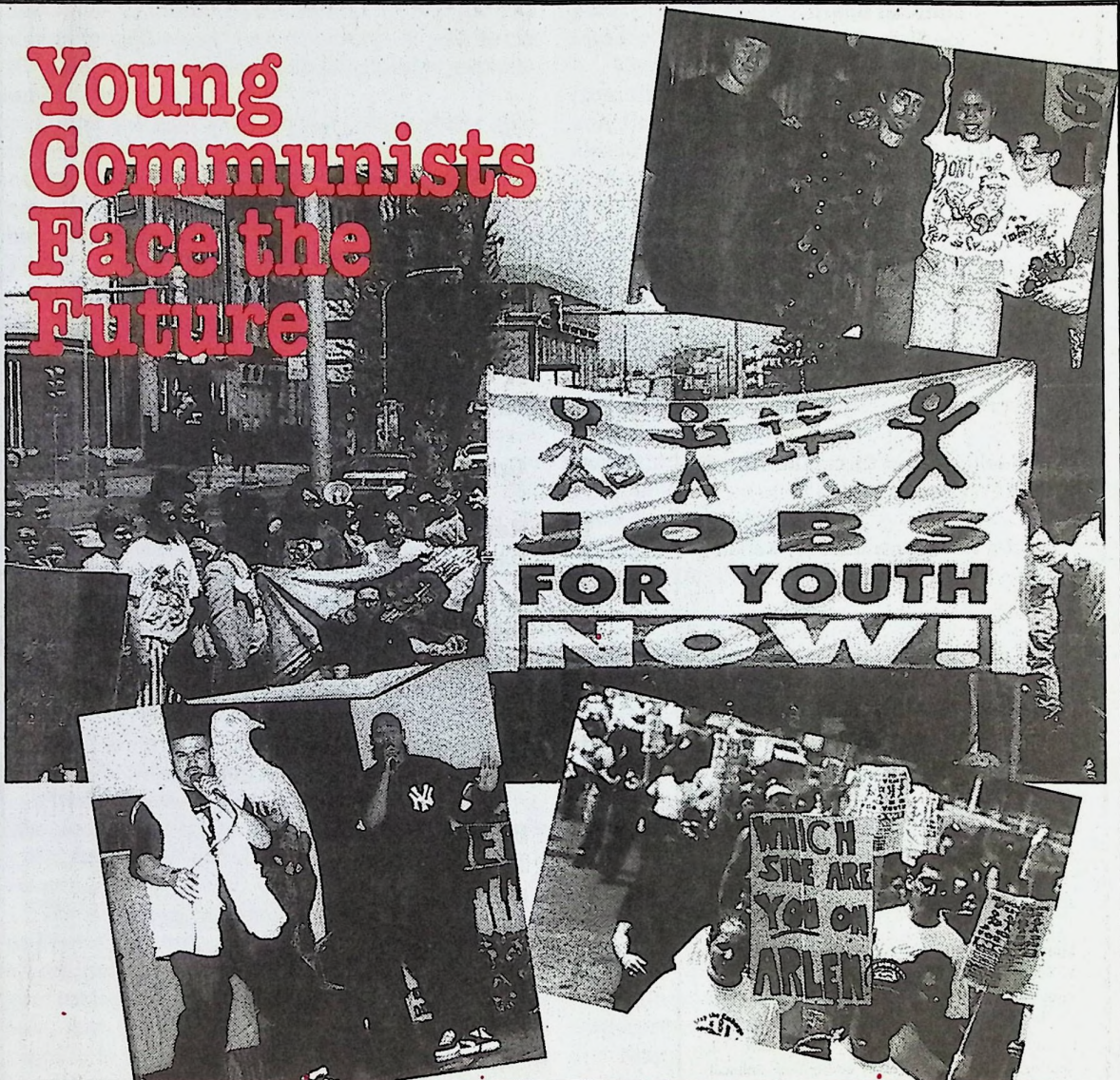


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Young Communists Face the Future



- End 100 Years of U.S. Colonial Oppression Against Puerto Rico – *Gus Hall*
- YCL 5th Convention – *Terrie Albano*

- Racism & the Youth Crisis – *David Mirtz*
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End 100 Years of U.S. Colonial Oppression Against Puerto Rico

Gus Hall

Almost a century ago Puerto Rico was annexed and forced to become a colony of U.S. imperialism and a source of immense profits for U.S. monopoly capitalism. In a few years it will be the 100th anniversary of this colonial plunder, exploitation and oppression.

Under the iron heel of insatiable, ruthless colonialism, Puerto Rico was turned into a land of poverty, unemployment and hunger. But even 100 years of corporate plunder and piracy have not been able to destroy the beauty of the land and its people. Through a century of colonialism, the Puerto Rican people have maintained their history and language and continued to develop their own cultural and political traditions.

RAVAGES OF U.S. COLONIALISM □ There is no justification – legal, moral, or otherwise – for colonial oppression. There is no possible rationale for the continued criminal ravaging of the people and resources of Puerto Rico. As the anniversary of the colonial annexation approaches, the issue of independence for Puerto Rico demands attention.

Puerto Rico is a colony of U.S. imperialism in a very special sense. The three and a half million people in Puerto Rico and the two and a half million Puerto Ricans in the United States are victims of a special kind of oppression, whether living in Puerto Rico, migrating to the United States or moving back and forth between them.

Puerto Ricans in the United States are working-class people, exploited as workers and at the same time victims of a special system of racism and chauvinism.

The same U.S. corporations oppress and exploit the Puerto Rican people in both countries. And it is the colonial conditions in Puerto Rico, which have been molded to benefit U.S. corporate operations there, that over decades have forced the people to emigrate in search of a better life to the barrios and slums of the United States.

The widespread poverty and unemployment

and terrible slums in Puerto Rico are the conditions that make it a special reservoir from which U.S. corporations draw a low-wage, non-union labor force into the United States.

The same U.S. corporations reap extra profits from the oppression of Puerto Ricans in Puerto Rico and Puerto Ricans in the United States. These are also the same corporations that reap profits from the exploitation of all the workers in the United States; the same corporations that wield the divisive weapons of racism and chauvinism to extract superprofits from the super-exploitation of the racially and nationally oppressed.

In New York and San Juan the system of exploitation and oppression and the conditions of life for the Puerto Rican people are rooted in the system of U.S. monopoly capitalism. In San Juan and New York, the sole purpose of the oppression and inequality of Puerto Rican workers is superprofits for the U.S. multinational corporations. In both, these corporate superprofits are derived from lower wages, production speedup, terrible working conditions, no job security and few, if any, benefits.

LIFE IN THE U.S. □ In the United States about 20 percent of Puerto Rican workers are unemployed. Many are in the ranks of the homeless and hungry. For those working, many are in the new and growing system of part-time, contingent workers. These are workers who are hired by big corporations at minimum wage levels, without sick or overtime pay, without paid vacations. The majority have no health care coverage and work under abominable conditions. They are victims of discrimination in hiring, training and promotion.

In many ways, this new contingent workforce – which is inching up to 50 percent of the total U.S. workforce – is becoming a “slave” labor pool for superprofit-hungry corporations.

Many Puerto Rican people are working in the fields and in sweatshop jobs under conditions that were supposedly outlawed and abolished years ago. In other words, poverty is so severe that Puerto Rican workers are forced to take part-time, minimum wage and sweatshop jobs – when they can get

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them. For the great majority, life means downward mobility, with very little hope that things will get better or that their children will live better than they do. The Reagan-Bush years of transferring wealth from the working class to the rich and slashing spending for social programs hit the already impoverished Puerto Rican community hard.

For Puerto Rican families in the United States words like poverty and inequality describe the everyday conditions of their lives. Statistics like "41 percent living below the poverty line" and "40 percent earning \$10,000 a year or less" mean deprivation. The fact that 43 percent of Puerto Rican families are headed by women, and that two thirds of these families are in poverty, means that Puerto Rican children are the poorest in the United States.

Translated in human terms; these facts and statistics mean high infant mortality rates, empty bellies, poor prenatal care, treatable diseases going untreated, smaller paychecks, cold water, run-down and crowded apartments in the crime and drug-ridden segregated barrios of the inner cities.

This means wearing hand-me-down clothes. It means insecurity about the future. It means going to the worst schools, with the highest dropout rates, attacks on bilingual education and Puerto Rican studies, and the insult and menace of "English only" campaigns, racist curricula and books. And it means living with the constant danger of police brutality and a judicial system saturated with chauvinism and injustice.

THE POISON OF RACISM ■ Racism is a poison that attacks the language, culture and traditions of the Puerto Rican people. Racist ideology distorts Puerto Rican history. Racism means having to face the everyday slurs and stings of insults, stereotyping and chauvinism – blatant and subtle, conscious and unconscious. We get poisonous doses of anti-Puerto Rican "humor" from the media, entertainment and communication outlets, and at the same time there are almost no positive roles for Puerto Ricans in television or film.

While the chauvinism expressed against Puerto Ricans has its roots in the overall racism in the United States, it has some particular anti-Puerto Rican expressions which have developed in the context of the colonial oppression of Puerto Rico.

In the areas of employment, housing, education, health care and culture, Puerto Ricans are discriminated against in special ways. Puerto Ricans are dis-

criminated against because of race and because of cultural and language differences. Puerto Rican workers experience anti-Latino and anti-immigrant discrimination, even though Puerto Ricans are, of course, citizens.

Puerto Rican women, in Puerto Rico and in the U.S., have been subjected to the widespread abuse of sterilization as a method of birth control. Neighborhoods that are predominantly Puerto Rican are some of the most under-served by city agencies. And Puerto Ricans remain greatly under-represented in the political arena.

The time has come to end all forms of chauvinism and inequality against Puerto Rican people in the United States.

STRUGGLE FOR PUERTO RICAN EQUALITY ■ Puerto Ricans helped put an end to the Reagan/Bush years through their votes for the Clinton-Gore ticket. This vote represented the desire for real change, for a reversal of the policies of attacks on social programs, on workers and their families, on civil rights.

But for this great majority of Puerto Ricans who voted for the Clinton-Gore promises of jobs, health care and lower taxes, the current direction of the Clinton Administration does not hold much hope. There is growing awareness in the Puerto Rican and other Latino communities of the need to pressure the Administration to make good on its promises: to implement a jobs program; raise the minimum wage; expand affirmative action and civil rights; reject English Only (Clinton and Gore come from English Only states), build affordable housing, solve the health care crisis, etc.

Some of the positive developments which will help raise the participation of the Puerto Rican community in the fight for jobs and justice include the elections of Nydia Velazquez, the first Puerto Rican woman elected to the U.S. Congress, and Luis Gutierrez, the first Puerto Rican Congressman from the state of Illinois, as well as the growth in size and activism of the Hispanic Congressional Caucus, and the formation of a Latino chapter of the NAACP in New York.

Through their unions and community organizations, in unity with African Americans and other racially and nationally oppressed people, Puerto Ricans are part of the growing people's movements for a better life for themselves and their families.

LIFE IN PUERTO RICO ■ Colonialism is more than a word for the people of Puerto Rico. It means an average income of \$6,200 – less than one-half that of Mississippi, the poorest state. For 65 percent of the people, colonialism means that they cannot survive without food stamps and other forms of federal assistance.

But for the big U.S. corporations operating in Puerto Rico, colonialism means getting away with racist murder. It means paying workers much lower wages than in the United States. It means getting away with spending nothing on job safety, health care and other hard-won union benefits. It means taking advantage of lax occupational health and safety regulations and environmental protection.

For years U.S. corporations have moved to Puerto Rico because they were able to operate tax-free, paying wages below one-half of U.S. wages. Most of these big corporations pay no Puerto Rican taxes, and, because of an amendment to the U.S. tax code made in 1976 (Section 936), they pay little or no U.S. taxes. There is talk of changing that amendment, but the corporations and their spokesmen defend it with a club that is familiar to U.S. workers – arguing that if 936 is repealed it will hurt Puerto Rican workers because the companies will leave Puerto Rico.

But the fact is that it is these corporate giants themselves which have created the widespread poverty in Puerto Rico. Unemployment is officially at a disastrous 18 percent. Like thieves, the U.S. monopoly corporations make a fast profit and leave. Nothing is left in Puerto Rico. In 1987 the drug manufacturers, the main beneficiaries of Section 936, received annual tax benefits worth about \$70,000 per employee – for jobs paying about \$26,000 average. There is very little capital accumulation, and the values produced by the workers are shipped out of the country – either as profit, at rates of 30 percent, or as exports to other lands.

The multinationals put nothing back into the Puerto Rican economy. The result is underdevelopment. The profits of colonial corporations are in the \$10 billion dollar range every year.

ALL-SIDED U.S. DOMINATION ■ U.S. colonial domination of Puerto Rico is many-sided or, more accurately, all-sided.

The most obvious example of the oppressive, unequal colonial status of Puerto Rico is the fact that its 3.7 million people, although they are citizens and serve in the U.S. military, cannot vote for president

and have no voting representative in the U.S. Congress.

U.S. corporations operating factories in Puerto Rico dominate the whole economy there. U.S. banks dominate the finances.

The U.S. military also dominates Puerto Rico, with thirteen percent of all the land under its control. The Pentagon has turned Puerto Rico into an imperialist fort and launching area for the intervention forces into Guatemala, Grenada and Santo Domingo and a base of operations for dirty tricks against Cuba. Puerto Rico houses the base for the nuclear strike force poised to hit any area in the Americas. It is one of the largest military bases outside the U.S. With all the talk about the need to close military bases there is not a word about closing the bases in Puerto Rico.

The people of the island of Vieques, two-thirds of which has been taken by the Navy for target practice and ammunition storage, want the Navy out. And although closing this base would not create the problem of job loss of other such closures, there is not a word about returning Vieques to its rightful owners.

The U.S. Supreme Court dominates the Puerto Rican legal system, which means that it is authorized to review and revoke decisions of the Puerto Rican Supreme Court.

The U.S. Congress controls the Puerto Rican political and legislative systems, as well as all social services. The U.S. Congress exercises exclusive jurisdiction over Puerto Rican commerce, transportation, communications, military and judicial systems. This means, among other things, that all laws passed by the Puerto Rican legislature are subject to the approval or disapproval of the U.S. Congress. The United States exercises supreme control over the foreign affairs and foreign relations of Puerto Rico.

U.S. laws that would benefit people in any way do not apply in Puerto Rico. Laws that benefit big business – like tax exemptions and loopholes – apply, but occupational health and safety laws do not apply or are ignored. Social security laws have special escape clauses for Puerto Rico; there are caps on spending for social programs, regardless of need.

The trade union movement in Puerto Rico faces severe repression, especially attempts to unionize in the private sector.

It is in the best interests of U.S. workers to work with the trade unions of Puerto Rico. It is in the interests of the entire U.S. working class to work for

Black-Brown-white unity.

The same monopoly corporations which make billions in Puerto Rico while the people live in poverty are also making record profits in the U.S. while the standard of living of U.S. workers has declined. The same monopoly corporations which in the U.S. oppose unionization, workplace health and safety regulations and civil rights and affirmative action are operating in Puerto Rico, where workers have even fewer rights.

The threat made by U.S. corporations – that if Section 936 is revoked they will pull out and jobs will be lost – is the same threat made by the steel corporations in demanding outrageous concessions from U.S. steelworkers, and the same threat made by companies demanding tax abatements from U.S. cities.

It is in the interests of Puerto Rican and U.S. workers to forge unity – for example, on critical, common interest issues such as the North American Free Trade Agreement. We must show that NAFTA will mean further reduction of wages and living standards for the workers, including in Puerto Rico.

It is in the interests of U.S. youth to work with the youth of Puerto Rico against U.S. military and corporate domination.

The FBI also plays a despicable colonialist role, illegally tapping telephones and searching homes of pro-independence activists termed "terrorists," as a cover for monitoring and harassing the political movements in Puerto Rico and among Puerto Ricans in the United States.

THE RIGHT TO INDEPENDENCE ■ For years there has been talk and debate about Puerto Rico's status: commonwealth, statehood or independence? The U.S. ruling class and corporate imperialist interests do not mind as long as it remains just talk. They do not mind as long as the colonial status of Puerto Rico is not disturbed. What they will not permit is any action that moves in the direction of giving the people of Puerto Rico the right to self-determination, the right to decide what they want the future of Puerto Rico to be.

The people of Puerto Rico cannot freely and fairly determine their country's status and future if the process is controlled by the colonial power, the United States. The discussion about what a change in Puerto Rico's status would mean for the people there has been manipulated by U.S. corporate interests, who are interested in maintaining as much of

the status quo – which greatly benefits them – as possible.

Puerto Rico has been kept a colony because of the vast profits that U.S. corporations have made there over decades. This wholesale corporate looting must end.

There is only one path to end all forms of colonialism – that is to put an end to racism and chauvinism, to end all forms of inequality and oppression. In Puerto Rico, the path to end colonialism is to revoke all forms of special rights and privileges of U.S. corporations and to remove all U.S. military forces who have been occupying Puerto Rico for almost 100 years.

The way to end this lingering example of the evil of colonialism is for Puerto Rico to finally gain its long-denied independence as a nation. The Puerto Rican people will only be free to choose that path of liberation when the conditions for a truly democratic decision about their country's status are created. This will mean, among other things, a plan for economic restitution for the century of pillage and special measures to allow Puerto Rico to develop its own economy.

The time has come to end all the empty demagogic talk and give the people of Puerto Rico their inherent right to self-determination and independence.

SOCIALISM IS THE ULTIMATE SOLUTION ■ The Puerto Rican people in the United States, together with the African American, Mexican American, Asian and American Indian peoples make up the 70 million victims of racism, special oppression and super-exploitation. Thus, the struggle against racism and chauvinism toward Puerto Ricans is a part of the struggle to end all forms of racism and chauvinism.

The struggle against racist ideology and racist practices is a necessary ingredient for working-class unity. Working-class unity and a strong, militant trade union movement are indispensable for winning a better life. The struggle against racism and chauvinism is a struggle against the same corporations that exploit the workers of the United States.

A country that claims to stand for democracy cannot justify colonialism, and whether it is called a "commonwealth" or "protectorate," Puerto Rico is a colony of U.S. imperialism. The struggle for freedom

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A Class Convention: The YCL Fights for the Future

Terrie Albano

The Young Communist League's 5th National Convention, held May Day weekend at Temple University in Philadelphia, marked the organization's 10-year refounding anniversary and was the culmination of two years of building and rebuilding.

The event holds important lessons for the Communist movement and illustrates exciting possibilities for initiative, growth and victories. In large measure, the success of the YCL Convention was the result of a turn in YCL policy, reflected in a greater focus on organizing around the economic crisis. The fruit of this work among homeless and unemployed youth was evident throughout the weekend. This article will attempt to summarize and convey the significance of the Convention and its political lessons.

This was the first YCL convention to take place during the world Communist and working-class regrouping process that rejected right opportunism after the collapse of socialism in the USSR and Eastern Europe. An important part of this process was the 25th National Convention of the Communist Party, USA. Indeed, the success of the CPUSA convention was no less than critical to the survival of the YCL. Had the social democratic faction won at the Cleveland Convention, the League might not even exist today – the original YCL was the first victim of liquidation during the reformist Browder days.

This was also the first YCL convention to take place without Reagan or Bush in office. It should be remembered that the YCL was refounded in 1983 at the height of the anti-labor ultra-right Reagan presidency that was characterized by vicious union-busting at home and cold war attacks on the Soviet Union as the "evil empire" abroad. The YCL's cadre and outlook were formed in the struggle against Reaganism and developed as part of the broad, all-people's anti-Reagan front.

This convention was also the first to occur since the change in political atmosphere brought about by the defeat of the Reagan-Bush policies at the polls.

Therefore, the development of tactics in response to the people's expectations and illusions had to be considered in a new way.

Indeed, this moment presents the young generation, the working class, the YCL and the Communist Party with some important challenges and great opportunities to advance the struggle for economic, political and social justice. The end of twelve years of ultra-right reaction of successive Reagan and Bush administrations with the election of Democratic Party candidate Bill Clinton has raised many people's expectations for progressive change. It has raised illusions as well as to what the new administration can and is willing to do to fulfill these expectations.

For example, many youth and student organizations for the first time in twelve years have been "given" a seat at the presidential table. This has, unfortunately, influenced their willingness to struggle in a negative way. Many have felt that coming out too strongly against the President's programs would jeopardize their "seat." As a result, mass demonstrations on the pressing youth issues of jobs, education and equality have not been called.

The Convention took place during the deepest economic crisis since the 1930s. In the midst of this crisis, corporate profit orgies have greatly intensified youth unemployment. Not only has youth joblessness continued to worsen but also the new feature of the economic crisis – the rapid growth of part-time and temporary employment – has had a special impact on young workers.

The inadequacy of the minimum wage also affects the youth's standard of living, since young people are overwhelmingly relegated to minimum and sub-minimum wage jobs. And on top of all this, the ruling class drive for maximum corporate profits by means of plant closings and union busting has greatly worsened generational unemployment which has been a feature of the youth crisis for some time.

This crisis of unemployment among youth is so great that even the bourgeois media has been forced to recognize it – it cannot be fully covered up. A

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recent study done in New York City and reported in the *New York Times* puts teenage unemployment at "double that of two years ago and the worst in the 25 years that records have been kept." The YCL convention had to grapple with the fact that this crisis of the young generation is the single most important factor shaping today's youth and that it must be addressed, not just by descriptions but with a program of action.

The severity of the crisis has propelled the YCL to step up its work on the basic economic issues and organize the victims of the crisis. In this regard, the YCL needed to fully implement the decisions made at its 4th Convention to add on to its campus concentration policy by focusing on working-class youth in the neighborhoods.

PRE-CONVENTION PERIOD ■ The pre-convention action and discussion period was geared towards making a turn in our work on the economic crisis. To accomplish this objective the League held a number of activities including a leadership retreat, a special meeting of the National Council, and classes on the economic crisis and the fight for jobs.

Probably the most important part of the pre-convention period was the League's initiation of the Jobs for Youth Campaign. This campaign was launched by circulating a petition calling on President Clinton and the Congress to tax the rich and corporations and slash the military budget and create jobs by rebuilding the cities. The petition demanded that these jobs be unionized and contain strong affirmative action guidelines. Unemployment compensation for first-time job seekers – a right in many European countries – is also called for.

This petition and the strategy developed around it (to target ten congressional districts, collect 1,000 signatures in each, and visit the congressional representative about introducing the legislation into Congress), helped turn the pre-convention period into a period of action on basic economic struggles. This campaign provided a basis for going to groups of young people and talking with them about what the YCL is doing and discussing how to work together. It helped in recruiting over 100 new members in the four months of pre-convention building, discussions and action.

When YCLers got out into the streets and collected signatures they met with a great reception. Numerous times young people would say, "Yeah, I need a job. If there were jobs you wouldn't have so

many people forced to deal drugs." Thus, the issue of jobs was the key to talking to people on the street and door-to-door. Youth as well as older people instantly responded to the message of "Jobs for Youth Now!"

BOLD, BOLDER, AND EVEN BOLDER ■ The challenge to be bold and public is very important for the YCL. The present moment – with the decline in anti-Communism and the cracking of the anti-Communist big lie pillar that Communists are agents of the Soviet Union – challenges the Communist movement to be bold, bolder and even bolder with our initiatives and public presence.

But the reality is that in work among young people and in League building, that was always the case. One has to be bold and public to attract youth. In this period public boldness has to be doubled.

YCL clubs have worked on a new level of boldness. This was reflected in the Convention discussions and the work leading up to the Convention. Below are some examples of work in different areas.

The host club of Philadelphia set the pace with their initiatives and an unreserved approach to YCL building. For example, the City Council was going to vote on a civilian review board to oversee the Philadelphia police department. While there were some problems with the bill, it was seen as a step forward.

When the club found out that the City Council did not have enough votes to pass the legislation it began a postcard campaign targeting a council member who had not taken a public position. The comrades collected and sent hundreds of cards addressed to this council member. Even after receiving the cards she didn't come out publicly for the civilian review board. So the club organized people to discuss the issue with her. A few days later, the council member publicly stated her support for the review board.

Since the time of the Convention, the Philadelphia City Council passed the civilian review board legislation, only to have the mayor veto it. The City Council responded to the veto by overriding it. As a result, Philadelphia now has a civilian review board. The YCL made a significant contribution to this important victory.

During this work they met a number of activists and leaders of other organizations. This laid a basis to talk to them about the Convention and the "March for our Future" which took place during the

Convention weekend. Some community leaders came and greeted the Convention, like Tyrone Reed from the Committee for a Better North Philadelphia. This helped to strengthen working relations and unity with local grassroots organizations.

Organizing for the Convention gave the YCL clubs an opportunity to meet with many organizations that they previously didn't have any relations with. In a meeting with Aspira of Philadelphia – an educational and cultural club for Latino youth organized mostly in high schools – the organizer held up the convention brochure and said to the membership, "This is just what we are looking for: jobs, education, equality and socialism."

Comrades went to the high schools and spoke to classes. This was the way the YCL met Louis Thomas, a high school student and winner of the citywide oratory competition on the theme, "Without struggle there is no progress." Thomas is also a founder of African American Youth for Empowerment. He came to the Convention and delivered his speech which was received quite enthusiastically.

The Philadelphia YCL combined boldness, creativity and hard work in their outreach for the Convention. And in return their coalition work is now on a new and higher level. They have recruited and have the opportunity to start a whole new club at a university in Philadelphia.

The experience in Philadelphia and elsewhere leads us to believe that while the "socialism is dead" attack by the ruling class has had an impact on some young people, the majority of working-class youth and grassroots activists have not been influenced negatively. Many national and local organizations and individuals contacted through the course of organizing for the Convention expressed many times, in many ways, their respect for the YCL, the Party and our ideas.

Many areas where there have been functioning clubs and members for a period of time made a conscious turn in their work. In New York, for example, the YCL and the Party ran David Mirtz, a YCL leader, for public office on the Tax the Rich line. This campaign reached thousands of voters in the hard-hit communities of Washington Heights and Harlem. The YCL followed up this campaign with the Jobs for Youth petition drive in the housing projects where the campaign had one of its concentration areas.

The Los Angeles and San Francisco clubs bounded back from the factional struggle with

many new members. The L.A. club has been involved in initiating a student march against education budget cuts, where over 1,000 students participated including the victorious UCLA students. A YCL representative spoke at this march and was very well received.

The San Francisco club initiated a forum on solidarity in the Americas, looking specifically at solidarity with Cuba and El Salvador. Over 100 students attended this forum and laid the basis for building the YCL at a local community college.

In both L.A. and San Francisco, the YCL participated in Party-sponsored public mass meetings, which were all important successes.

Even at Brown University – a bastion of ruling class education – the YCL club there initiated two important struggles. The first was on the issue of preserving and increasing financial aid, in which a large, multi-racial coalition emerged. This struggle made national news when over 200 students were arrested for taking over a university office. The second struggle focused on work-study students and solidarity with the college unions. Both initiatives are very important, especially for a club at an elite institution like Brown. It shows that no matter where the YCL is we will seek to find the working-class, bread and butter issues and initiate struggles around them.

NEW CLUBS ■ Building for the Convention also helped establish new clubs. There are several areas where six months before the Convention, a League organization didn't exist. The organizing drive made the difference. These experiences indicate the possibilities for the YCL to grow into a large, mass organization very rapidly.

For example, only a few months before the Convention the state of Connecticut did not have a YCL. The Communist Party decided, along with the national YCL, to make building for the Convention a political priority. Resources, time and cadre were allocated. By the time of the Convention the YCL statewide organization had over two dozen members. National YCL leaders made two visits to Connecticut during that time for the purpose of recruitment and consolidation.

Who are these new recruits? Most are African American and Puerto Rican youth, high school students, working-class unemployed and homeless youth. How were they met? Mainly through the work of the Party in the homeless movement.

Friends, contacts, and sons and daughters of Party members were also an important source of recruitment.

The YCL club in New Haven was very active leading up to the Convention. Helping to set the pace nationally on the Jobs for Youth Campaign, they collected 1,600 signatures on the Jobs for Youth and Tax the Rich petitions. Club members testified at various hearings against shelter closings, tabled at a Black Expo fair and attended classes on Marxism offered at New Haven's People's Center. Many new YCLers were met initially at this center. A public meeting was organized there called "Youth say it's about jobs. Come hear what the Young Communist League has to say." People came and that's how the YCL got introduced in New Haven.

Since the Convention many members participated in a Tent City on the Green in New Haven. This Tent City was erected to protest inhuman cuts in the city's shelters. The protesters won 78 beds back from the ruthless axe of city hackers.

Many of the homeless and formerly homeless youth who joined are also active in an organization called We the People. This organization, founded over a year ago, is made up of homeless and formerly homeless people. They recently opened a drop-in center on the first floor of the People's Center.

Another area where the YCL has grown rapidly is Casa Grande, Arizona. This club has grown to a couple dozen members in less than six months. The club chair has boldly held meetings outside in a local park, attracting young people hanging out.

The composition of the club is overwhelmingly working-class and multi-racial: Black, Brown and white, with a large number of Chicano youth.

This club has focused on trying to unionize a local Wal Mart store, where many young people work, including members and friends of the YCL. They have also collected signatures calling for a federal civil rights trial in response to the racist murder of a Mexican national committed by a border agent who was acquitted of criminal charges.

The club raised over \$500, through car washes and other activities, to help cover costs in coming to the Convention. The help of the district organizer, Lorenzo Torrez, who drove a van full of delegates for two and a half days, enabled these new members to get to the Convention.

San Antonio, Texas is another area where an active and growing club just blossomed by being at the right place at the right time. In San Antonio

there was a big struggle against a curfew law. The law fines teenagers, 16 years and under, and their parents, up to \$500 if caught out after midnight. When this law was passed it was used mostly to harass Chicano and African American youth.

A multi-racial movement of young people grew in opposition to this law and formed a group called Students United for Justice. One of the prominent leaders of this group was called by a Communist Party comrade who had met him through other social justice coalition work. The Party comrade asked him if he would be interested in organizing the San Antonio leg of a Texas speaking trip for a YCL leader. This youth leader, surprised to find out there was a YCL, readily agreed and organized a big public meeting at a housing project sponsored by the tenants' association. He also joined the YCL.

After this trip, the San Antonio club grew, mainly from activists in the anti-curfew struggle. They began to circulate the Jobs for Youth petition and two members came to the YCL national school in January. This club, like the others, is predominantly working-class and multi-racial.

OPENING THE CONVENTION ■ The Convention's main slogan was, "Fight for the future – jobs, education, equality and socialism." The 135 registered delegates and guests met in a convention hall framed by beautifully painted banners. These banners reflected the wide range of YCL activity and read: "Build unity, fight racism," "Hands off Cuba," "Socialism is our future – YCL is our organization," "End apartheid – in memory of Chris Hani," "Don't mourn, organize," "Jobs for youth now," and "Stop the budget cuts." There were also many other colorful club banners, like the one from the Arizona YCL which in black and red featured a rising phoenix.

The Convention opening ceremony paid special tribute to working-class leaders who had recently died. Tribute was paid to the general secretary of the South African Communist Party, Chris Hani, who was murdered by the apartheid regime. The Convention also recognized the untimely deaths of ANC leader Oliver Tambo and the founder of United Farmworkers, César Chávez. The League pledged to redouble its efforts to carry on the historic legacy of these working-class heroes.

The delegates and guests gathered at the Convention reflected both what is new among young people and in the YCL. This newness was reflected in the fact that slightly over half of those who

attended were not members at the beginning of the weekend. Of the members in attendance, one half had been YCLers for less than a year.

This illustrates that the Convention, in a manner of speaking, gave birth to a whole new organization. Many who were considered "veterans" YCLers were members for only one or two years.

The large number of working-class youth in attendance was a breakthrough. Almost half of the Convention was young workers, employed, unemployed and homeless. Many of these delegates and guests came as a direct result of the work done around the youth jobs campaign.

One of the striking characteristics of the Convention was its multi-racial composition. Forty-seven percent of the delegates and guests were racially and nationally oppressed, half of whom were African American. Puerto Ricans and Chicano/Mexican Americans were also well represented. The YCL's program on the economic crisis and principled commitment to the struggle against racism and for multi-racial unity was a magnetic force in attracting these youth.

The average age of convention participants was 21. High school students made up a quarter of those present, reflecting the increase in political struggle among this section of young people.

One half of the Convention was composed of young women. This will allow the League in the future to improve its female composition in any unbalanced collective. Twenty-two states were represented, illustrating that the YCL is indeed a national organization with clubs and friends across the country.

CLASS, RACE, AND CORPORATE PROFITS ■ The class and racial composition of the Convention is significant because it shows the League can recruit large numbers of working-class, African American, Puerto Rican, Chicano and other racially and nationally oppressed youth. The primary reason for this is the work done responding to the economic crisis and organizing its victims.

However, it should be pointed out that the YCL brought something special to this struggle without which this recruitment would not have been possible. For example, in the Jobs for Youth Campaign, not only did young Communists correctly describe the crisis, but they also showed solutions, a fighting program, a way out. Young Communists had solutions because through the scientific outlook of Marx-

ism-Leninism they knew where the money has to come from to fund the solutions – from the corporate profits of the rich. Young people respond because Communists consistently show that the rich and the corporations have stolen money and resources rightfully due working-class people – including youth.

Corporate robbery points to the most basic flaw of capitalism. There is much popular sentiment among young people that something is wrong with the system. This was evident especially after the racist acquittal of four policemen in the beating of Rodney King.

Youth respond to the YCL because it verifies and deepens their feelings that something is wrong with the system – by exposing the system of monopoly capitalism and its drive for maximum profit. Thus young people are joining because not only does the YCL fight for short-term remedies, but also because it understands capitalism's most basic systemic contradiction, and fights for the long-term solution: socialism.

The Convention's politics focused on the economic crisis in its many aspects. Workshops were held with the following titles: Youth say it's about jobs; Fulfill the dream: The fight against racism and for equality; Education is a right; Stop the drugs, violence and police brutality; The struggle for women's equality; Ending homelessness; The fight against imperialism; The role of the YCL; Sports, profits and racism; End discrimination based on sexual orientation; Culture and the MTV generation; Rights of high school students; and more.

As was the case with the issues of the fight for jobs and the struggle against racism, the issue of education received a lot of attention. A special statement on Clinton's National Service plan was written and printed leading up to the Convention.

Many of the youth and student organizations who sent representatives came specifically to discuss education. They also co-led the workshop on this subject. This included representation from the United States Student Association (USSA), the largest and oldest student organization in the U.S., with three million members; the Student Action Union, a national student and youth organization formed at a conference a few years ago at Rutgers University.

Indeed, to deal adequately with youth issues in the economic crisis, one must address the problem of education. Most national youth and student orga-

nizations focus on this issue.

There is a sharp attack on public and higher education for working-class youth. As one leader from the Philadelphia YCL put it, "City kids watch schools fall down, they watch it rain inside the school buildings, and they can't take off their coats. Then you see suburban kids get everything." This same YCLer helped initiate a campaign against budget cuts that would totally eliminate all extra-curricular activities in Philadelphia.

CLASS STRUGGLE CONVENTION ■ The class struggle was central to the Convention. Trade union leaders from Philadelphia greeted and addressed the Convention. A steelworker and elected trade union leader from Ohio gave a rousing speech calling on the YCL and the young generation to "meet the challenges history has put before us, like the youth of the '30s." He challenged young people to build the movement of unemployed and homeless and to build the trade union movement. His speech was met with a standing ovation.

The biggest contribution to putting the class struggle front-and-center was the participation of a large number of striking workers from near Philadelphia. This was the first time that a strike participated in a YCL convention since its re-founding. Their story was a deep learning experience for many of the delegates and guests – an experience in class struggle, solidarity, unity, the fight against racism and the importance of trade unions. A whole plenary session was devoted to listening to the workers talk about their struggle. Delegates asked questions and discussed what young people can do to lend support to the strike.

These experiences help to win the young generation's hearts and minds to the working class, trade unions and the class struggle. One of the tasks set before the YCL by Gus Hall, chairperson of the CPUSA, at its founding convention, was to "mold the thinking and fighting qualities of the young generation." This convention went a long way in molding these qualities along class struggle lines.

MARCH FOR OUR FUTURE ■ Another significant part of the Convention was a demonstration and rally entitled, "March for Our Future," initiated by the YCL and co-sponsored by a host of local organizations. Endorsers included: City Council members David Cohen and Angel Ortiz; Jeff Brown, president, Local 1971, District Council 33 AFSCME; Carol

Rosenblatt, president, Local 2187, District Council 47, AFSCME; Aspira of Philadelphia; Jobs with Peace; African American Youth for Empowerment; the Eastern Pennsylvania District, Communist Party, USA; Church and World Institute; Committee for a Better North Philadelphia; Church of the Advocate; and the Community Labor Forum. The march raised the issues of jobs for youth, saving the schools, stopping budget cuts and an end to racism, and police brutality. Solidarity with the striking workers was also a part of the march.

The marchers went from Temple University through a large shopping area and into a section of the economically devastated North Philadelphia. Copies of the *People's Weekly World* – newspaper of the Communist Party – and *Dynamic* – the magazine of the YCL – as well as leaflets were passed out, and signatures were gathered on petitions along the way.

The marchers carried beautifully made signs and banners projecting the demonstration's main slogans: End police brutality, civilian control now! Jobs for youth now! Education is a right! Tax the rich! Stop the budget cuts! Specter [Pennsylvania Senator] is anti-worker and anti-youth! Health care for all! Stop racism! Support the strike! The most popular chant was after a popular rap song: "Hey, Ho, unemployment's got to go!"

It was a beautiful sight to see the two hundred marchers in formation, four across, extending for three blocks. The YCLers who volunteered as marshals showed the experience and poise of veterans of mass actions.

The march put the YCL and the Convention out onto the streets in a bold and public way. Indeed, action is a key component to the YCL. For the Convention to put mass action like the march in the program was very significant. It was the first march at a convention since the organization's founding in 1983.

GREETINGS ■ Greetings given by local and national organizations and leaders were warm messages of solidarity voicing appreciation for the League's work. All had a similar thread which wove them together, that the YCL was not alone, that others are willing and glad to work with us.

For example, Cecil Gray, the Director of the Church and World Institute of Temple University, said, "We appreciate your work. Young people make the difference. Now is the time to risk. Now is

the time to test, to push the limits. We are glad your convention is taking place at Temple." The Church and World Institute also gave housing space – free of charge – to all the overflow delegates and guests from the dormitories.

Carol Rosenblatt, president of AFSCME Local 2187, greeted the Convention and told about the current labor and community struggles taking place in Philadelphia against Mayor Rendell's budget cuts and moves toward privatization. She spoke about Workers Memorial Day and the importance of health and safety laws for young workers, indicating that in the last year 150 young people died in work-related accidents. She appealed to the youth to help and get involved in the labor movement, and wished the Convention well.

Stacey Shears, representing USSA, said, "Like the YCL, USSA is committed to multi-racial coalition building. And I would like to commend the YCL on this great work."

Tyrone Reed, Director of the Committee for a Better North Philadelphia, said, "Thank you for being here and coming to North Philly. This is a place where things are happening. A lot is going on, not only in this room but in rooms all over. You are not by yourselves – a lot of people are mad and are 'not gonna take this no more.'"

CULTURE ▣ The Convention combined politics with culture. For young people music is just as important in mobilizing, educating and inspiring as speeches and discussions. Many guests and delegates performed throughout the weekend at the Friday night coffeehouse and the Saturday evening concert called "Internationalism Lives."

Probably the highlight and most exciting part of the cultural performances was the up-and-coming rap group called "Latin Empire." These two talented artists from the South Bronx rap in Spanish and English and "Spanglish." Many a time throughout the weekend they had everyone up on their feet and moving. The event inspired them so much, they wrote a new rap song talking about the issues at the Convention. Each verse ends with, "YCL, give 'em hell," the League's official chant.

The Friday night coffeehouse also provided a forum for the many talented poets.

Special tribute was paid to the work of John Bachtell and Joe Sims, two former leaders, and to Sarah Milgram, a founder of the YCL of the 1930s in Philadelphia.

The Saturday night concert, on the theme of international solidarity, was the forum for the international guests to speak. Internationalism and anti-imperialism were important issues throughout the convention weekend.

INTERNATIONAL DELEGATES ▣ Guests came from fraternal organizations in Norway, Panama, Denmark, South Africa (ANC youth section) and Canada. The youth representatives from Mexico were denied visas by the State Department. The Cuban young Communists sent greetings but could not send a representative due to the emergency caused by the hurricane.

For the comrades from Norway, Denmark and Panama it was the first time their organizations sent representatives to a YCL convention. They represented the new leadership which has come forward worldwide after the turbulent last two years of setbacks and struggles against opportunism.

The international guests and the many greetings received added an important dimension to the 5th Convention. It showed that the world movement is regrouping and moving ahead. It added internationalist and anti-imperialist breadth to the Convention.

Internationalism is very important for the YCL. League clubs have been active over the years on international solidarity and anti-imperialist work. From mobilizing against the Gulf War, to continuing to keep the pressure on racist apartheid South Africa, to struggling to break down the U.S. imposed embargo against socialist Cuba, the YCL stressed the importance of fighting imperialism – U.S. imperialism in particular.

In some cases our international guests spoke about the rebuilding process taking place in their countries. Rune Rensmoen, chairperson of the Communist Youth League of Norway, said:

Together with a big mass movement which represents a very clear majority of our people we fight for an alternative policy. We represent a majority in active opposition to the policy of the social-democratic and bourgeois political elite and the economic elite. It is a pleasure to be Communist in such circumstances.

We have no illusion that Norway will be socialist tomorrow or the day after, but things are going in the right direction. Therefore, we think the Communists have an important role to play by just remaining Communists and Marxists and by keeping our strength – the strength of being revolutionaries. There are allies in the people's

movements who need us, and they only need us if we are true to that specific identity. If we give up that identity they do no need us anymore, because our analysis and our contributions to the struggle will be of less interest.

AN IDEOLOGICAL REAFFIRMATION ■ Since the 5th Convention was the first after the factional attack on the Communist Party, it was important to reaffirm some basic ideological concepts. During the attack there were ideological challenges to some Marxist-Leninist foundations like democratic centralism, the class struggle, the working class, the fight against imperialism, etc. Thus the YCL Convention adopted a resolution taking a firm position along these lines which states:

We in the United States must make a special effort to step up the struggle against U.S. imperialism and our solidarity with the people, in particular the young people, of South Africa and Cuba who face the most brutal forms of imperialist intervention.

Events of the last years have disoriented some, demoralized others. Not the Young Communist League, USA. We remain committed to fight for the future – to fight for the rights of young people – for jobs for youth; for the right to a free quality education; against racism and sexism and for full equality of all people. We demand that the Congress and the new administration take emergency measures to solve the crisis facing young people.

On this 10th anniversary of the refounding of the Young Communist League, USA, we remain committed to building the Young Communist League, USA as a Marxist-Leninist youth organization that unites Black, white, Latino, Asian and Native American, young women and men, gay and straight youth. That fights to unite all young people with the working class of our country and the working and oppressed peoples of the world.

We reaffirm our fraternal relations with the Communist Party, USA, as we remain committed to the fight for a socialist USA as the only solution to the basic problems faced by youth created by capitalism and the only guarantee of a future for the youth of our country.

With some debate on grammar and a few additions, the resolution passed overwhelmingly.

Other resolutions that passed were on gay and lesbian rights, organizing the unemployed, organizing unions at youth workplaces, women's equality, mobilizing for the 30th Anniversary March for Jobs and Justice on August 28th, the fight for housing and ending homelessness, and work on Cuba soli-

arity.

The Convention brought forward a whole new YCL leadership. The National Council elected there has strong working-class composition and is half African American, Puerto Rican, Chicano and Palestinian. The male/female composition is 60/40 – a weakness that needs to be corrected. However, there are open slots which are to improve composition and to elect new and emerging leaders. It can be said confidently that with the many young women Communist leaders coming forward, it won't be long until a better balance is achieved.

The National Council elected its executive, the Coordinating Council, which will meet in between NC meetings and serve as a consultative body when pressing issues arise that have to be dealt with by the leadership. The National Council also elected its officers. The number of officers have traditionally been equal to the number of YCL full-time organizers, ranging from three to five. The National Council voted this time for eight national officers with only three full-time organizers. This broadens out the top leadership of the YCL, enabling the full-time organizers and officers to draw on a larger collective for input on a weekly, even daily basis.

An important conclusion that can be drawn from these experiences is the necessity of the Communist Party in helping to build the YCL. In each case the Party has played an important role in either initiating or sustaining YCL building. In return, the Party's circle of contacts and supporters has widened. New young people come around the Communist movement and hopefully into the Communist Party as a result. The YCL in most districts works hand-in-hand with the Party on joint projects – public meetings, street corner rallies, *People's Weekly World* distributions, fundraisers, and other events.

This leads to a higher level of Party/YCL unity, which should always be fought for and carefully guarded. Lessons from Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union show that the YCLs in those countries were used as battering rams against the Communist Parties. During the factional attack against the Party here, there were attempts to turn the YCL against the Party. The YCL never wavered during the attack and always defended the Party and our Marxist-Leninist integrity.

There is great respect among YCL members for the Communist Party. This was evident in the two standing ovations given to Judith Le Blanc, member of the CPUSA National Board, who delivered greet-

ings from the Communist Party, USA.

The respect for the Party among the young people there was also evident in the attendance and interest in the session with Party leaders entitled, "Socialism USA: Ask the Communist Party."

To take advantage of the moment in building the YCL there has to be a conscious approach to it. There has to be acknowledgement that a YCL exists. Youth should be asked to join. In many areas people hesitate to ask someone to join the YCL because "we don't have a YCL in our area." A local YCL can start with just one member.

NEW CHALLENGES ■ Now the challenge is put before the YCL to further build and consolidate on the gains made during the convention period. The continuation of the Jobs for Youth petition campaign – which will culminate at the August 28th March for Jobs and Justice – will help with that process. The YCL plans to bring copies of the signed petitions, from across the country, to Washington D.C. and present them to Congress and the White House.

Another challenge before the League is to elevate its work in the fight against racism and to constantly improve and fight for Black-Brown-white unity and leadership and to take initiatives in this fight.

In the next period the League has to increase and improve its work fighting homelessness and the epidemics of drugs and violence. The YCL is similarly challenged to increase work for labor/youth solidarity, international solidarity and the struggle against U.S. imperialism. We face the challenge to increase our activity on the struggle for women's equality and to end discrimination against gays and lesbians. We need to increase our work in fighting for national health care and ending the AIDS epidemic.

There is a new level of dedication which was evident in the course of organizing the convention. Two YCLers came to New York and volunteered to work a month before the convention. Another took extensive time off work to organize for the convention and contributed two weeks worth of pay to the convention fund. This kind of volunteerism and spirit has not been present for a number of years.

Continuing and constantly pushing for a higher form of Marxist-Leninist education and training and continuing to experiment with forms of educational activity is another challenge before the YCL. To this end, plans have been made for our first summer national school following the 5th Convention, to be held August 13-22, 1993.

The YCL faces many challenges now, including to consistently build our organization into a mass League of tens of thousands of young people. Why? Because, as the Ohio steelworker who spoke to the Convention put it, "History has placed this challenge before us. I didn't, no one in this room did – history did."

The Convention was successful because it happened. It was successful because the organizing process resulted in over 100 new members for the YCL. It was successful because the politics were the politics of class struggle, taking on the economic crisis and organizing the young victims of the crisis. The Convention was successful because it was united and elected a united, multi-racial working class leadership. The Convention was successful because it increased Party/YCL unity. It was successful because it marked the 10th year of uninterrupted Communist youth work and reaffirmed the Communist approach to the youth question. It was successful because people had a good time, got out on the streets and learned something in the process. That's what the YCL is all about. □

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for Puerto Rico strengthens the struggle of the U.S. working class and people. We, the people of the United States, must become active partisans and participants in this struggle.

Finally, based on the history of the struggles against racism, chauvinism, colonialism and imperialism, we know that ultimately we will be rid of these evils only when we get rid of their source –

private profits. Puerto Rico is a living testament to the fact that capitalism produces neither development nor prosperity, but wealth for a few and poverty for the majority. For the almost one hundred years of U.S. colonial occupation, the land and people of Puerto Rico have suffered as incalculable wealth was stolen by U.S. corporations.

In Puerto Rico as in the United States, capitalism must be replaced with a system of production for the common good, not the corporate good – socialism. □

COMMUNIST PARTY USA

Editor's note: Following is the greeting to the Young Communist League's 5th National Convention presented on behalf of the Communist Party USA by Judith Le Blanc, member of the CPUSA National Board and its coordinator of mass work.

Your 5th National Convention is a fitting celebration of May Day, international workers' day. This working-class holiday was made in America, by the American working class in struggle. On behalf of our Party and its national chair, Gus Hall, I bring you May Day greetings.

Gus could not be with us today because he is leading the Party contingent in a New York labor march to save a General Motors plant. The Communist Party's participation in this labor march is a tremendous, historic breakthrough in ending years of discrimination against Communists in the labor movement. It is a breakthrough because Communists celebrated this workers' holiday through many difficult years of anti-Communism and McCarthyism. Being a part of this official labor march is like coming home.

This breakthrough signals a new political atmosphere in our country. The Party and the Young Communist League are seen as vital, dynamic forces for unity and militant mass struggle. The YCL plays a unique role in the youth movement, building unity between young people and labor. The youth movement can only be as strong as its connection to the working class and the trade union movement, because the workers are on the front lines of the struggle against capitalism.

It's a new moment – millions are discovering that Communists are like May Day and McDonalds, rap music and apple pie. Made in America, made by America.

You are the new generation, a generation which is different and unique. From every area of life there's a pitch for your attention. You are categorized, analyzed and your lifestyle sloganized. Your expectations for the future are a centerpiece of songs, movies and literature. Even your love life is a

focus of mass agitation and propaganda.

Why? Because of the class struggle – the struggle between the ruling class and the working class. Because those who control the power, the wealth, the *status quo*, have much at stake. They know that those who win the young generation have the future. They will use any means necessary to define your hopes, dreams and aspirations.

But after all the hype, the fact is that your generation has been abandoned by this society. We are sick and tired of "the lifestyles of the rich and famous," because we live the lifestyles of the poor, proud and struggling. No amount of joking on "In Living Color" or "Saturday Night Live" can cover up the crisis of joblessness and poverty we all face. No high tech videos, no action movies can hide the crisis. Every time a new movie or a song or a new television show gets too close to reality, they pull it.

In the 1970s my generation coined the phrase, "The revolution will not be televised." What we meant was that the politics of the day would be determined by action in the streets. We were wrong about one thing – the revolution will be televised, faxed and computerized. We were right about action in the streets – it was necessary then, it's even more necessary now. It's more necessary because your generation is right in the middle of the biggest crisis ever of the capitalist system. There are tremendous technological advances, so many consumer goods, yet growing numbers of people are hungry, homeless and unemployed. They sell \$150 sneakers, but they won't give you jobs to pay for them. What a contradiction!

Your generation is being molded by these conditions. Plenty for the rich and powerful, and less and less for the poor, especially the young. That's capitalism! Capitalism is in crisis – economic, political and social. The system has failed you. It doesn't work anymore. Song after song tells of the hopelessness and alienation young people feel. From country music to rap, the rhythm may be different but the theme is the same.

Capitalism means the right to be rich, by any means. But what is just or right about one percent of the people stealing ninety-nine percent of the wealth and goods? The Russian people are finding out the

hard way that capitalism won't solve their problems. We could have told them that - it hasn't worked here, it won't work there.

Your generation, especially Black and Brown youth, have been labeled criminals. The basic cause of what's called "street crime" is the lack of jobs for the people on the streets. Hopeless, desperate and angry people will take the problem into their own hands. People who have lost all faith in society act against society. Unfortunately, this happens.

What's wrong? It is not that all of a sudden there are some bad people, or some people who are selfish and want more money. What's wrong is the system, an economic system and political system that is based on inequality. It's a system in which the rich, the crooks, the corrupt, the thieves, the swindlers run the show. From the stealing of the land and slavery, to the brutality of today's mass unemployment and poverty, capitalism is not and has never been a just, humane, or civilized system. The solution to crime is *not* more police or more prisons. The solution is jobs, justice and equality.

Under Reagan and Bush's pro-corporate policies, the rich had one wild party during the '80s, and we were left with the mess. Through union busting, passage of anti-labor laws, destruction of civil rights and affirmative action, the right-wing takeover of the courts, and huge changes in the tax system, Reagan-Bush and company stole massive amounts from poor and working people, and gave to the rich. The 1990s are being shaped by a deep, long-term crisis - a crisis which is political, social and economic.

Your generation has been influenced by the fight against the ultra-right Republican domination of government. It has been shaped by anger against police abuse of the civil and moral rights of the young. It has been shaped by the threat of nuclear destruction and the real fact of war and intervention.

You are the future. Where do you stand? Clinton and Congress were elected by the people calling for basic change. Their votes were a rejection of the 12 years of Bush-Reagan policies. Clinton's theme song was, "Don't stop thinking about tomorrow." You must let them know: we have not and will not stop thinking about it. Our song should be; "Don't stop fighting for tomorrow."

Thursday was the 100th day of Clinton's presidency, and what have they done? In just 100 days their campaign promises have become a trail of broken promises. How can we compel them to make

good on those promises?

They promised to put people first. But there is no summer youth jobs program - Clinton gave in and the Republicans killed it. And almost exactly one year ago, 45 people died in Los Angeles. After 100 days in office what have the Congress and Clinton done for the cities? There are no jobs for the 20 million unemployed and underemployed. There is not enough housing, not enough food, not enough medical care. The government has done nothing to meet the needs of the people.

What will the Clinton administration and Congress do to turn things around, to reverse the Reagan-Bush anti-people, pro-corporate policies? Don't stop thinking about tomorrow - don't stop fighting for it. We have to organize the street heat. We have to give Clinton and the Congress a wake up-call.

In a country as richly endowed as ours, there is no reason for haves and have nots, no reason to have very, very rich and very, very poor. There is no reason we should have homeless living on the streets, under bridges and buildings, by the millions. There is no good reason why we should have people without medical and health care, why every woman shouldn't have the right to safe, free abortion, why anyone with AIDS should go without treatment. There is no reason why any worker should be unemployed, and yet there are jobless workers - by the millions.

There is no good reason why all our young people are not in school, in college rather than on street corners. There is no reason why so many are on the streets, on drugs, unemployed and hounded by the police, why Black and Brown youth are written off as criminals. But they are - by the millions.

No one should suffer because of racism, segregation or brutality by racist gangs or police. No woman should be degraded or impoverished by male supremacy and discrimination. Every young American - Black, Brown or white - should have the basic human right to a job, an education, a trade, a profession - to a future.

The Communist Party and its fraternal youth organization, the Young Communist League, say that such a society is not acceptable anymore. It is time to say: *no more!*

The Communist Party says: Put the people's needs before corporate greed!

- Redistribute our country's wealth.
- Cut the military budget! No war in Bosnia; fight the war on poverty in the USA.

● Cancel the five trillion dollar national debt. Let the banks bear the burden of rebuilding our country. They've made enough profits.

● Stop taxing poor and working people – tax the rich and the corporations.

● Double the minimum wage.

● Make health care free and comprehensive for all.

The right to a job, housing, food, and a secure life is a democratic right.

Your generation, as every past young generation has its historic role to play. Your generation will be a part of the great upsurge that is building among the people – an upsurge for radical change, one premised on the popular notion that this system is not working.

This is a time when the working people, younger and older, must put their foot down. The rich have pushed capitalism to the brink. After 500 years capitalism hasn't solved any of the basic needs for all the people. The solution has got to be a socialist system. This socialist system will be based on working people calling the shots, running the Congress, the state houses and city halls. It will not be a system based on greed but one based on meeting the people's needs. A socialist USA is in our future because capitalism's options are played out.

Only the militant mass action of the people can move the Clinton Administration and Congress to do the right thing. The same is true of socialism – only through the militant mass action of the people will it become a reality.

For Communists there is no greater power than unity – Black-white-Brown unity, class unity, unity of the people.

There is no generation gap between the Communist Party and the Young Communist League. We'll always be together. Shoulder to shoulder in struggle. We'll be together in Washington on August 28 for the first major mass demonstration for jobs of the Clinton Administration. We'll be together wherever there's a picket line of striking workers, a fight against evictions, a sit-in to win compensation for first-time job seekers, a street corner rally for economic justice or a campaign to elect to government a real fighter for the people.

We'll be together. Give 'em hell, YCL! □

Solidarity from Youth Around the World

Editor's note: Following is a sampling of the greetings sent to the Young Communist League on the occasion of its 5th National Convention from fraternal youth organizations around the world.

GERMANY

In a time when the capitalist world economy suffers from its most severe crisis since the 1930s and mass unemployment, poverty, oppression of the poor and warfare reach terrifying peaks, the struggle for freedom, democracy and socialism is more important than ever.

All over the world youth are facing an insecure future. It is of essential importance to give them back hope and self-confidence, and to unite against the ruling spirit of ignorance and oppression.

As the United States is one of the most powerful nations in the world, your struggle is important to our struggle. We wish you all the luck for your 5th National Convention and your future activities.

**Youth of the Party of Democratic Socialism
Germany**

SUDAN

The Sudanese Youth Union would like to convey warm greetings to the whole YCL membership. The SYU shares with you the same vision and principles. We emphasize our support and solidarity with your struggles. We are sure that this congress will contribute to shaping the ideological and political orientation of American youth.

Your congress is taking place in a very crucial period for the international left movement. We think this congress will help in uniting the international progressive and democratic youth movement.

Sudanese Youth Union

VIETNAM

Warmest greetings to your 5th Convention. We wish your convention great success, actively contributing to the struggle for peace, jobs, education, equality and socialism. May our fraternal relationship be further developed.

**Ho Chi Minh Communist Youth Union
Vietnam**

GREECE

The young Communists of Greece wish every success to the 5th Convention of the Communist youth of the USA, which we hope will strengthen your organization and improve your position among young people.

Your convention is taking place in a very difficult time for humanity and for young people who are watching capitalist brutality destroy their dreams. In Greece we feel this directly, as the imperialists try to increase their influence in the Balkans, forcing the peoples of these countries to kill each other. The everyday reality of war, poverty, unemployment, racism and violence convinces us of the fact that socialism is needed more than ever.

Every success to the convention of the Young Communist League. Marxism-Leninism is leading us to the future!

Communist Youth of Greece

SYRIA

On the occasion of convening the convention of your fraternal union, the Executive Committee of the Democratic Youth Union of Syria sends you best regards, wishing your congress success in reaching the best conclusions to meet the needs of the struggles you are facing.

Dear comrades, your convention is convened under difficult international circumstances. After the temporary retreat that hit the forces of social progress in Eastern Europe and in the Soviet Union, the offensive of American imperialism and international Zionism has been escalated against all forces of liberty and democracy all over the world.

Nevertheless, we fellows in the Communist youth of the world are in solidarity and united in the fight against imperialism and Zionism, in order to prevent them carrying out their aims of grasping the world in their hands, plundering the resources of its countries and undermining its youth in an attempt to spread and generalize the spirit of carelessness, consumptive mentality and nihilism.

Dear comrades, the graph of socialism will be back on the rise, despite the temporary setback; the fire of international imperialism and Zionism will be extinguished. We will fight beside you with the youth of all nations for a world in which we live fraternally and cooperatively. Together we will build societies in which there is no exploitation of a man by another or of a people by another, and in which

the rights and aspirations of youth are achieved and maintained.

Long live the Young Communist League, USA.
Long live our mutual friendship and fraternity!

Democratic Youth Union of Syria

ISRAEL

On behalf of all members of the Young Communist League of Israel, Jews and Arabs, we wholeheartedly greet your congress.

With great interest we have followed the dramatic events which took place in the U.S. Communist movement in the last two years. We are glad that you succeeded in overcoming the crisis and are now making a new drive in your activity. We are encouraged by your latest successes of the Young Communist League, USA in this regard.

The developments in the world during the last years, and especially the collapse of the socialist regimes in the USSR and Eastern Europe, have not failed to leave an imprint upon our movement and have caused many new difficulties. However, the vast majority of our members and sympathizers continue their fruitful activity.

In Israel we are engaged in a struggle against the policy of occupation and oppression led by the ruling circles. We demand the withdrawal of Israel from all the territories occupied since June 1967, including the Palestinian, Syrian and Lebanese territories. We struggle for a peaceful solution, on the principle of two independent states for the two peoples – Israel and Palestine – which will live peacefully side by side, with the pre-1967 demarcation lines as the peace-border between them. Such a solution to the conflict lies in the true interest of both our peoples. At the same time we continue to fight against the policy of the ruling circles – discrimination against the Arab population in Israel in general and against the Arab youth in particular. In these struggles we join forces with other youth movements in our country.

The YCL of Israel demands a change in the national priorities by transferring state funds from the huge military expenditures and upkeep of the occupation toward education, social services, health institutions and investment in job-creating enterprises to relieve the massive unemployment.

Dear comrades, in spite of all that lately has happened in the world, we are convinced that only socialism is capable of bringing solutions to the

problems of the society we live in. We shall learn the lessons from the rich, positive experiences, as well as from the bad ones, and shall mend mistakes in order to improve our activity, and realize Marxist-Leninist theory in a creative way, in accordance with the changing conditions and the reality in Israel.

Young Communist League of Israel

HUNGARY

Accept our greetings and best wishes to the 5th National Convention of the Young Communist League, USA, this important event in the life of your organization.

We express our solidarity with your struggle against imperialism's attempts at world domination, your commitment to socialism and peace. We have to broaden the cooperation of left-wing youth organizations in uniting the youth of the world against the millionaires and technocrats.

Marxist Youth Association, Hungary

PORTUGAL

We send you warmest greetings to all the comrades of the YCL on the occasion of your convention. We are confident that the event will be of extreme importance, and will contribute to the development and strengthening of the fight of the youth in your country.

Portuguese Communist Youth send a message of hope and confidence in your work and struggle for a better and fair society, where there will be no exploitation of man by man, where every citizen has the right to freedom and democracy. Together we struggle for the defeat of the capitalist system and against violence and racism.

We will continue to uphold the fight against imperialism and for socialism.

Portuguese Communist Youth

MEXICO

It is unfortunate that we will be unable to attend your 5th National Convention because of the visa denial by the diplomatic representation of the United States here in Mexico, in spite of the efforts made by us.

It is unfortunate because the opportunity to meet would allow us to deepen our bonds of friendship, as well as discuss issues of great importance to

the youth of our two countries, especially at this moment when the forces of imperialism assail the people of our two countries, and as a result of these imperialist actions the youth are the most affected.

We send our warmest revolutionary greetings to the 5th National Convention of the Young Communist League of the United States, knowing that you will make important decisions, plan out new strategies of struggle for the benefit of the youth of the United States that will ratify without a doubt your role as a vanguard of the young people of your country. Fraternally, for a socialist Mexico,

Youth of the Popular Socialist Party, Mexico

CUBA

In the name of the youth of Cuba we send our sincerest greetings and hope that your convention is a success in strengthening your work and the defense of revolutionary ideas in your country - in the struggle for the fundamental rights of all citizens - jobs, health, social security and life. For our young people it is very inspiring that young Communists of the U.S. discuss the need and methods of solidarity with our country, at this moment when we are living under severe economic limitations as a consequence of the fall of the socialist camp and fundamentally the unjust and inhumane blockade, that for more than three decades has violated the most elemental norms of the right to sovereignty and self-determination, not only of Cuba but of all who have opposed it.

For these reasons, the work that each one of you and others do is of the greatest importance: condemning the economic, political, military and diplomatic blockade against our country; the Guantanamo naval base; the illegal transmissions of the misnamed Radio and TV "Marti;" and the political interference against other peoples of the world.

We reaffirm that the Cuban youth, confident in the ideas of the revolution and its direction, will continue to support the food program, scientific and technical development, the tourist industry and at the same time with the modest resources and ideas to look for recreational alternatives for youth and the political and ideological preparation of the new generation.

Union of Communist Youth, Cuba

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Racism and the Youth Crisis

David Mirtz

"Go ahead and kill us, we're already dead ..." - a young participant in the Los Angeles rebellion.¹

The Los Angeles rebellion a year ago exposed the brutality of racism - it laid bare the ravages of the systemic crisis of capitalism and blew the lid off of the ruling class's Hollywood image of life in America. The racist beating of Rodney King and the subsequent acquittal of four police officers sent a clear message - racism is alive and well in the U.S. at the end of the 20th Century.

Indeed, a whole new generation of youth is coming of age in the nineties. The bourgeois media and their fashion and trend makers have eagerly tried to label this "twenty-something" generation with a defining issue: the AIDS generation, the "we" generation, and so on. In their frustration and inability to define it, some have settled for "Generation X," waiting for the defining event to occur.

But they have missed or perhaps avoided the most obvious and profound issue: this is a generation without a future. Though not as promotable or profitable as others, the concept of "futurelessness" will shape this generation's outlook on their own lives and the world.

A 25-year-old today was 13 in 1981 when Ronald Reagan became President. And during this period - a period defined in part by ultra-right attempts to shape mass thought patterns in a racist right-wing direction - this generation has seen its standard of living decline to the point that it can no longer expect to live at a level higher than or even equal to their parents. Even the illusions of the "yuppies" who became a symbol of the Reagan-Bush era have been smashed by the long-term economic crisis of U.S. capitalism.

RACE AND POVERTY ■ For most young families, more than illusions have been smashed. Young families today make up one third of all families and over half of all children are born to parents under thirty. The income of these families has dropped

32.1 percent in 1990 dollars. Poverty for children born to these families has increased dramatically, as illustrated by the *New York Times*.

From 1973 to 1990, income fell 22 percent for young white families, 28 percent for Hispanic families and 48 percent for black families. Poverty rates rose to 23.8 percent for the children in young white families, 43.5 percent for those in Hispanic families and 57.9 percent for those in black families.²

The "American Dream" has become impossible to achieve for a majority of young families. This generation has seen jobs disappear, as downsizing has become the watchword of the capitalist economy. Unemployment has reached crisis proportions for young people and remains the heart of the social and economic crisis facing young people.

Racism has turned the dream into a nightmare. Indeed, in the conditions of the systemic capitalist crisis, institutionalized racism has consistently eroded and undermined the important gains made during the historic civil rights struggle. The consequences of racism are so pervasive that even education, which in the past allowed a young person to get ahead, has not solved the problem. Heads of poor families are better educated today but hold fewer jobs than in the past. According to *Business Week*, in 1968 approximately 35 percent of Black and 40 percent of white heads of poor households did not work. However, in 1990, because of the racist edge of the economic crisis, the jobless figures reveal a staggering 60 percent for Blacks as compared to 45 percent for whites.³

Because of these problems the question of unity is of pressing importance. With the decline of anti-Sovietism and anti-Communism, the ruling class must rely more on racism as its chief weapon to divide youth. With the lingering economic crisis, cuts in social programs and competition among people for dwindling opportunities have heated up.

Young people are particularly vulnerable to the poison of racism, both as victims and perpetrators. The ruling class has made every effort to wipe out the legacy of the civil rights movement among

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youth, with some success. White youth all too often accept the idea that racism is a thing of the past and that nationally and racially oppressed youth should not receive preferential treatment, in the form of affirmative action, to make up for past and present discrimination. The current backsliding, reversals and capitulations to racism of the Clinton administration – especially on the nomination of Lani Guinier has added to the problem enormously.

How to respond to this new problem, raise the level of the struggle against racism and build unity in this period of long-term economic crisis will be a crucial question in forcing the ruling class and the new administration to take emergency measures to address the crisis of youth.

RACIST IMPACT OF YEARS OF REACTION ■ The last twelve years were characterized by a full-scale attack on civil rights and the gains made for equality. The Reagan and Bush Supreme Courts have sought to undermine and overturn the key legislative victories of the civil rights struggles – the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and the Fair Housing Act of 1968 – with a decade-long campaign against affirmative action. This campaign is based on the racist lie that equality has been achieved and special measures to remedy past discrimination are no longer necessary, and in fact constitute “special privilege” and “discrimination” against white people. Commenting on this attack, the late Thurgood Marshall reflected on the Supreme Court’s overturning of Richmond, Virginia’s affirmative action set-aside program:

It is difficult to characterize last term’s decision as the product of anything other than a deliberate retrenchment of the civil rights agenda. We could sweep it under the rug and hide it, but I’m not going to do it. We have come full circle [since *Brown v Board of Education*]. We are back where we started.

This attack on civil rights is not without a particular youth component. In fact an important ideological aspect of this period, was the attack on youth, blaming much of societies ills on “anti-social” youth, especially working-class Blacks and Latinos. Such ideological offensives included concepts like the “underclass” which seeks to justify an institutionalized policy of discrimination, oppression and even the physical elimination of African American young men. As sociologist Tony Monteiro states:

Defining the African American poor as an underclass plays an essential role in shaping this ideological stance. African American males, according to the underclass concept, tend to be socially and culturally pathological and part of a criminal subculture.⁴

It is an often-quoted statistic that 200,000 more African American males are in prison than are in college, and African American males in their twenties are sixteen times more likely to be in prison or under the control of the criminal justice system than their white counterparts. This does not confirm the racist argument that African Americans are more prone to criminal behavior; rather it reflects the fact that arrest rates are 45 percent higher for Black males even though white males commit the majority of assaults, burglaries, rapes and murders.⁵

Thus, the right-wing policies of the last twelve years together with the long-term economic crisis of U.S. capitalism have precipitated a social and economic crisis among today’s youth that is literally stealing lives away. Black, Latino and other nationally and racially oppressed youth have been singled out for particularly vicious attack. This crisis cannot be solved without dealing with the special oppression and problems of Black and Latino youth, because often the attack on them is the opening gun of an assault on young people as a whole.

Even with the defeat of Bush, the current failure of government to address the crisis is glaring. And even though capitalism turns a deaf ear, young people can be heard demanding an end to this inaction by anyone who is listening: they can be heard in the cultural trends among young people; they can be heard in the protests of students at campuses across the country; they can be heard in the rebellion against the Rodney King verdict in Los Angeles and across the country; they can also be heard in young people’s silence – the growing use of drugs, dropping out of school and refusing to vote and participate in a system increasingly perceived as alien and hostile.

CRIMINALIZATION ■ The criminalization of African American youth constitutes a new stage of racist oppression. It is modern-day lynching, this time carried out by law enforcement officials instead of white mobs or the KKK. It goes beyond the police singling out Black youth, but combines with it a racist intellectual justification that Black youth are

biologically and culturally prone to violence and crime. Its goal is to terrorize African American people and to justify a whole series of repressive measures by the law enforcement and criminal justice systems. It has become political ammunition in the hands of the ultra-right, the most glaring example being that of Willie Horton, who was the subject of George Bush's racist scare campaign during the 1988 presidential elections.

Black youth are not the only victims of this criminalization campaign. The criminalization of Black youth is the cutting edge of an assault on young people in general, a way to control youth as they become increasingly intolerant of the conditions they must live under. The U.S. now leads the entire world with its incarceration rates of children and adolescents, and has executed more juvenile offenders than virtually any other country.

The use of repression against student protests has also increased in the past years as city and state governments have become less willing to fulfill or even listen to student demands. Examples include the City University of New York, where massive force and tens of thousands of dollars were used to remove students who had occupied buildings over proposed tuition increases and budget cuts, and Brown University, where hundreds of students were arrested protesting financial aid cuts.

DRUGS AND DRUG-RELATED VIOLENCE ■ Drugs and drug-related violence are an important part of the racist impact of twelve years of reaction. With the appearance of crack, a very addictive and relatively cheap form of cocaine, there was a 3,500 percent increase in the amount of cocaine entering the country.⁶ Much of the drug dealing on a street level is concentrated in the most impoverished working-class and racially oppressed communities.

There has also been a dramatic increase in violence, in particular violence among young people. The Children's Defense Fund's 1992 *State of America's Children* noted:

Arrests of youths for violent criminal acts increased 24 percent between 1987 and 1991, with especially significant increases in weapons violations and drug-related arrests. Black youth were arrested for violent crimes at a rate five times that of white youth in 1990.⁷

This combination of drugs and guns is no accident but is a part of the ultra right's secret govern-

ment, that was run out of the White House "basement," and was partially exposed in the Iran/contra scandal. Dealing in arms and drugs has been a part of U.S. foreign policy for decades, beginning with the Vietnam War and the trafficking of heroin from Southeast Asia.

The drug trade in the U.S. is now a multi-million dollar business that uses poor, working-class, Black, Latino and Asian youth as its foot soldiers and cannon fodder.⁸ A frightening result has been the culture of violence that has grown up around the drug trade. The possession and use of firearms and sophisticated automatic weaponry has become commonplace.

Of course, to put the blame solely on the drug trade would not give a full picture of the culture of violence. The saturation of television and the media with violence play an important role in shaping the attitudes of young people. Violence has become a way of life and solving problems for many youth. Homicide is now the second leading cause of death among 15 to 24-year-olds.⁹ While many have expressed shock and outrage at this situation, little to nothing has been done to remedy it.

The predicament of youth today is that first drugs are pushed on them, then they are branded criminals. This then becomes the justification of a whole series of repressive policies including "anti-crime" measures that have undermined the constitutional principle of "innocent until proven guilty."

EDUCATION ■ Another aspect of this problem is the attack on public and higher education. In the last decade federal funding for grade school, junior high and high school has dropped from nine percent to six percent. Total federal support for education as a percentage of the federal budget fell from a disgraceful 2.3 to 1.7 percent. The cost of college tuition has increased by more than 50 percent over the level of inflation.¹⁰ Yearly education cuts by the Reagan and Bush administrations, and racist school funding practices based on property taxes, have left schools dilapidated, overcrowded and unbearable learning environments.

High school dropout rates were 11.9 percent overall;¹¹ 8.9 percent for whites in 1991, 13.6 percent for Blacks, and a shocking 35.3 percent for Latino youth.¹² No small reason for this high dropout rate among Latino youth is the language barrier they must overcome, especially with the "English only" drive and non-existent funding for bilingual and

multilingual education. But as bad as they are, these numbers are deceiving even still, because the dropout rates for African American and Latino youth in urban schools soar to more than 40 percent.

In addition, a disproportionate number of Black and Latino students are tracked into special education programs and concentrated in the worst schools. This results in significantly lower learning skills beginning early on, with what many educators have called the "fourth grade syndrome," a phenomena where enthusiasm for school and learning is replaced by apathy.

The situation of schools attended by poor and minority youth is dramatic:

These schools typically have fewer resources and much weaker academic programs than schools with more white and higher income students. For example, only half of the schools whose enrollment is 90 percent minority offer even one section of calculus, compared with 80 percent of mostly white schools. In one low income school district cited by the Texas Supreme Court in 1989 as evidence that the difference in the equality of education programs between wealthy and poor districts was "dramatic," there were "no foreign language, no prekindergarten program, no chemistry, no physics, no calculus, and no college preparatory or honors program," much less extracurricular activities such as band or debate.

Poor and minority students who attend wealthier suburban schools may not be much better off, however, for often they are tracked into non-academic courses. Across all American schools, for example, almost twice as many black eighth-graders as white eighth-graders take no science classes. Latino eighth-graders are almost two-and-a-half times as likely to take no science classes as their white peers.¹³

Higher education was not immune to reactionary attacks on education. In the '90s the determining factor of a young person's ability to get an education is family wealth. A young person from a family with a yearly income over \$58,000 has a 55 percent chance of getting a college degree by age 24. For those from families under \$24,000, it is six percent. Because of this, the enrollment of Black and Latino youth into college has dropped significantly in the last decade.¹⁴

The percentage of African American high school graduates who go on to enroll in college dropped off severely from the mid-70s to the end of the '80s. Today, African American youth are about half as

likely as whites to earn a bachelor's degree. In 1974, the college enrollment of Latino youth was almost equal to that of whites. Today, only 27 percent of Latinos between the ages of 18 and 24 are enrolled in college, compared to 43 percent of whites.¹⁵

A college education remains out of reach for the majority of young people. Those who do get into college face an uphill battle just to stay in. Financial aid for needy students has been slashed by the last two presidents, leaving few options for young people but to run up thousands of dollars in debt if they wish to stay in school. The attack on affirmative action has not omitted financial aid – as recently as 1990, the Department of Education ruled that federal funding of minority scholarships amounted to "reverse discrimination" against whites and was unconstitutional.

Additionally, racially and nationally oppressed students who were in college found the environment increasingly hostile to their presence, with an increased number of racial assaults and harassment and an attack on the movement to broaden university curriculum to include the histories and contributions of non-white peoples. Indeed, multiculturalism has become a major attack point for the ultra-right in its attempt to influence the ideological direction of education at universities. Demagogically using the straw man of "political correctness," they have attempted to eliminate and prevent the implementation of a multicultural curriculum. Even a number of liberals have gotten in on the act.

GHETTOIZATION, SEGREGATION & POVERTY ■ The last twelve years have left many young people wondering if the hard-fought gains of the civil rights movement have been for nothing. Some have likened this period to the overthrow of Reconstruction after the Civil War where through KKK terror and other legal and extra-legal measures the deposed Southern slavocracy regained power.

Today, in spite of the eradication of legalized segregation, we still live in a segregated society by means of red-lining and other methods. In fact, Black urban segregation is now greater than in the 1950's. Similar trends can be found with the Latino community. Mirroring this level of segregation in housing is the segregation of schools. The Children's Defense Fund has this to say:

Big city school systems became increasingly segregated during the 1980s. Eighty percent of Latino students in

the South and Northeast now attend schools that are predominately minority. Half of all black students in the Northeast attend schools with fewer than ten percent whites, and onethird attend schools that are at least 99 percent minority.¹⁶

As recently as last May, South Boston – the site of big school desegregation battles and riots in the 1970s – saw a return of conflict among young people. Black, Latino and Asian students who are bused into the predominately white school have been targeted for harassment not only by fellow students but also by the surrounding community. Pro-segregationists use this as an example that busing and desegregating schools has failed.

Of course, more often than not, the burden of busing is put on minority youth. And busing does not address the deeper issue of housing segregation. Whether the recent conflict in South Boston is an isolated event or represents a growing trend has yet to be seen. But there is no doubt that right-wing racist forces are trying to fan the flames around this issue.

Along with this slide backward into even greater segregation have come new levels of impoverishment that match the poverty rates of 20 and 30 years ago. As a result, a disproportionate number of Black and Latino youth go into the armed services as a way of "getting ahead." This is shown by the fact that 30 percent of the the armed forces are African American and at least 46 percent of the troops who fought in the Gulf War were racially and nationally oppressed youth.¹⁷

CAPITALISM AND YOUTH ■ To put the entire blame for this desperate situation on the Reagan and Bush administrations would be only half true. In a more basic sense, it is the system that must be blamed. The crisis of youth and the special crisis of racially and nationally oppressed youth is deeply rooted in the system of capitalism. Capitalism has a long history, going back to its very beginnings, of exploitation of youth and children – primarily as sources of cheap or even free labor. Child and youth labor has also been used to undermine the power of organized workers, and the child labor laws won in the early part of this century were an important step in strengthening the power of labor.

Today U.S. capitalism exploits young workers in many ways. Young people constitute an important reserve army of unemployed workers. Young people face higher levels of unemployment, up to 19.3

percent for 16 to 19-year-olds, as compared with 9.8 percent overall. In big cities like New York, the unemployment rates have risen dramatically to 40 percent for 16 to 19-year-olds.¹⁸ And these are official figures, which tend to significantly underestimate actual unemployment. The unemployment rate for African Americans runs two to two and a half times that of whites.

This great number of unemployed youth acts as a weight pulling downward on the wage level of all workers. It allows capitalists to extract greater profits from the working class as a whole.

Added to the unemployed is the growing number of young people employed as temporary, contingent and on-call workers. These workers are almost exclusively unorganized and receive low pay and no benefits. A majority of 20 to 24-year-olds fall into this category, and young people make up a significant number of the growing contingent workforce that already constitutes one quarter of the overall workforce in the United States.

In addition, there is the sub-minimum wage for youth, pioneered by the Reagan Administration, that locks young people into sub-poverty level incomes while simultaneously undercutting the existing minimum wage, as outrageously low as it already is.

The exploitation of youth represents a source of superprofits for capitalism through lower wages and fewer benefits. In the last twenty years, the situation has not gotten any better.

Those young people who do have jobs have seen their earnings drop dramatically – young white males drop more than 14 percent since 1973, and young Black males 24 percent. White and Black male high school dropouts saw their earnings drop 33 percent and 50 percent respectively. One can safely assume that for young women the situation is worse.¹⁹

Of course racism is a source of superprofits for capitalists, and this remains true with regard to Black and Latino youth. The super-exploitation of Black and Latino youth results in the fact that these young people are paid less money than white youth for doing the same work.

With the long-term economic crisis of the U.S. economy, and the current recession, these trends will continue. Youth unemployment will increase, and so will the number of temporary workers, which is expected to be half the workforce by the year 2000. The gap between Black, Latino and white

youth will continue as capitalism relies more and more on racism and racist exploitation to keep profits high.

INSTITUTIONALIZED RACISM ■ Racism is one of the ruling class's most important weapons against working people. Racism remains the most powerful tool of the ruling class to divide young people and the youth and student movement. Racism from its very beginnings in the African slave trade has been a tool of capitalism for the maximization of profits.

Along with the slave trade came the ideology of white supremacy. This ideology is used to justify the exploitation and oppression of peoples of African descent. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said:

With the growth of slavery, men had to convince themselves that the system that was so economically profitable was morally justifiable. The attempt to give moral sanction to a profitable system gave birth to the doctrine of white supremacy.²⁰

Racist exploitation of African Americans is at the center of U.S. racism, and the attack on Black youth is the cutting edge of racist assaults. Historically, racism in the United States developed specifically as a system of exploitation and oppression of people of African descent, and genocide against Native Americans. Its growth and emergence into a special system of oppression within U.S. capitalism affects the lives of all racially and nationally oppressed peoples.

Racism against African American youth constitutes a form of genocide. As Tony Monteiro describes:

They experience higher levels of killer diseases such as cancer, hypertension, heart disease and AIDS. They have the shortest life expectancies of any single section of the population. They are the least educated segment of the entire population and experience the highest rates of permanent unemployment.²¹

The ideology of racism has had to change and adapt to new conditions as the struggle against it makes advances – like a virus it mutates into ever new forms. As more and more white people reject racism in its most overt forms, the ruling class has had to develop more subtle and insidious ones. Gus Hall, National Chair of the Communist Party, USA, noted: "Today most white people reject racism, as

they understand it. They reject the basic premise of racial superiority. As a result, the monopoly corporations have ideologically sugarcoated and repackaged racism."²² The main objective of these new forms of racism remains the shoring up of racist oppression and exploitation, and hiding the real source of racism: the system of capitalism and its ruling class.

Some white youth are very susceptible to these new forms of racist ideology. Whites commit the majority of "hate crimes" and the majority of these are committed by youth. A significant rise in hate crimes, both in the community and on campus, has taken place in the last twelve years. Many of these crimes can be linked to the ultra-right as they became emboldened under the Reagan and Bush administrations, and sought to use white youth in their racist campaigns.

Many of these attacks are also related, directly and indirectly, to right-wing groups like the Young Americans for Freedom, the Young Republicans and some of the all-male white fraternities which have been breeding grounds for violent acts, not to mention sexual assaults and ritual rape of young women. Some of the attacks have also been linked to loosely knit youth gangs with ties to organized crime, such as in the case of Howard Beach and Bensonhurst in New York.

We have seen the phenomenon of racist neo-Nazi skinheads (although it should be said that there are also organized *anti-racist* skinheads). But neo-Nazi skinheads in the U.S. do not seem to have gained the kind of following as in Europe, particularly Germany and Britain. Neo-Nazis in these countries have even developed their own music to carry their racist message, called "hate rock." While definitely a dangerous phenomenon, skinheads and neo-Nazi youth groups have only been able to muster a small following.

Racist violence is also related to the growing economic crisis. As competition for dwindling opportunities increases, some white youth, under the influence of racism, turn their frustration and anger at the deteriorating conditions they must live under, against racially and nationally oppressed youth.

As arguments for biological and genetic inferiority become almost completely discredited, the need of the ruling class to find other rationales becomes necessary. In fact, it is not common to find the argument of biological or genetic superiority of

whites among white youth. More common would be a belief in the socio-cultural inferiority of racially and nationally oppressed people – the idea that it is something in the social and cultural traditions of African American and Latino peoples that explains their conditions, rather than the super-exploitation and discrimination that they must endure. In this regard Dee Myles notes that: "In effect, no longer must genetic inferiority be argued because socio-cultural inferiority is a good substitute."²³

The bourgeois media play an important role in this respect by popularizing the myth of socio-cultural inferiority. The mass media present the social problems of Black and Latino people as being based on an inferior culture. They diligently obscure the truth of the matter, which is that the social problems of racially and nationally oppressed people are part and parcel of a special mixture of class, racial, and national oppression that has its origin and development in the system of capitalism. Moreover, the ruling class seeks to hide the fact that all workers face a common class enemy, regardless of race.

This is reinforced by the mass media. Racist images promoted by the mass media attack African American and Latino families in particular. Racial stereotyping also has a sexist edge with its attack on female-headed households (the "welfare queen" image) and blaming young Black and Latina women for teenage out-of-wedlock births.

In essence these are just more blame-the-victim arguments and are meant to convince white people that no special measures on the part of government and society as a whole to remedy inequality are needed or justified.

'LIBERAL' RACISM ■ Another trend among youth – perhaps the dominant trend that is actively promoted by the ruling class, in particular its liberal sectors – is to recognize the existence of racism but to remove the system of racist exploitation and ideology from its historical and class context by reducing its causes to simple fear and ignorance. This trend also considers racism a two-way street, with both Black and white youth capable of being "racist."

"Liberal" notions like "racism is a two-way street" reduce the struggle against racism to holding workshops and classes that will teach young people to respect each other, not believe in racial stereotypes, and so on. Like most liberal ideology it urges people to free their minds while it leaves their bodies in chains.

On the one hand, this position calls on young people to be anti-racist, but on the other it obscures the actual nature of racial oppression in the United States. It weakens the struggle against racism and the need for special measures to address the crisis of Black and Latino youth; in particular it weakens support for affirmative action.

This concept promotes an attitude among youth that racism is the same as other forms of discrimination, such as the discrimination against women, senior citizens, and gays and lesbians. Also obscured are the differing forms and methods racist oppression of African Americans, Latinos, Asians, and Native American Indians, as well as the similarities. The result is a rejection of the idea that each requires special and particular solutions.

Latino youth face special problems of discrimination based on race and nationality. Attempts to suppress the Spanish language by the English-only campaign is a major thrust of the ultra-right. In this age of budget cuts and belt-tightening, Puerto Rican and Chicano studies programs are among the first cut. Chicano students in Los Angeles recently won an important victory in preserving a Chicano studies program.

Latino youth also face special forms of discrimination based on immigration status – persecution by the INS, exploitation by employers and so on.

Asian youth face particular problems because of language and cultural barriers and as immigrants – take the recent uncovering of a "modern day slave trade," the trafficking of thousands of Chinese, many of them young, to work in conditions of indentured servitude here in the United States. Unable to pay off their debt to smugglers, some are forced into organized crime, drug trafficking and prostitution.

Native American youth face virtual genocide. On Native American Indian reservations, unemployment reaches 76 percent and poverty rates 90 percent. Native Americans are faced with the elimination of their language, cultural identity and traditions and control over the land that they live on.²⁴

A proper recognition of these differences does not in any way divide or create a "pecking order" of oppression. Quite the opposite – it reveals the specific nature of racist oppression in order to build the broadest unity and fightback against racism, based on the common factors as well as the specific problems of each oppressed group. Only by taking up the specific problems of each racially and nationally

oppressed group is the maximum mobilization and unity against racism possible.

BLACK-BROWN-WHITE YOUTH UNITY ■ The main obstacle to the unity of youth is racism. The racist division of youth weakens the struggle for far-reaching solutions to the crisis. The most difficult task in building youth unity in the struggle against racism remains winning over white youth to actively struggling against racism.

The majority of white youth reject racism. They do not accept the racist idea that African Americans are biologically inferior and support the idea of equality. Many believe that African American and Latino youth face discrimination that is not faced by whites. At the same time, it remains a minority of white youth who are actively involved in the struggle against racism. While it is true that whites suffer from racism – reflected in lost income, reduced educational and job opportunities, and the inability to mount an effective united struggle – the reason many white youth do not actively fight racism is because they remain relatively insulated from its most severe effects and do not understand how it affects their own declining social conditions. However it is possible to win more and more white youth to anti-racist positions if initiative is taken.

In a period of economic decline and greater competition among people for jobs, one can expect a rise in racism. But as white youth find that the color of their skin becomes less and less of a guarantee against unemployment, homelessness and so on, and that they cannot fight effectively without the support of Black and Latino youth, they will be forced to come to terms with the need to struggle against racism.

Even among those white youth already involved in the struggle against racism there are many weaknesses. Paternalism among whites continues to be a main form of racist ideological seepage into anti-racist ranks. Paternalism is related to the fact that many white youth still do not see the fight against racism based on their own interest but out of some kind of "benevolence."

Racist paternalism is manifested on the one hand by a resistance to taking any leadership from nationally and racially oppressed youth, and on the other hand a resistance to accepting the fact that the primary responsibility in the struggle against racism falls on the shoulders of white people, which is to organize and struggle against racism in the white

community and among white workers. Most importantly, this must involve responding swiftly and strongly to any and all acts of racism in the community or workplace, actively soliciting the support of whites and pressuring local politicians and leaders in white communities to take action. Most important is a decisive response against the racist violence that often occurs in "white" enclaves, and support for the desegregation of these areas.

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION ■ The biggest weakness is on the fight for affirmative action. The struggle for affirmative action remains the Achilles heel of the anti-racist movement. Support for affirmative action among young people may have diminished due to the consistent campaign by the ultra-right to discredit and distort it as a tool for achieving equality. Some have been influenced by the idea that it discriminates against white people, that it is paternalistic to African Americans and Latinos, and that it somehow lowers workforce and classroom standards.

The anti-racist movement has allowed itself to be disarmed by this racist campaign; this was evident around the Lani Guinier nomination. Some have accepted the ideas of the ultra right and abandoned the fight for affirmative action. For example during the Gulf War, in the Youth and Student Coalition for Peace in the Middle East, a successful campaign against affirmative action was waged – mainly by ultra-left groups – with the argument that the representation of Blacks, Latinos and other racially and nationally oppressed youth in the leadership of the anti-war movement cannot be solved "mechanically." Of course, the end result was to re-enforce racial division in the movement and weaken it. Some, while supporting affirmative action, oppose quotas, which are the teeth in any affirmative action program.

What are the reasons for this backtracking? One is a lack of confidence that white youth can be won and convinced of the importance of affirmative action. This stems from a failure to understand that affirmative action benefits the majority by opening up employment and other opportunities to others, including women and even white males, by eliminating patronage hiring practices and so on. The fear of a "backlash" among white youth has prevented some from taking on the fight for affirmative action.

But the experience of organizations like the United States Student Association proves otherwise.

Although under constant attack from the right, USSA has maintained its affirmative action guidelines and even strengthened them. Rather than alienating white students, USSA has grown to the largest, most representative and influential multi-racial youth organization in the country. Its affirmative action guidelines, rather than being a handicap, have preserved the unity of USSA. White students have played an important role in defending them. Rather than being a "mechanical" solution to the representation, affirmative action has guaranteed racial composition from bottom to top.

The fight for affirmative action is the litmus test of the anti-racist movement. Without a consistent fight for affirmative action, multi-racial unity is not possible. It is necessary to mount an offensive in favor of affirmative action and win the majority of white youth to it. Particular focus must be placed on reversing the declining number of African American and Latino youth in college, in job hiring and training, and in skilled trades. This cannot be achieved without a campaign to significantly expand the educational and employment opportunities, by demanding the federal government create jobs and adequately fund education.

In this regard, the strengthening of Black-Brown-white unity is a necessary and strategic objective in order to win further victories against racism. There is a growing level of unity among Black, white and Brown youth. There are many examples of this unity and it is reflected on many different levels. Perhaps the most recent and sharpest example was the response to the not guilty verdict of the LAPD officers in the beating of African American motorist Rodney King. There was an overwhelming rejection of this racist verdict, especially among youth. The protests and rebellion in Los Angeles and across the country were characterized in the press as "rainbow riots."

NEW POSSIBILITIES ■ Only recently, particularly with the Los Angeles rebellion, has the ruling class been forced to recognize the crisis among youth. It has become impossible to cover it up. At the same time, little to nothing has been said about the special crisis among nationally oppressed youth. One of the examples of the ruling class's recognition of the crisis has been President Clinton's National Service Trust Fund Act which promises to open up educational opportunities to young people. This recognition of the youth crisis presents a political opening

which must be taken advantage of. Clinton's national service is not adequate, but it presents an opportunity to push for farther-reaching solutions.

Many have been hesitant, to turn up the heat. But with the waffling and retreat of the Clinton Administration in the face of a new right-wing coalition of Republicans and conservative Democrats, the question of fighting on the issues becomes even more crucial than it already was. It is time for the youth and student movement and others – in particular organized labor – to demand far-reaching solutions to the crises.

There are possibilities to win new victories. It is necessary to take up the struggle against racism in a new way. The youth and student movement must step up the demand for a new and strengthened Civil Rights Act to overturn the reverses of the Reagan-Bush period. A battle must be waged in favor of affirmative action, to include goals and timetables. Other measures are needed that will ensure equality, include outlawing racist violence and police brutality, and demanding reform of the criminal justice system to stamp out institutionalized racism.

Quality education should be provided for all, with full funding for Pell Grants and minority scholarships. Historically Black and Latino colleges should be defended and multi-cultural school curricula should be implemented. Legislation to ensure equal funding for schools, and to end housing and school segregation, should be demanded.

Emergency measures must be taken to deal with the unemployment crisis among youth. It must include the creation of a federally funded jobs program for youth that would train and employ young people in rebuilding the country at union wages and with union protection. There must be unemployment compensation for first-time job seekers – especially important for young people getting out of high school who often find it impossible to get work. Such solutions must include strict affirmative action guidelines with quotas and timetables and laws to close the racist income gap.

The youth and student movement must take initiatives that will galvanize, unite and motivate young people to fight for these demands. Such initiatives should include:

- Petitioning and lobbying;
- Calling for the introduction to Congress of a youth and Student Bill of Rights and other pro-youth legislation;
- Convening a youth and student congress

around such demands;

- Organizing a march on Washington demanding education and jobs for youth.

- Mobilizing youth and students to participate in the August 28th March on Washington for Jobs and Justice.

These demands and initiatives must include the support of organized labor, without which they are not winnable.

The only means by which this generation will win its future is by the united struggle of youth, the working class, nationally oppressed peoples and others. Today there is the possibility of building a broad and powerful anti-racist movement among youth based on the majority anti-racist sentiments of young people – but only if this movement is linked to the fight on the economic crisis, especially the struggle for jobs and the fight for education. It is possible to build a multi-racial anti-racist movement among young people that can play an important role in fighting the right-wing coalition in government and put pressure on the Clinton Administration.

THE YCL ■ The YCL has a special role to play in this movement. We help initiate militant action on the most pressing issues facing young people. We show young people that racism is a special form of capitalist exploitation designed to extract superprofits. We show young people that racism is a special form of oppression that needs special solutions. And we show that far reaching solutions must include taxing the rich and big business and slashing the military budget. We show that the solutions must go to the heart of the capitalist system – to where the money is, the profits extracted by the ruling class from working people.

We also show young people that the only way to victory over racism is through unity. While the ruling class pressures and manipulates people against each other, we show the need for multi-racial Black-white-Brown unity in the struggle against racism. We show that white youth have a special responsibility to fight racism. We also show young people that they cannot win alone, but only in unity with the powerful working class and organized labor will we be able to force the ruling class to squarely address the crisis of today's youth.

Finally, we show young people that racism has its origin and its roots deep in the capitalist system. Indeed, to end racism means to end the system that

sustains it and gives it life. We show young people that socialism lays the basis for the permanent eradication of racism, by removing the profit motive. But we also show that without struggling against racism now, we cannot fight capitalism. Only then can we build the unity among young people, and among the working class as a whole, that is necessary to transform this nation. □

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National Service & The Crisis in Education

Jason Rabinowitz

In a recent letter to the youth of America, President Clinton challenged young people to join him in "a great national adventure - National Service." This adventure is aimed at "encouraging" youth to perform service in communities - before, during or after college - by offering forgiveness on student loans.

According to Clinton, National Service is "the American way to change America" because the program "values something more than money." He has put forward the program as one of his four key policy goals, claiming that it will solve the deep education crisis in the country, as well as help young people, who are by the millions idle, alienated and pessimistic about the future, to get involved in solving the problems faced by our society.

"Instead of throwing money at the problems," Clinton said, "National Service throws you at the problems."

Unfortunately for many students and young people desiring an education, who have already been thrown around quite a bit in the past few years by the ravages of massive budget cuts and skyrocketing tuition, every college in the country still asks that you throw a substantial amount of money at them if you would like to attend.

And the cost of education keeps going up. In fact over the past decade, on average, tuition has increased by more than 50 percent over the level of inflation.¹ During the same period, under Reagan and Bush, federal financial aid was cut every year. In addition federal aid to states and cities was also slashed, resulting in devastating cuts to public universities and state financial aid programs, tuition and fee increases, layoffs of professors and staff, and cuts in class offerings, libraries, sports programs and research funding.

CRISIS IN EDUCATION ■ There is a full-fledged crisis in education, and it is caused precisely by the fact that the government is not "throwing" enough money to adequately fund it. This crisis is part of the

legacy of the Reagan and Bush administrations, and the overall transfer of wealth from the working class to the rich and corporations. This shift is part of the overall corporate plan of dealing with the economic crisis by cutting into working-class living standards and making the working class shoulder the burden of the economic crisis. Indeed, the education crisis cannot be separated from the overall crisis of the U.S. capitalist economy.

Twelve years of reactionary Reagan-Bush education and youth policies, on top of the general economic crisis of U.S. capitalism, have created a deep and profound crisis among youth. The education crisis is part of the general social and economic crisis, a crisis that hits the majority of youth in the face at every turn. Young people daily are faced with dilapidated and decaying schools, racist discrimination and violence, mass joblessness and dead-end minimum wage jobs, drugs and police brutality, sexual discrimination and abuse. This is a generation that sees no future for itself, no opportunities for getting an education or a decent job. The education crisis and the epidemic of youth unemployment are the nitrogen and glycerin in an explosive social mixture. It is an emergency situation requiring an emergency response.

Under the Clinton administration the crisis in education continues, with the cutting of financial aid grant programs in favor of loans. National Service, by offering loan forgiveness, is put forward as the solution to the problem of students accumulating huge loans. It claims to "solve America's problems" by providing all young people with educational opportunities while encouraging them to "give back to their country."

The idea of a federal youth service program is a positive one. The question is what kind of National Service program we will have. Will it be the corporate vision, that would force youth into sub-minimum wage jobs, undercut the labor movement and provide a cover for the gutting of financial aid for education? Or will it be a working-class and people's version of service, with decent wages, health care, child care, adequate loan forgiveness, together with emergency legislation for a jobs program and

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full funding for financial aid?

There is a fight on for the soul of Service. Clinton's National Service proposal must be viewed within the context of this struggle. Clearly it provides an important opening for the youth and student movement that, if taken advantage of, can move in the direction of more basic solutions. What the proper tactics should be in this struggle is an important question currently under debate. This article is a contribution to the debate.

A BRIEF HISTORY ■ National Service is not a new concept, but has been around in different forms for some time. In the 1930s, under Roosevelt's New Deal, thousands of unemployed youth were put to work by the government in the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), where they received a wage and work skills. President Kennedy proposed the Peace Corps, which sends thousands of youth to work around the world each year. After the defeat of the military draft in the '70s, the idea arose of a compulsory national civilian youth service to replace military service, based on the idea that it would increase the sense of duty and commitment to the country among youth. By the late 1980s, many policymakers were arguing for service in exchange for educational opportunities, rather than a compulsory system.

In the late 1980s right-wing Democratic Senator Sam Nunn introduced an extremely reactionary, pro-corporate National Service bill into Congress. Nunn's service bill proposed to completely eliminate financial aid grants for college, replacing them with Income Contingent Loans (ICLs). ICLs are a proposal that first came out of the Reagan administration, crafted by then-Secretary of Education Bill Bennett. It was presented as a progressive program because payments are determined by income; but their interest rates are unsubsidized and the poorest people would end up paying off the interest for their entire lives, never even touching the principal. The Bush administration saw ICLs as the future of education funding, and succeeded in winning a pilot program which is still in existence. The goal was a program that would completely eliminate any government contribution to financial aid. Nunn's National Service would have made this regressive, anti-people loan program the basis for all financial aid. But, facing great opposition from students and other progressive forces, the bill was defeated in Congress, and National Service was not heard from again until the Clinton presidential campaign.

While the concept of service may not be novel, linking it to student financial aid is. Prior to this the major form of funding college education was either self-payment, grants and scholarships, or loans. Needless to say, university attendance based on a student's ability to pay all but ruled out the majority of working-class and minority students and major struggles had to be initiated to compel government responsibility in providing financial assistance.

By the early 1970s, many important gains in financial aid had been won. As a result thousands of African American, Latinos, and other working-class students were able to pursue a higher education. However, these gains have been steadily whittled away over the two decades since, especially under Reagan and Bush. The long-term trend in federal education policy has been to move from grants to loans as the basic form of educational financial assistance for working-class youth. Politically this is a reversal, back to previous ruling-class educational policy where only the rich and well-to-do were able attend the universities. This also is an ideological retreat. It reflects a step away from the hard-fought concept that government has the responsibility to provide affordable education for all, toward the idea that education is a privilege that each student must finance on their own. Education, never affordable for all, is once again unaffordable for most.

In 1975, grants made up more than 80 percent of all student aid, as compared to 16.9 percent for loans. Today, the majority of aid takes the form of loans. During that period most of the key aid programs aimed at the neediest students were slashed. Funding for Pell Grants, the cornerstone of student financial aid, was greatly outstripped by increasing costs. In 1979, the maximum grant covered 50 percent of the average cost of attendance – not enough, but something. Today, the maximum – a pitiful \$2,300 – covers less than a quarter.² And last year there was a \$2 billion shortfall in funding for Pell, leaving thousands of eligible students out in the cold.

As originally conceived, grants were supposed to be for low-income students and loans for those of middle income. Now even the poorest of students must finance the majority of college costs through loans. And there aren't enough loan dollars to go around, so middle-income students are having a harder time getting them. With the prospects for getting a well-paying job in one's field after graduation diminishing, many potential students are

caught between a rock and a hard place.

Cutting grants in favor of loans has locked millions of potential students from working-class families out of the opportunity of receiving an education. Today, the main criterion that determines who can get an education, and what kind, is not ability or intelligence but family wealth. A young person from a family with a yearly income over \$58,000 has a 55 percent chance of earning a bachelor's degree by age 24. For those with income under \$24,000, it is six percent.

This assault on education has a vicious racist edge. Double and triple levels of unemployment and poverty, combined with the Reagan-Bush attack on affirmative action, have intensified the effects of the education crisis on racially and nationally oppressed youth. The percentage of African American high school graduates who go on to enroll in college dropped off severely from the mid-70s to the end of the '80s. Today, African American youth are about half as likely as whites to earn a bachelor's degree. In 1974, college enrollment of Latino youth was almost equal to that of whites. Today, only 27 percent of Latinos between the ages of 18 and 24 are enrolled in college, compared to 43 percent of whites.³

In response to these problems the Clinton Administration has promoted National Service as a domestic Peace Corps, which will help solve America's problems by encouraging young people to get involved. "Your efforts and energies can lift up the spirits of our nation and inspire the world," he said in his letter to the youth.

It is true that service plays an important role in society, and could be a significant element in an emergency response to the crisis. The spirit of volunteerism, of working to help others, of helping one's community, is a positive force. Everyone benefits by the millions who serve – helping the elderly, reading to the blind, staffing homeless shelters and soup kitchens, cleaning up neighborhoods, working with children, and so many other things.

Voluntary work can enrich the lives of young people, teaching them selflessness and community, exposing them to new people and experiences. And the fact is that when service opportunities are available, young people, with all the idealism and vitality of youth, are always there. No other sector of the country's population performs service in higher numbers than the youth. National organizations like Youth Serve America and Campus Outreach Oppor-

tunity League, together with countless local groups, organize millions of youth to perform all different kinds of service. After the rebellion that followed the Rodney King verdict in Los Angeles, thousands of youth volunteered to help rebuild the sections of the city that were destroyed.

But the question remains, what kind of service program will we have – a working-class version or a capitalist version?

CORPORATE APPROACH ■ The corporations have a clear view of what type of National Service they want. It is part of the overall ruling-class plan for getting itself out of the economic crisis and solving the government's debt crisis, by cutting into the living standards of the working class and making it pay an even greater portion of the bills. The big corporations are downsizing expenses by laying off hundreds of thousands of workers, forcing concessions in wages and benefits, busting unions and shipping jobs overseas. Meanwhile they are upsizing profits, and, as always, this comes at the expense of working-class living standards. Another part of this process is the continuing tax cuts for the wealthy and tax increases on the working class, forcing it to pay a greater and greater share of the government's bills. Indeed, for all his talk about taxing the rich, Clinton has hardly done a thing about it. Instead of a "middle-class tax cut" he has proposed new taxes for the middle class, including energy and sin taxes.

The corporate version of service links it to financial aid for college. It is premised on forcing poor and working-class youth to do service in exchange for an education. It forces working-class youth to work at sub-minimum wages, postponing their education or their careers in order to pay for college. It puts working-class youth at a disadvantage in the job market, since they will be working in jobs not related to their chosen fields while their wealthier peers would be in the job market with a one to two year head-start. The corporate version of National Service is thus inherently discriminatory.

In the past, the corporations were compelled to pay at least part of the costs of education through taxes. Under the new plan, students would finance the education system through their own personal loans. The corporations are off the hook and their training and research centers are subsidized – yet another way of robbing wealth from working people.

Another dangerous dimension of the corporations' version of National Service relates to the new phenomenon of a contingent workforce. Contingent, or temporary, part-time workers have lower wages, no benefits or health coverage, nor job security or union protection. National Service threatens to become part of this process, creating a pool of sub-minimum wage contingent workers that can be used to bring down the wages of workers in general and undermine trade unions. As originally proposed, National Service would have had the government directly hiring young people at a sub-minimum wage. The "service positions" would have included teaching, law enforcement, medicine, construction, etc. The trade union movement raised hell about the threat this would have posed to union jobs, and successfully forced a change in the current plan. Now National Service would create more traditional service positions, through already existing organizations. But the threat to labor is still there.

The element of compulsion inherent in the corporate plan is ominous. While there is nothing wrong with asking young people to make sacrifices for the good of others, there is something very wrong with forcing them to do it by using their education and future as blackmail because they are not rich enough to pay for college on their own. The whole idea of service is that it is voluntary. When you force people to do it, it is no longer service – it is servitude.

The corporate concept that youth need to be forced to do service reflects the anti-youth idea that they are lazy, selfish, anti-social – that they are idle because they do not want to work, not because there are no jobs available. These anti-youth stereotypes which permeate the mass media are particularly aimed at working-class and racially and nationally oppressed youth.

WORKING-CLASS VERSION ■ A working-class version of National Service would move in the opposite direction from the corporate one, answering the youth crisis by providing real educational, job and service opportunities at union wages. It would include sufficient loan forgiveness and it would be adequately funded so that all who want to may participate. Such a concept of service would also include affirmative action enabling racially and nationally oppressed people to participate on an equal basis.

In order to effectively address the crisis, a peo-

ple's national service would be part of a larger, far-reaching program to provide a future for youth. It would be coupled with full funding for education.

Thus, there is a clear need to combine service with a far-reaching, emergency jobs-creation program. Young people, even those of high school age, increasingly need paying jobs. Because of the deepening economic crisis, increasing numbers of youth must work to supplement family income, especially in households where parents are unemployed or underemployed. In many families, young people are the parents. Thirty percent of today's families are headed by a young person.⁴ And the great majority of college students, including full-time students, must now work in order to pay tuition and living expenses because financial aid only scratches the surface. Many hold down two or even three jobs and go to school full time.

The official unemployment rate among youth now stands at 19.7 percent. For African American youth it is 38.5 percent.⁵ Real unemployment is much higher, because the official rates do not take into account those unemployed who have never had a job, or who are discouraged and not looking – two huge categories among youth. In many poor inner city neighborhoods, estimates are that real youth unemployment is as much as double the official rate.

It is likely that many unemployed youth, desperate for any kind of job, will try to enter the National Service program for even a sub-minimum wage job. But this anti-youth and anti-labor device is not a substitute for what is needed – a massive, emergency jobs program that will put millions of young people to work rebuilding America, that will include training and affirmative action.

CLINTON PROPOSAL ■ Thus the Clinton National Service must be examined within the context of these two class approaches. While Clinton's service is different in many ways from previous proposals it has some basic weaknesses and therefore has created more complicated tactical questions. How to take advantage of the opening and bring mass pressure to bear on the administration to improve it, while continuing to demand more basic solutions, is a major task before the youth and student movement.

Clinton's service is a mixed bag, and contains elements of both classes' versions of service. Unlike Nunn's plan, Clinton's National Service is not proposed as a replacement for other financial aid pro-

grams. The loan program he is proposing will still have subsidized interest rates, like the current Guaranteed Student Loans. And participants in the program will receive a wage, although it is proposed at only 85 percent of the minimum wage, a woefully inadequate \$3.61 an hour.

Some important improvements in the program have already been won by pressure from people's forces. Students have fought for and won health care and child care benefits for participants; direct lending from the government, making the loan forgiveness tax-exempt, and other improvements. These gains show that the administration is vulnerable to pressure.

Clinton's National Service Trust Act of 1993, introduced into Congress on April 30, would fund 25,000 service positions in 1994, growing to 150,000 by 1997.

In Clinton's plan participants would receive \$5,000 (cut down from the \$10,000 originally proposed) in loan forgiveness or tuition vouchers, for every full year of service. The government stipend of 85 percent of the minimum wage will be paid through each service program, which may supplement the stipend if they want.

Introduced along with this bill was the Student Loan Reform Act of 1993, which would remove the banks from the student loan process. Under the current system, the government actually pays banks billions of dollars every year to lend money to students. They charge students exorbitant interest and processing fees, and the loans are backed by the government so the banks are guaranteed payment. This bill would end the shameful profiteering by the banks at the expense of students because the money would be lent directly by the government. This will save over \$1 billion a year, which will go to lower the interest rates on student loans after 1997.

It is a victory for students, whose organizations, including the United States Student Association (USSA), have been fighting for years to stop bank profiteering on student loans. The banks and secondary lending institutions, meanwhile, have launched a huge campaign to stop direct lending, spending tens of thousands of dollars to set up bogus student organizations to lobby against it.

A big negative feature of Clinton's proposal is that it leaves loan collection to the IRS, allowing it to garnish wages of people in default. USSA is fighting against this proposal.

But will National Service as proposed, and the

education policies of the Clinton administration provide the solution that is needed to the youth crisis, as its proponents claim? Will it move our country towards making education a right, not a privilege?

BASIC FLAWS ■ The answer is no, it will not. In fact, in many ways the National Service program and the loan programs as proposed continue the trends of the last two decades of cutting federal funding to education and putting the burden of cost on students. It is putting a band-aid on a deep wound.

Clinton's National Service comes tied to a proposed education budget that is even worse than the Bush Administration's budgets. Clinton has proposed deep cuts in almost every federal student aid program in existence, particularly those aimed at helping the neediest students. His budget zero-funds State Student Incentive Grants, which help colleges give scholarships to low-income students. Also cut are College Work-Study, Supplemental Education Opportunity Grants, Perkins Loans, and the TRIO Program for economically and racial disadvantaged students. The Pell Grant program received an increase in total funding, but only enough to cover part of last year's massive shortfall. The maximum grant will stay the same, and the average grant will actually go down by \$150. Clearly Clinton has no intention of "throwing money at the problem" of the education crisis, even though that is exactly what is demanded.

National Service as proposed will not provide any solutions for the vast majority of prospective students. At its height, it will only cover 150,000 people – only three percent of the five million who take out student loans every year.

But even for many who can get into the program, it is not sufficient. Consider that the loan forgiveness being offered is only \$5,000 after a year of service – less than the debt of the average college graduate. Many millions of working-class students, especially those from poorer families and those who have pursued graduate studies, are emerging from the universities with debts of \$20,000 or \$30,000 or even more. Will the possibility of gaining loan forgiveness of \$5,000 be particularly encouraging to a prospective student from a working-class family who is considering taking on a debt of many times that?

Clinton's National Service is part of a bigger picture – the steady destruction of student financial aid grants, in favor of a system totally based on loans in

which the government forces students and their families to finance education themselves.

All across the country in recent years as funding for higher education has been decimated, students have engaged in all kinds of struggles – mass demonstrations, strikes, sit-ins, lobbying campaigns – in protest of the cuts. The rallying cry for this movement, from coast to coast has been, “Education is a right. Fight, fight, fight!” Increasingly, students and others are coming to the conclusion that society has the responsibility to provide quality, affordable education for all who are qualified and wish to attend.

Meanwhile, Bill Clinton’s approach – stated during his presidential campaign and since taking office – is: “Everyone who is willing to borrow the money should have the right to an education.”⁶ In other words, you have the right to an education if you pay for it yourself.

If education is truly to be a right, the government has to guarantee it. The experience of the past 20 years proves that when loans form the basis for student “aid,” millions are locked out. It is no accident that the numbers of working-class youth who have been able to get an education, in particular racially and nationally oppressed, have plummeted over the past two decades at the same time that grants have been cut in favor of loans. Not only is it an obstacle to enrolling in college, studies indicate that those who are forced to take out loans to finance their education are much more likely to drop out than those who receive grants.⁷

The risk that a young person must assume by taking a student loan today is tremendous, when increasing numbers of people are graduating from college to find that they cannot find a job. But the loans still need to be paid back. In fact, the loans must still be paid back if a student fails to graduate from school. This creates further barriers to those who have academic difficulties, found in larger numbers among working-class and racially and nationally oppressed youth who have been subjected to the worst schools their whole lives. Financial pressures are the biggest cause of student dropout.

Nevertheless, the Clinton National Service plan represents an opening, because the ruling class has been forced to acknowledge the youth crisis and put their solutions on the table. Now that the debate has been opened, it is up to the people’s coalition that elected Clinton, giving him a mandate for basic change, to turn on the pressure and demand more

basic solutions.

We must build on the victories already won to transform National Service into a better program. The youth and student movement is already moving on this. USSA, for example, has taken a position in favor of service with the following important changes. They propose that loan forgiveness, which was slashed in half in the final proposal, must be restored to at least the original \$10,000 per year. In the current proposal, selection of participants is left up to each service organization, but the program should guarantee participation of low-income youth and racially and nationally oppressed youth, with an information campaign aimed at low-income youth. Student loans should be forgiven for those who enter low-paying service jobs and for those who are unemployed, and all debt should be forgiven after 15 years.⁸

YCL PROGRAM ■ The Young Communist League has also made proposals to move National Service in the direction of the working-class version of service.

In his letter to youth, Clinton says that participants in National Service will be paid “a living wage.” But \$3.61 an hour is not a living wage, it is a sub-poverty wage. The wage should be increased to double the minimum wage. In order to guarantee equality of participation in the program to all, it must include affirmative action guidelines, including quotas, to ensure that young people of color are not locked out.

Even a transformed National Service plan alone is not enough, but it could pave the way for more far-reaching victories. It should be a lesson for today’s generation that the 1930s’ version of National Service, the CCC, was a precursor to the more massive youth jobs programs of the era, which provided jobs to millions of unemployed youth at the height of the Great Depression. It was the result of years of mass pressure on the Roosevelt Administration by youth, in unity with the trade unions, the unemployed movement and others. The victories grew and built on each other, as the force of the people literally transformed the Roosevelt Administration. Similar possibilities exist today, and Clinton’s small and inadequate proposals, and the mandate he has from the election to provide jobs and education on an emergency basis, are the opening.

The social and economic crisis of youth demands an emergency response, comprehensive and far-reaching, from the government; only this

will solve the crisis among today's youth. The YCL demands emergency measures – legislation for a massive jobs-for-youth program that would create millions of permanent union-wage jobs for unemployed youth. Affirmative action guidelines and a special focus on jobs in the cities must be enforced. Unemployment compensation must be extended to those unemployed people who have never had a job, who are majority young people, if they cannot be provided with jobs.

END THE EDUCATION CRISIS ■ If service is going to be truly voluntary, and not servitude in exchange for education, the government must take immediate steps to deal with the education crisis. The federal government must restore the Reagan-Bush cuts to education and aid to the states, fully fund Pell Grants up to the full amount of student need or at the very least at the \$3,700 level authorized by the Higher Education Act of 1992.

It is time for the federal government to step in to rein in education costs. Special legislation to control education costs – including tuition, book prices, eliminating interest on education loans, restoring funding to higher education including grants – should be introduced into the Congress.

The federal government must move to eliminate racism and guarantee equality. This must include enforcement of goals and timetables for attendance of non-white youth in all universities – including in the availability of financial aid, equalization of funding for public schools, multi-cultural education and anti-bias laws on the campuses and in the communities.

The ruling class aims to deal with the crisis by making youth, students and working people pay even more of the bills. But the only way to fund the massive jobs and education programs that are needed is to go to where the money is. To get out of the crisis, we must tax the rich and slash the bloated cold war military budget. This would free up the money needed to fully fund education, and provide jobs or income for all unemployed youth.

The YCL believes that in order to deal with the education and youth crisis in a basic way, we have to look at the economic and social system in our country. The roots of the crisis are buried deep in capitalism. Providing education and decent jobs for all young people is not profitable, and therefore the system does not do it unless forced to by the mass action of the people. The way to provide the basis

for a secure future for the young generation is to fight for socialism, a society where the wealth – the factories, farms, and, yes, the universities – are owned by the people.

The "Peace Corps" image of National Service has made it difficult for the student movement and others to squarely deal with the program's flaws and the threat to higher education it poses. It has become easy to peg students and youth as lazy or as freeloaders when they voice criticism of the program. The program has gained wide support in Washington among prominent liberal Democrats, like Senators Tom Harkin and Ted Kennedy.

Therefore, many in the student movement do not think that it is possible to fundamentally change the program. On the other hand, the corporations and the ultra right are not shy about pressuring Clinton. They're not scared of wrecking his "honeymoon," or of losing their place at the table. We cannot afford to have that approach either.

Winning the fundamental changes needed in National Service requires militant, mass action by students and youth, together with our allies – mass demonstrations, petition drives, mass lobbying, and sit-ins. And a national march on Washington for youth rights – jobs, education and equality – is an idea whose time has come. Only this kind of mass pressure can move the administration. And students can only win victories for youth rights by building a coalition with other forces who are negatively affected by the crisis, like the trade union movement, African American organizations, Latino organizations, and so on.

National Service – as proposed – will not alone provide the youth of our country with a future. But if we move to take advantage of the openings it presents, the power of youth and students and our allies can win the massive emergency measures we need to meet the crisis and provide our generation with a future. □

FOOTNOTES

1. United States Student Association ACCESS Campaign Organizing Manual, 1991, Maxwell/Dong, p. 47.
2. Ibid. pp. 49-50, 67.
3. USSA Organizing Manual, 1990.
4. Ibid.
5. United States Labor Department, January 1993.
6. Bill Clinton, speech at the Rainbow Coalition Conference, Washington D.C. June 13, 1992.
7. Report on Undergraduate Completion & Persistence at Four Year Colleges & Universities, American Council on Education 1989.
8. Recommendations on National Service USSA, 1993.

International Notes

SOLIDARITY MESSAGES

On behalf of U.S. Communists, CPUSA Chairman Gus Hall sent greetings to the 9th Congress of the Communist Party of Venezuela, the 4th Congress of the Communist Party of Spain, and the 5th Congress of the Communist Party of Catalonia.

Congratulations and greetings were sent to the Communist Party of Sri Lanka on the occasion of its Jubilee 50th Anniversary, and to the Communist Party of Guadalupe on the occasion of the 49th Anniversary of its newspaper *l'Etincelle*.

COMMUNIST PARTY ACTIVITY

● **Italy:** In recently held local and mayoral elections the Communist Refoundation emerged as the 4th biggest party in the country with just over eight percent of the vote.

● **Germany:** A delegation of the German Communist Party visited Vietnam and China at the end of May as guests of the Communist parties of both socialist countries.

● **Nepal:** The Communist Party of Nepal gained close to 30 percent of votes cast in recent elections.

● **Poland:** The Union of Polish Communists (Proletariat), assessing the economic and social disaster facing workers and peasants in Poland, recently declared its full support to the spreading strike movement and underscored the need for unity and political action. In a recent statement they said:

Our Party is actively pursuing political cooperation between all Left parties, despite ideological and tactical differences. We have set up local Left organizations as a means of launching a united fightback against the right-wing offensive. Pressure must be mounted for a new general election, as only a new balance of forces in Parliament can stop the privatization of the state sector... One important task ... is to convince other Left organizations of this.

Following the demise of socialism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, U.S. imperialism has laid claim to world rule. International organizations such as the U.N. are supporting U.S. political aims.

But so are Poland's new rulers.... The Solidarnosc movement received more than \$5 million from one source alone - the U.S. National Endowment for Democracy. It is also known that the U.S. secretly conspired with the Vatican to destroy socialism in Poland.

We are in a situation similar to neo-colonial countries. We must strengthen international cooperation with other forces facing and resisting the same kind of economic and social problems.

We must build solidarity between progressive and anti-capitalist forces around the world. Capitalism cannot solve the crisis and it cannot prevent the victory of the forces fighting for social justice. Those forces represent the majority in today's world.

● **India:** An international seminar in Calcutta, India commemorating the 175th anniversary of the birth of Karl Marx was a great success. The seminar was sponsored by the Communist Party of India (Marxist).

The Communist Parties of Cuba, Vietnam, Democratic Peoples Republic of Korea, South Africa, Bangladesh, Nepal, Mexico, Brazil, the Phillipines, Australia, Canada, Greece, Turkey, Portugal, France, Germany, Belgium, and Britain were present. The Communist Party of India was a full participant.

Greetings were read from the Communist Party of China and the Russian Communist Workers Party. Papers were submitted by the Communist parties of the United States, Syria, and Cyprus.

In the keynote address Harkishan Singh Surjeet, General Secretary of the CPI (M) said in part,

As a creative science, Marxism-Leninism identifies the tendencies and directions of development. In doing so it provides the possibilities for mass popular intervention in those developments in the pursuit of establishing an exploitation-free society.

The historical inevitability of the replacement of exploitation based on capitalism by socialism is not automatic.

The key factor that can effect such a social transformation is the correct ideological political and organizational leadership of the growing struggles of the working class, the peasantry and all working people.

When this class consciousness is diffused or blunted the forces of counterrevolution exploit the situation to perpetuate their class rule.... Crises by themselves cannot cause the collapse of capitalism automatically. A conclusion of seminal importance drawn by Marx was that capitalism has to be overthrown. It does not automatically collapse.

International Commission, CPUSA

POLITICAL AFFAIRS

In the Parish of the Poor: Writings from Haiti, Jean-Bertrand Aristide. Translated and edited by Amy Wilentz, New York: Orbis Books, 1991, 112 pp.

"Je suis convaincu que le peuple peut y arriver. Et ensemble, comme toujours, nous y arriverons. / Mwen seten n ap rive fe sa. E n ap rive fe I ansanm ansanm kom toujou."

From a flyer distributed by le Comite contre la Repression en Haiti at a New York City rally in February, 1992. Translation: "I am convinced that the people will overcome. And together, as always, we will overcome."

— Jean Bertrand Aristide.

The history of Haiti is not without great revolutionary fervor. During the time when slavery was a brutal fact of life on the Caribbean island, 450,000 slaves revolted (Oct. 30, 1791) and left thousands of burning cane fields in their wake. Toussaint L'Ouverture emerged as a great and unifying leader. Contemporary admirers in France said of him: "Of the two Bonapartes the black one is greater." When L'Ouverture made a new constitution for Haiti (then called St. Domingue) and became governor, Napoleon set about to destroy him and sent to Haiti — on January 29, 1802 — no less than 83 ships. (J.A. Rogers, *World's Great Men of Color*, New York: Macmillan, 1972, V. II, p. 233)

Recent history has seen Haiti suffer economically, socially and politically, especially under the ruthless and desperate dictatorship of the Duvalier family, which ended in 1986 when the revolutionary spirit of Haiti's people once again emerged and brought about the fall of Jean-Claude Duvalier.

During these later years Father Jean-Bertrand Aristide became known as a leader from and for the people. Instead of a soap box he spoke from a pulpit in a Roman Catholic Church called St. Jean Bosco in Port-au-Prince. Democratically elected as president in 1991, then driven from Haiti in a violent coup by Duvalier's cronies, Aristide has produced a book, more like a letter, directed to his constituency in the Latin American church, to his people in the wider community in Haiti and, of course, to whoever among us are alert enough to listen. "Listen, and then tell me you do not recognize yourselves..."

Amy Wilentz, translator and editor, writing in the forward to *In the Parish of the Poor: Writings from Haiti*, writes:

He gave hope to his parishioners from the slums, and his words helped them understand in an analytic as well as symbolic way the structure of the system that had entrapped them.... Aristide listens closely to the murmurings of the people, and responds, and they also listen to what he says, and respond. He admits that he can bring the Haitian people out into the street, but he says he can do so only when the Haitian people have themselves already decided to take to the street.

Ms. Wilentz observes that Haiti is a very Catholic country, and like other Latin American countries the Church plays a very large role in the daily lives of its poor and disenfranchised people. The Haitian Church underwent a dramatic change in the 1970s and there emerged a grassroots development of "base ecclesia communities" (in Creole called "ti kominite legliz" or TKL). These TKLs promoted a climate of community involvement and began to attract many young people and peasants, drawn to the popular activism they advocated. Aristide played a key role in this movement and his popularity grew out of it.

Aristide's *In the Parish of the Poor* takes us on a brief tour of a country of six million people living on 27,500 square kilometers of land urging that "we should not be mysteries to one another" and pleading to those who would leave to come back and make a new Haiti. "But that is all we ask, a decent poor man's home, and no more corruption, no more inflicted misery, no more children bathing in sewage." He shows us the slums and destitution of places like La Saline, "and the other slums like it that are spreading like contagion in a city that for years has been clogged with the detritus of the deadly economic infection called capitalism." Who among us cannot see the inevitable parallels in our own U.S. cities and elsewhere?

Aristide, who is only in his late thirties, has faced death many times. Yet somehow, through force of will, exceptional courage, determination and the support of Haitians (in Haiti and in the United States) and many others sympathetic with

the plight of the Haitian people, he has endured, even triumphed.

He tells of many incidents in this long and violent struggle. In January, 1986, Aristide and his church members were at St. Jean Bosco Church planning a "demonstration of faith" against a Duvalier inflicted state of siege when a man appeared just before a morning mass and pointed a revolver at Aristide:

I felt about it then – as I still do ... if I were to die, let me die in my place, where I belong. Therefore, I just sat there, waiting, and he pointed the revolver at me, and then – miracle, miracle – he opened it, took out the bullets, and handed the gun and the bullets to me.

Later, after Duvalier fled Haiti, Aristide recounts that it was decided to organize a Mass of Mourning and a prayer procession to Fort Dimanche – a notorious prison and torture chamber and symbol of the army, police and Tontons Macoutes (Duvalier's terroristic special armed forces): "We were broadcasting live from the procession and we would broadcast live from Fort Dimanche. We arrived at the prison in the midst of a crowd of thousands and thousands of people."

Aristide describes how at the moment of their arrival at the prison they saw the administrator of Fort Dimanche, along with his henchmen, holding weapons and then begin firing on innocent people who were begging for mercy with rosaries in their hands. He saw people fall "by the dozens." "The driver is gone, but the car is still here, loaded down with the weapons of Duvalierism."

There is much more in this book that would rival any other for its scenes of violence and harrowing escapes from imminent death. But the very vivid and unmistakable message here is that the Haitian people are determined that their elected President be returned to them and soon – or else. A man who will never turn back, Aristide makes this very clear: "No bullets or rifles or Uzis, no tear gas or bombs, will ever dissuade us from that willingness.... We are unshakable. Like the poor, we will always be with you. Kill one among us, and we rise up again, a thousand strong."

Jean-Bertrand Aristide's commitment to democracy and freedom in Haiti grew out of his experience within a movement in the Haitian Church that Aristide calls "the Little Church – Ti Legliz." Further, it is anathema to him (and to any human logic)

that Church leaders have since condemned him rather than supported him and the Little Church. He clearly makes a distinction between the Church hierarchy and the thousands of Church members and leaders in the communities. Aristide offers the following report as evidence:

When it became clear that the Church's literacy program was finally having some effect, the bishops shut it down....

The bishops supported the sham elections that ended in blood....

They supported the puppet president....

They spoke as one against the Little Church....

They attempted to silence me, to send me away....

They dismissed all of the journalists who gave the Church's radio station in Haiti its legitimacy and popularity....

Aristide concludes that the Pope must be like the CEO of a multinational corporation and he therefore must protect its international interests. He charges that the Pope and the "middle managers" and other "executives" of the Church "have not simply walked away from the workers, but have striven actively to impede the workers' progress toward liberty and equality." Aristide feels double-crossed, abandoned and deeply hurt because it is the same institution that inspired him that now sabotages his every effort. Aristide reasons,

When the pastor only feeds the children, he is participating in that corrupt system, allowing it to endure. When the pastor feeds the children AND helps organize the peasants, he is refusing the corrupt system, bringing about its end. Which behavior is more Christian, more evangelical?

The *Parish of the Poor* is divided into two parts. Part I, "In the Parish of the Poor, A letter to my Brothers and Sisters," and Part II, "Sermons and Messages." This small book of 112 pages also includes two stunning messages delivered on Radio Soleil and Radio Haiti-Inter (Fall, 1988). During this time the Haitian bishops decided to oust him from his religious order. Haitians were observing a general strike called by the nation's largest labor union against the rule of General Avril. Father Aristide's church was burned to the ground and his congregation massacred (September, 1988).

Today, Haitians still wait for the restoration of

their democratically elected government and they wait still for their democratically elected President, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, to return. Aristide, writing on the op-ed page of the *New York Times*, advises that:

The solution to Haiti's crisis is not elusive. Visas of the leaders and financiers of the coup regime can be annulled and their international assets frozen. Instead of simply blockading Haitians inside the country, the U.S. could use its Navy to make the economic embargo effective, stopping the delivery of all oil and weapons. The democracy embraced by Haitians will endure if the international community remains firm.

In a September 9, 1992 interview on a TV program about Haiti on a PBS channel, Aristide said, "I am following the people, they are not following me." The *Parish of the Poor* confirms this revolutionary observation on every page. It is impossible to feel discouraged about anything when one follows such events in the lives of a people who continue against incredible odds. Jean-Bertrand Aristide never seems to pause and think about odds; he only thinks about tomorrow:

Are we there yet? No.
Do we want to get there? Yes.
Can we get there? Yes.

Therese D'Agostino

Southern Labor and Black Civil Rights – Organizing Memphis Workers, by Michael Honey, University of Illinois Press, 1993, 364 pp, \$17.95

There is a growing bibliography of labor history books dealing with many aspects of the class struggle in the U.S., but few that have explored so thoroughly the close interconnection of the labor movement and the African American civil rights movement as *Southern Labor and Black Civil Rights – Organizing Memphis Workers*, by Michael Honey.

As the author puts it early in his book,

Only recently have labor historians begun to connect black working-class activism and industrial unionism to the rise of the civil rights movement. Civil rights histories for their part rarely consider the influence that industrial union growth or the experience of Black workers had on

the rise of the freedom movement in the 1950s and 60s. This book then, seeks to document a missing link in the evolution of the Black freedom movement and to analyze labor history with a new perspective.

Honey spent more than ten years researching and working on this book, but was also an activist in the civil rights movement in Tennessee for many years. He was an organizer for the Southern Conference Educational Fund and Southern Director for the National Committee Against Repressive Legislation. So, although he has in recent years taught at several universities and is now an assistant professor at the University of Washington, he is no ivory-tower academic. He was a participant in many of the battles he describes, and his deep respect and affection for the heroes he writes about – both Black and white – comes through very clearly in the incidents and stories described.

Honey's book is a major contribution to deepening the understanding among partisans of the fight for strong unions and full equality of African Americans that both struggles are interdependent. Progress for both groups depends on their mutual strengthening. At the same time, the book demonstrates in a clear and dramatic way the heroic role played by the Communist Party, especially its Southern members, in fighting to organize the unorganized and for racial equality in the face of the most brutal, repressive and overwhelming forces of industry, the press, the police, the FBI and anti-communist elements in the AFL and CIO in the Memphis area.

The book is thoroughly documented, with 53 pages of notes giving sources and added information on the developments described. Much of the book is based on many hours of oral tapes with the major figures of these struggles.

Among those whose experiences and judgments are drawn upon heavily is William (Red) Davis, a leading Communist in the Memphis area in the '30s and '40s, who is now Labor Secretary of the Communist Party of Missouri. Davis was a member of the National Maritime Union working on the river boats and came to play a major role in organizing drives in several industries, leading many battles against the racist practices that blocked labor unity.

Honey credits the Communists with being the decisive force in the great successes that built the CIO in the South in the 1930s and '40s in the face of the deep-seated racism and reactionary political

domination of the area.

In dealing with the effects of the Cold War on the labor and civil rights movements in the 1950s, Honey observes that,

The main obstacle to continued unity within the labor movement remained the general drive toward reaction in the country, not the faulty vision of party leaders or the mistakes of trade union leftists.

No matter how dedicated they might be, neither the handful of Communists and leftist activists in the Southern CIO, nor the CIO itself, could stop the upsurge of the larger forces of the Cold War era, nor could they halt the segregationist reaction against growing Black civil rights demands. No matter what positions leftists might have taken, it would not have saved them from the onslaught to come.

This book is no dry collection of statistics or listing of events, rather it resounds with the sounds of the battles fought by courageous Black and white workers in the South. There are stories like the brutal attack on George Bass, organizer for the Rubber Workers Union who was beaten by a gang of Firestone Company goons while distributing leaflets at plant gates. There is the story about Thomas Watkins, courageous Black longshoremen's leader who was the target of a police kidnapping but managed to escape with his life. These and many other stories of working-class heroes who fought well and hard to help change the way things were in Memphis run throughout the book.

For those in the labor movement today who wonder why unions are not able to more effectively organize the unorganized and win more gains, Honey's book is a powerful beacon illuminating the kind of strategy that is needed – a strategy that takes the fight to the companies on the key issues of Black/white unity against all forms of discrimination and inequality. This is a strategy based on the full utilization of all the resources of the workers themselves, and their allies – and the inclusion of the most dedicated and far-seeing sections of the working class, namely Communists. □

Herb Kaye

The Splendid Blond Beast: Money, Law, and Genocide in the Twentieth Century; by Christopher Simpson, New York: Grove Press, 1993, 399 pp.

A few years ago Christopher Simpson penned *Blowback*, which detailed the fascinating story of how the U.S. ruling class helped to bring Nazi war criminals to this nation after World War II. This patently illegal act not only saved these vermin from war crime tribunals and just retribution, but their presence on these shores was a key element in solidifying the right wing and galvanizing cold war policies of anti-communism that ultimately contributed to the demise of the Soviet Union.

In the volume at hand, Simpson continues this important story. The title of this work is taken from Friedrich Nietzsche, who called the

aristocratic predators who write society's laws "the splendid blond beast" precisely because they so often behave as though they are beyond the reach of elementary morality.... We can imagine them returning from an orgy of murder, arson, rape and torture, jubilant and at peace with themselves as though they had committed a fraternity prank.... (p. 3)

The focus here is primarily on the Holocaust during World War II – which is inextricably bound up with the Nazi attempt to destroy the Soviet Union – and the historical precedent for this bestiality, i.e. the genocide launched against Armenia years earlier by Turkish elites.

The author seeks to draw larger conclusions about why and how genocide can take place. Those of us in the United States who are familiar with what has befallen the Native Americans should not and cannot be indifferent to these questions. It is noted that the Nazis sought to compartmentalize the process of the Holocaust – some were involved in identifying victims, others were involved in transport, etc. – thus providing some with the excuse that they were not aware of the larger picture. This compartmentalizing often is mirrored in politics, where some focus on gender issues, others on race, but not enough examine the larger picture of capitalism, imperialism and the connections that exist among all of these phenomena.

Furthermore, the Nazis sought to provide a material incentive for some to deny the scope of what was taking place. For example, businesses seized from Jewish merchants were turned over to non-Jewish businessmen. The analogy is drawn with those Euro-Americans who took over the land of the indigenous peoples after they were expropriated. It should not be forgotten that those Jews,

Romani (Gypsies), gays and lesbians, Communists, Socialists, et. al. who were killed during the war were often killed as a product of being worked to death as slave laborers. Joseph Borkin discusses this at length in *The Crime and Punishment of I. G. Farben*.

In other words, the Holocaust can be seen as capitalism run amok. This is an important insight, for in the U.S. today the Holocaust often is viewed as something mystical and impossible to comprehend. Similarly, the critical role of monopoly capital is obscured. Fortunately, Christopher Simpson does not make this mistake:

Ford Motor Company built a vast factory at Cologne, then used it to manufacture cars for all of Central and Eastern Europe. There were also joint ventures, such as I.G. Farben's pacts with Standard Oil of New Jersey, some of which were subsequently found to be violations of U.S. law. General Electric purchased substantial shares of the German electronic giants, AEG and Siemens, and entered joint ventures with both companies.... Dillon, Read & Co., private U.S. investment bankers, specialized in loans to Deutsche Bank, Siemens and Flick interests. (p. 47)

These German partners of U.S. monopolies formed the backbone of the Nazi regime. And that is not all:

German subsidiaries of U.S. companies, including General Motors, Ford and several oil companies, made extensive use of forced labor as well. Buchenwald concentration camp supplied labor to G.M.'s Russelsheim plant ... and to the Ford truck plant at Cologne. (p. 96)

What comes clear in this book is that such monopolies were opposed to the Soviet Union primarily because they feared that socialism meant a circumscribing of the prerogatives of big capital. This motivated U.S. policy toward Moscow before and after the war.

After the war, the much heralded Marshall Plan was simply a continuation of this anti-communist policy. Its purpose "was never described as the revitalization of the German business elite," so that the ongoing battle against socialism will continue, though this was precisely the goal.

After the war progressive humankind pushed vigorously for ratification of the Genocide Convention so that history could not again be repeated. William Patterson, Paul Robeson and the Civil Rights Congress were in the forefront in urging ratification in this nation. But their efforts were blocked, in part because the U.S. ruling class did not want its internal record subject to inspection and sought to preserve room to maneuver.

This is a bracing story. Since the war, Cambodia and other nations have witnessed genocide. The weakening of socialism internationally has emboldened those who would like to repeat the macabre history of genocide. Only eternal vigilance as manifested in disciplined organization can guarantee that these ghastly plans do not leave the drafting board. For reminding us of this simple truth, once again we find ourselves in the debt of Christopher Simpson. □

Gerald Horne

Greetings, continued from page 18

SOVIET REPUBLICS

On behalf of the All-Union Leninist Young Communist League, we are sending our comradely regards to all the young Communists of the USA. Young Communists in your country carry on difficult but very important work to sustain the political, economic and social rights of workers in the USA. A main opposition to capitalism has been and remains the youth.

Unemployment, discrimination, the crisis of education and the lack of social rights are the main questions which capitalism has tried but cannot find the answers for when it comes to the rights of

workers in your "civilized" country. No capitalist government has been able to provide the answers on these issues when it comes to working youth. That is why it is so important to fight for socialism.

We wish you all success in your convention. Please continue your principled political work for the future of young people in your country.

We can learn from one another. Geographical distance does not mean differences of ideas. Communist ideas don't have borders. The Komsomol fights for international working-class solidarity of youth. Down with international imperialism! Long live socialism and communism! Workers of the world, unite! □

**All-Union Leninist Young Communist League
(Komsomol)**

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