issue of controversial statues came up in 2018. The commission called for "historical markers" on controversial statues such as the Columbus statue on 59th Street. So far, I have seen no "markers". Governor Cuomo stated recently that he is against the removal of the statue. Many people think that the whole issue to remove statues of those who engaged in crimes against humanity such as Christopher Columbus or who were instrumental in causing the bloodiest civil war in our history by resisting even an eventual end to slavery such as the leaders of the Confederacy, is a waste of time or just part of our history. I believe that to keep their statues in public spaces is to honor them and perverts what really happened in history. Hitler is an important part of German history but no German government would allow his statue to be displayed in public spaces.

Regarding Columbus, even the Spanish government recalled him back to Spain, stripped him of his titles and jailed him temporarily for his enslavement the Caribbean indigenous and for brutally murdering those who resisted. Many Americans believed that "Columbus discovered America" but he was sent by Spain to sail directly west across the ocean to India and China. Not knowing there were two continents that blocked him, he believed that the islands he encountered were off the coast of India and he called the indigenous people Indians. In fact, there were tens of millions of indigenous living on these continents thousands of years. I believe that Gov. Cuomo underestimates the Italian American community. Those Italian Americans who use Columbus as a figure to rep-

resent their contribution to American society would recoil in shock if they knew what crimes Columbus and his brother Bartolomeo committed once they arrived in the "New World". To ignore this is to refuse to honestly face up to our history, something that some many U.S. cities and states have corrected. Bartolome De Las Casas, priest and missionary, reported that Columbus and his soldiers "thought of nothing of knifing Indians and cutting slices of them to test the sharpness of their blades". The Spanish government had Columbus arrested, sent back to Spain and jailed. Later, needing the experience of Columbus to extend its explorations and conquests, the Spanish government approved further trips to the New World led by Columbus. The European conquest of the "Americas" resulted in a cultural and economic disaster for its indigenous peoples as European religion and languages plus colonial mercantile capitalism were transplanted in the Western Hemisphere.

Several U.S. states and cities have already renamed the day as Indigenous People's Day or do not celebrate Columbus Day, such as Hawaii, Alaska, New Mexico, Florida, Vermont, South Dakota, Los Angeles, Santa Cruz, Seattle, Denver, Phoenix, Salt Lake City, Austin, St. Paul-Minnesota, Tacoma- Washington and others. Surely, there are other Italians that Italian Americans can honor as an official holiday in place of Columbus such as Leonardo Da Vinci, or Giuseppe Garibaldi and Giuseppe Mazzini, who were instrumental in the unification of Italy in 1870. Not to learn from our history will prevent us from ever solving the curses of racism, prejudice and xenophobia that afflict this country.

Thomas Siracuse (Siragusa), an Italian American  
MA in Latin American History -Columbia University

[http://www.silive.com/news/2018/01/nyc\\_to\\_keep\\_controversial\\_stat.html](http://www.silive.com/news/2018/01/nyc_to_keep_controversial_stat.html)

## Book Review: *Sojourning for Freedom: Black Women, American Communism, and the Making of Black Feminism*, by Erik S. McDuffie

This book is a valuable discussion of the role of Black women in the CPUSA, particularly when it was a revolutionary organization. It is unfortunate that so many of their stories are unknown, even among Marxist-Leninists.

Most of these women were drawn to the CP because of its militancy in the fight for the rights of women and Black people. For some it was also through their experience of visiting or living in the Soviet Union. There they saw first-hand how socialism led to the equality of all nationalities, as well as the developing equality between men and women. For example, Louise Thompson (who later married CP leader William Patterson), said: "What I had witnessed, especially in Central Asia, convinced me that only a new social order could remedy the American racial injustices I knew so well." This compares with the famous quote by Paul Robeson: "In Russia I felt for the first time like a full human being."

The first Black women to join the CP entered shortly after its founding as the legal, united Workers Party in 1924, after the division between the CP and CLP had been overcome<sup>1</sup> and after the Palmer Raids<sup>2</sup> were over. One of the first was Grace Campbell, who had been a leading member of the African Blood Brotherhood (ABB)<sup>3</sup>.

The CP was initially weak in theory and practice regarding Black people in the U.S. It continued the position of the Socialist Party that Blacks could only be organized as workers, that there were no "special demands" for Black people. (This is still the position of many Trotskyists today. For example, both the Spartacists and the Internationalist Group use the slogan: "Black Liberation through Socialist Revolution")

In 1928 and 1930, the Communist International, with the input of African-American communists such as Harry Haywood, put forward the thesis that African-Americans constituted a nation in the Black Belt South. This, and the fight that the CP led for the freedom of the

Scottsboro youths<sup>4</sup> led large numbers of Black people, including Black women, to join or become close to the CP. Ada Wright, although she never actually joined the CP, was the mother of two of the Scottsboro youths and was active in the fight for their freedom. Louise Thompson organized mass rallies for the youths, leading to a march of 5,000 people in Washington DC in 1933, immediately after which she joined the CP.

During the Depression, the united front against fascism led to the expansion of the mass work of the CP on a country-wide scale. This included rent strikes and the fight against evictions, which were massive during the depression. (These mass evictions are coming again now, in the second Great Depression, once the moratorium against evictions is lifted.) These fights were organized through the Unemployed Councils, and even earlier by groups like the Harlem Tenants League. In Harlem, Black women led by the CP moved people back into their homes. They also fought against price-gouging (another issue for today), winning some successes. For example, in 1935, under the leadership of Bonita Williams, they won a cut in meat prices in Harlem. They also helped form the Domestic Workers Union. This not only led African-American women communists to take a leading role in mass actions, but brought masses of Black women (and men) around the leadership of the CP in their activities.

In this period, the CP, and Black women in it, also took on international issues, such as the defense of the Spanish Republic and Ethiopia against fascist aggression. Several women, including Thyra Edwards and Louis Patterson, traveled to Spain and reported back on the heroic struggle of the Spanish people.

During World War II, many Black and white women got jobs in industry as many men joined the armed forces in the fight against fascism. Women such as Esther Campbell fought to



Domestic Workers strike, 1942

<sup>1</sup> When the communists from the reformist Socialist Party in 1919, they initially formed two parties, the Communist Party, CP, made up largely of immigrant workers, and the Communist Labor Party, made up mainly of U.S.-born workers.

<sup>2</sup> The Palmer Raids were government attacks on mainly immigrant revolutionary workers, mostly communists but also anarchists. Many of them were deported.

<sup>3</sup> The Brotherhood was a left-wing split from the Garveyite movement. Many of its members later joined the CP.

<sup>4</sup> The Scottsboro youths were nine Black teenagers who were framed for the rape of two young white women while riding a train in Scottsboro, Alabama, in 1931.

extend social security to domestic workers, as helping the fight to defeat fascism.

In the post-World War II period, there was a fight to overcome the legacy of Browderite revisionism. In the long run, this fight was unsuccessful, and by the late 1950s the CP had fully succumbed to revisionism.

For this period, McDuffie of course raises the case of Angela Davis.<sup>1</sup> Although Davis's case led to a brief respect for the CP, it brought few Black people (women or men) into the organization. In 1972, there was a mass rally for Davis in Madison Square Garden in New York City. A friend who was working there as an usher said that almost the only Black women in attendance were "nannies" of white CP women, who wanted them to know who Angela Davis was. And Davis showed where she really stood when she left the CP in 1991 to become a founding member of the openly social-democratic split, the Committees of Correspondence.

McDuffie correctly points out that it was not all smooth sailing for Black women in the CPUSA. Often they had to fight to get their views taken seriously, not only by their white comrades, but also by their Black male comrades. One example of this is the article by Claudia Jones, printed in the CP's theoretical journal, *Political Affairs*, June, 1949, "For an End to the Neglect of the Problems of Negro Women."<sup>2</sup>

The author is *not* a Marxist-Leninist. Right at the beginning, he gives the obligatory reference to "Stalinist atrocities" (of course without mentioning any). He does not consider the CP in its later years as revisionist, but only "sectarian." When he discusses the CPs "Black Belt thesis," he never mentions that this meant the right to political secession. And he considers the Black women in the CP to be "left Black feminists," not recognizing that one can support women's liberation without being a feminist, just as one can support Black liberation without being a nationalist.

He has what one might call a schizophrenic respect for much of the work of the CP and for that of Black women in it. He raises the question of the triple oppression, as workers, as African-Americans and as women. He also raises the view that they should therefore play a vanguard role in the fight for socialism in the U.S. Whether or not this was correct at the time he discusses

(I think it was not), the question is even more relevant today. As industrial production continues to decline in the U.S. (and it has been declining since long before the pandemic), the importance of areas such as public employment, health care and service industries continue to grow. These are areas where women, and in particular Black women, generally play a leading role.

Finally, a number of women discussed in *Sojourning for Freedom* wrote memoirs and papers. These are languishing unpublished in libraries throughout the country (as are those of other leading male, white communists, such as that of Sam Darcy in Tamiment Library in New York City). Thus there are those of Hermina Dumont Huiswood and Claudia Jones in Schomburg Library in New York City, Louise Thompson Patterson in the Reference Center for Marxist Studies (though they may have since been moved to Tamiment) in New York City, as well as her papers in Emory University in Atlanta, etc. These should be rescued and photocopied (or even photographed with cell-phone cameras) by readers. If they were sent to me electronically, I will try to make them available through Red Star Publishers.



<sup>1</sup> Davis was framed for a supposed role in the attempted prison escape of Black revolutionary George Jackson in Marin County, California in 1971, in which Jackson was killed. Davis was later acquitted.

<sup>2</sup> Claudia Jones was a Trinidadian-born woman communist, who in 1955 during the McCarthy period was deported to England, where she died in 1964. She is buried in London next to Karl Marx. This article has been reprinted by Red Star Publishers.)



# Marx(ists) & Communists on prostitution



On what foundation is the present family, the bourgeois family, based? On capital, on private gain. In its completely developed form, this family exists only among the bourgeoisie. But this state of things finds its complement in the practical absence of the family among the proletarians, and in public prostitution.

Karl Marx. Capital Volume One, Chapter 25 (1867)



With the rise of the inequality of property – already at the upper stage of barbarism, therefore – wage-labor appears sporadically side by side with slave labor, and at the same time, as its necessary correlate, the professional prostitution of free women side by side with the forced surrender of the slave.

Friedrich Engels, Origins of the Family, Private Property, and the State (1884)



...it is self-evident that the abolition of the present system of production must bring with it the abolition of the community of women springing from that system, i.e., of prostitution both public and private.

Karl Marx & Friedrich Engels, Manifesto of the Communist Party (1848)



Prostitution destroys the equality, solidarity and comradeship of the two halves of the working class. A man who buys the favours of a woman does not see her as a comrade or as a person with equal rights. ...The contempt he has for the prostitute, whose favours he has bought, affects his attitude to all women.

Alexandra Kollontai, Prostitution and ways of fighting it (1921)



...so long as wage-slavery exists, inevitably prostitution too will exist. All the oppressed and exploited classes throughout the history of human societies have always been forced ... to give up to their oppressors, first, their unpaid labour and, second, their women as concubines for the “masters”

V. I. Lenin, Capitalism and Female Labour (1913)



The capitalist exploitation of the proletarian work force through its starvation wages, sees to it that there is a large supply of prostitutes which corresponds to the demand by the men.

Clara Zetkin - Only in Conjunction With the Proletarian Woman  
Will Socialism Be Victorious (1896)



*The below discussion is taken from a Facebook exchange. The names have been deleted to protect the innocent, and the guilty.*

## **On the Question of the African-American Nation in the Black Belt**

I am always impressed at the clarity and farsightedness of the Comintern Resolutions in many ways, however the Black Nation Thesis is certainly wrong today and was certainly wrong by the 1970s when many anti-revisionist MLs in the USA were still defending it. The Theses make very clear that the material basis of the Black Question was the agrarian question in the US South. Obviously that is no longer the case.

Furthermore, the genius of Harry Haywood notwithstanding, the demand for a separate nation has never been popular among the vast majority of Black Americans, who have always fought for the right to be both Black and American in the USA, with all the equal rights this entails, not for a separate Black Nation.

In fact, the petty bourgeois black nationalists who have achieved large followings at one time or another (e.g. Marcus Garvey's UNIA, the Nation of Islam) have shown themselves willing to negotiate with the KKK and other white racists (including the American Nazi Party) to secure some separate "Black nation" (really a Bantustan). So separatism has been viewed not just as unrealistic, but (correctly) as capitulation to white supremacy.

### **Reply**

I think there are a number of mistakes in the position of the comrade.

First, I visited parts of the Black Belt, particularly in Louisiana, during the 1980s and 1990s when I was working with a group of Marxist-Leninists there, mainly black but not at all nationalist. I remember that we went along the road from New Orleans to Baton Rouge (the site of one of the largest slave rebellions, in 1811. My comrades pointed out that many of the families there were direct descendents of the slaves who had worked there cutting sugar cane, but today they were working in pharmaceutical and other small industries.

It is true that at the time of the Comintern resolution, the agrarian question was at the heart of the question of the Black Nation. It is equally true that this has changed, as industry (including the service industry) is now predominant in this area. However, this is not essentially different from the situation in many oppressed countries, in particular in Latin America. The relations of production there are no longer agricultural, but are mainly dependent capitalist. But no one would claim that these countries are no longer dependent on imperialism, especially US imperialism.

There is also confusion on which are objective questions and which are subjective. Whether there is a Black Nation in the south is an objective one, not a matter of the will of even members of that nation. There is no doubt that there have been some changes in the territory of the nation, as many black people have migrated to the north, but also to major cities in the Black Belt itself (Atlanta, Birmingham, Houston, etc.) But this does not change the fact that there is still a predominantly black territory in the area. (To make another comparison, there are now more Puerto Ricans in the United States than there are in Puerto Rico, but that does not change the fact that Puerto Rico is an oppressed nation, in this case a colony, of the U.S.)

If one is a Marxist, and recognizes the existence of a nation in the Black Belt (and again this is an objective question), then one must acknowledge the **right** to self-determination of that nation. But this does not in any way mean that we have to call for secession of that nation. As Lenin pointed out, we call for the **right** to divorce but that does not mean that we think that couples should actually divorce. There is no doubt that the great majority of black people in the U.S. today want equal rights (including the right not to be killed by police), not for independence.

However, if here comes a time when the movement among people in the Black Belt becomes much advanced than in the rest of the country, the question of independence of the Black Belt could become a practical issue.

Finally, Garvey's UNIA never called for a separate Black nation in the South – they called for a movement "Back to Africa," which gave them a common base with the KKK which also wanted to get rid of Blacks from the U.S. We do not have to follow behind other nationalists such as the Nation of Islam (which incorrectly saw the question of the Black nation as meaning five states (which included areas that are not part of the nation and excluded areas that are part of the nation). We must take up this question as Marxist-Leninists, not as nationalists.

I hope this clarifies some of these questions.

## Humor and Stupidity Page

*I hope that this page will not be seen as detracting from the seriousness of this journal. Humor, and particularly satire, is one weapon in the class struggle. and if one does not know how to use all the weapons, it is harder to defeat the enemy.*

The busses and trains in New York play a recording every few minutes reminding everyone that they have to wear a mask on public transportation, which gets rather annoying. It is worse if you also know Spanish, because then you have to hear it twice as often. They could at least vary the words a little. Here is one suggestion:

*“If you see a suspicious particle or activity (such as a passenger sneezing, coughing or not wearing a mask), do not keep it to yourself. Tell an MTA employee or a police officer.”*

Also, from mid-March through August 31, most bus passengers had to enter through the rear door (so at least we didn't have to pay). There was a plastic sheet between the front section, with only the driver and elderly or disabled passengers. But this does not stop a recording, when someone rings for the bus to stop, from reminding you: “Please exit through the rear door.”

More seriously, while passengers on ordinary busses did not have to pay, for a time passengers on express busses (which have no rear door) still had to pay although the drivers had no extra protection. It must comfort the drivers to know that the MTA considered their health worthy of protection for the \$2.75 ordinary fare, but not the \$6.75 express bus fare. Now all busses have an extra sliding plastic shield, to “protect” drivers from possibly ill passengers. However, it seems that the great majority of drivers recognize that these do no good, because they do not use them.

New York City has dozens of public outdoor swimming pools, which are very convenient on hot summer days, especially for children. However, this summer the city government decided to only open five of them, “because of the pandemic.” If five pools could be opened, why not all of them?



## La economía mundial está en crisis

El pronóstico que recientemente el Fondo Monetario Internacional (FMI) lanzó para este año sobre la caída de la economía mundial, según ellos, “peor que la gran depresión”, la siguen justificando como “causa de la pandemia del Covid-19”, “pandemia” que les sigue sirviendo de gran pretexto para impedir por “razones de salud” la respuesta movilizadora y organizada de los trabajadores que no quieren la crisis sobre sus espaldas, en tanto, la oligarquía financiera quiere seguir manteniendo y reforzando por más tiempo el “confinamiento”, el “cubrebocas”, la “sana distancia” y la “Nueva Normalidad”, la reducción salarial, los despidos, el aumento de la productividad, como medidas anti-crisis para salvar sus ganancias.

Tal situación alerta a los grandes capitales del mundo a actuar con prontitud, fuerza y profundidad, para impedir que el barco se hunda, endureciendo y desarrollando nuevas medidas que impidan la reacción espontánea o planificada de los explotados.

El sistema capitalista-imperialista ya padece una grave enfermedad terminal –agotamiento, decadencia y descomposición- desde hace tiempo atrás, la “pandemia de Covid- 19” se suma y agudiza esta tendencia. Frente a este escenario, y aún con pandemia, la lucha de clases seguirá tensándose más y el orden imperialista mundial se romperá por cualquier eslabón débil de su cadena imperialista.

Según los cálculos del FMI, la economía global se reducirá un 4.9% frente al cálculo hecho del 3% en abril, de este mismo año. Esto es, que tendremos crisis económica todo el 2020, acompañada de pandemia de Covid-19. España e Italia perderán el 12.8% de su Producto Interno Bruto. América Latina tendrá “un desplome del 9.4% casi el doble” del pronóstico anterior; Argentina está en crisis, desde 2016, antes de la “pandemia” y en 2020 su PIB será de -9.9%; Brasil y México, caerán un 9.1% y un 10.5%, respectivamente. Otros países tendrán números negativos, como Canadá: -8.4%, EE.UU., y Sudáfrica: -8% y Alemania: -7.8%. Las economías de China e India, no serán negativas, pero descenderán por lo menos hasta un 3%, según pronóstico de marzo-abril de este año (S&P), los primeros meses de este año la economía de China se contrajo 6.8%. La de Rusia se redujo -8.5% en el II trimestre, según Rosstat. La India creció apenas en el primer trimestre en un 0.7%, que fue menor respecto al 0.9% del último trimestre de 2019.

Esta situación del capitalismo en su fase superior imperialista y las medidas de la “pandemia” configuran un nuevo escenario mucho más elaborado y complejo de acciones y organización de fuerzas, donde los dueños del capital buscan nuevas condiciones de acumulación de capital, desatando contradicciones en el mismo proletariado, para distraerlo y desviarlo de su objetivo de clase, de su emancipación, confrontándolo entre los que creen en el coronavirus y los que no (se está usando al mismo proletariado para rastrear a contagiados y denunciarlos), donde la vacuna aparecerá igual como una complemento al control social que se quiere. Por su parte el proletariado consciente busca develar estos objetivos y confrontarlos para derrotarlos.



## Reparación por uso de glifosato en Estados Unidos



El glifosato, desarrollado en los años 70 del siglo XX, se popularizó en la fabricación de herbicidas para el control de maleza en los cultivos. Desde esa época, se desarrollaron varios cientos de productos que, hasta hoy, se utilizan en la industria agrícola. Sin embargo, desde el año 1980, varios artículos científicos han cuestionado su uso pues el glifosato es un elemento altamente tóxico para distintos organismos, considerándose como causante de varias formas de cáncer; pese a ello, los fabricantes desconocieron la evidencia y, aún hoy, recomiendan su uso. Bayer, en su página oficial, entrega información acerca de los potenciales beneficios de su uso.

Las demandas contra el uso de glifosato no se han hecho esperar. Durante varias décadas, en diversas partes del globo, las comunidades se han pronunciado en contra de su uso, incluso ante el orden estatal. Sin embargo, el poder económico de los laboratorios farmacéuticos ha sido tan poderoso que ha financiado campañas a favor del uso de glifosato e incluso ha obligado a los gobiernos a mantener la legislación a su favor. La resistencia de los pueblos y las múltiples manifestaciones en contra de este producto químico es lo que ha mantenido a raya a este poder.

En territorios de la frontera de Ecuador - Colombia, producto de las aspersiones de glifosato en los cultivos

ilegales de coca en territorio colombiano, los cultivos tuvieron daños irreversibles al igual que la salud de miles de habitantes de la zona. El gobierno ecuatoriano, en el año 2008, interpuso una denuncia contra su par colombiano por el uso de este producto en los cultivos. Tras varias negociaciones, Colombia estableció un corredor de varios kilómetros para evitar que las fumigaciones en su territorio afectasen a los cultivos ecuatorianos, por lo cual la demanda quedó insubsistente. La lucha de los pueblos logró, asimismo, que el Tribunal de Garantías Constitucionales prohibiese el uso de glifosato, aunque no logró ninguna reparación económica para los pueblos afectados.

En el caso de los granjeros estadounidenses, plantearon una demanda colectiva contra Monsanto por el incremento de casos de cáncer en las zonas donde se empleaba este herbicida. Desde hace varias décadas existe este pleito sin resolución. Bayer, comprador del producto demandado y de los litigios pendientes de Monsanto, ha decidido pagar entre 8900 y 9600 millones de dólares en un acuerdo masivo para todos los demandantes, protegiéndose también de futuros procesos judiciales, para lo cual ha destinado 1250 millones de dólares. Este caso es relevante pues es la primera vez que se repara económi-



camente a las víctimas por el uso de este producto químico en los cultivos de consumo humano.

Este triunfo de los demandantes en Estados Unidos, abrirá una ventana de oportunidad para exigir la reparación a comunidades enteras afectadas por el uso de este elemento nocivo en América Latina.

El uso del glifosato sigue siendo muy popular en varias zonas, especialmente de grandes productores agrícolas, por su bajo costo en relación a su acción para el manejo de cultivos. Su uso permanente causa un grave perjuicio a la salud de sus trabajadores y a los habitantes de

zonas aledañas, es probable que incluso contamine fuentes de agua. La lucha de los campesinos organizados por retomar mejores prácticas de producción permitirá cuidar la tierra y la salud de los consumidores, al tiempo que derrota a las transnacionales que fabrican estos productos.

La sentencia contra el gigante farmacéutico Bayer es un reconocimiento de las malas prácticas empresariales que sus predecesoras realizaron, y se convierte en una oportunidad para alcanzar la reparación que los pueblos afectados requieren.