

Black Liberation & the Class Struggle

Of the many “Big Lies” pushed by the Reagan/Bush administrations in the 1980s, perhaps the biggest is the proclamation of a “post-civil rights era” in which black people have supposedly been assimilated into the mainstream of American society. The truth is that for black America things are bad, and getting worse, as the rulers of this country ruthlessly slash social programs and abandon all pretense of support for integration. The “freedom, justice and equality” that the American bourgeoisie is so concerned about for the Eastern Bloc remains a dream deferred for the overwhelming majority of black Americans.

According to the National Urban League’s “State of Black America 1989,” per capita real income for poor people (a category which is disproportionately black) fell twenty percent in the decade after 1978. Black men working full time saw their real wages fall by ten percent in the same period. For those under thirty, average real income today is *half* of what it was in the early 1970s. Black unemployment, already more than double that of whites, is increasing. Infant mortality, already at Third-World levels in many ghetto neighborhoods, is also on the rise. Suburban segregation is rapidly catching up with the urban cores. According to the National Center for Health Statistics, in 1987 and again in 1988, life expectancy for blacks declined (the first back-to-back annual declines this century). White life expectancy went up both years. The Urban League concludes:

“It is ironic that in 1989, the 200th anniversary of the U.S. Constitution that defined blacks as ‘three-fifths’ of other persons, black income is well below 60% of white income, and other indicators find blacks at an even greater disadvantage.”

Why American Blacks are Not a Nation

Racism is a social phenomenon intimately connected to the rise of capitalism as a world system. The whole idea of racial inferiority/superiority first appeared as a rationale for the inhuman brutalities inflicted on the indigenous peoples of the “New World” by the Christianizing European conquistadors. A bit later similar theories were used to justify the slave trade. In fact, slavery was gaining commercial importance just as the revolutionary bourgeoisie was proclaiming “liberty, equality and fraternity” as the fundamental principles of human society. The logical contradiction posed by the slave trade was re-solved by redefining “human” to exclude all but white European men.

One response to the pervasive racism of American society has been “black nationalism.” This was the dominant strain in the black movement of the late 1960s, and it remains widely popular today. Black nationalism has existed in other periods in American history as well. Sometimes it has meant a call for black “self-improvement;” other times it has taken the form of Pan-African-

ism, or the demand for a separate black state. Today, black nationalists tend to focus on assertions of black “cultural identity” and a sentimental harkening back to “African roots.” What all forms of this ideology have in common is the belief that American blacks have an identity and a destiny separate from the rest of the American population.

Contrary to the nationalists, Marxists assert that blacks in America are *not* a nation but an oppressed race-color caste. A nation is a stable group of people with a common language and culture, common history, common territory, and a common economy. Blacks in the U.S. do *not* occupy a common territory, although there are large concentrations of blacks in all major urban centers, and particularly in the strategically important sectors of the proletariat. They do not speak a separate language, nor do they have a separate economy.

Far from being a separate nation, or a “colony” of white America, American blacks are *integrated* into the U.S. economy, while simultaneously *segregated* at the bottom of it. Wherever capitalism exists, it has produced a large group of workers who live on the margin of society, without steady employment or the resources or opportunities available even to the average member of their class. This layer (Marx called it the “industrial re-serve army”) provides a pool of low-paid workers who can be relied upon to do the dirtiest jobs, and are available to be thrown into new branches of industry. Their low wages tend to depress wages in general.

In the earlier phases of European capitalist development, the “reserve army” belonged to the same ethnic and national group as all other classes; it was distinguished only by its poverty and destitution. In contemporary Europe, this layer is mostly comprised of immigrants and “guest workers” from poorer countries. When American capitalism hit full stride after the Civil War, it had a ready-made labor reserve army in the multi-millioned black population, *already* branded from birth due to the ideology of racial inferiority handed down from slavery. Thus the *specific* features of American history combined with the *general* needs of capitalist development to create a black color-caste, forcibly segregated at the bottom of society.

The term “caste” is useful because it describes the social hierarchy of color which is superimposed on the class structure of capitalist America. Of course not all blacks are poor, nor are all poor people black. But blacks are barely represented among the rich and powerful, and even a black millionaire can never completely escape the social stigma that a racist society attaches to the color of his or her skin.

Black Separatism: A Product of Defeat

The late Richard Fraser, a long-time Trotskyist leader, was a pioneer in analyzing the historical dynamics of the

struggle for black liberation in America. Fraser noted that upsurges in separatist sentiment tend historically to follow setbacks in the struggle for equality. More than a quarter of a century ago he observed that:

“Because of the utter irrationality of race as a reason for social partition, segregation is absolutely required for the perpetuation of racial exploitation and because of this interdependence of segregation and discrimination, the Negro movement for nearly two centuries has directed its main line of struggle against segregation, against that barrier which prevents Americans from becoming a whole people, from becoming themselves.”

—“Revolutionary Integration,” 1963

It is significant that the first movement for black separation was initiated not by blacks, but by white slaveholders. The American Colonization Society was founded in 1816, with the aim of deporting all free blacks from the country. Free blacks, in the eyes of the Southern planters, were a living refutation of the ideology of white supremacy. After all, slavery was supposed to be the “natural condition” of black people. In answer to the Colonization Society’s schemes, free blacks launched the Convention Movement in 1817. Its members pledged to stay in the U.S. and fight for unconditional emancipation. That was the program of the first national black organization in American history.

In the ensuing decades, the abolitionist movement, with support from both blacks and many Northern whites, grew in size and militancy. The abolitionists suffered what seemed a historic defeat with the Dred Scott decision of 1857. Scott was a slave who claimed that his residence in Illinois made him a free man, and petitioned the Supreme Court for his freedom. Chief Justice Roger B. Taney, representing the court’s proslavery majority, rejected Scott’s claim with the infamous decision that black people “have no rights that white men are bound to respect.” Moreover, Taney ruled, because he was black, Scott could not be a citizen and therefore had no right to sue in a federal court. This decision sanctioned the activity of slave catchers, and was interpreted by many as legalizing slavery in every state in the Union. The Southern slave power appeared to have a firmer grip on the national government than ever before.

Many blacks began to feel that the program of emancipation was “unrealistic.” Even a section of the abolitionist movement turned temporarily toward separatism. Martin Delany, a prominent black abolitionist who is often referred to as the “father of black nationalism,” concluded that the fight against slavery was becoming hopeless. He went to England to negotiate for a piece of Africa in which to establish a black state. But this flirtation with separatism was short-lived.

When the Civil War broke out, and the anti-slavery fight began in earnest, Delany was one of almost 200,000 blacks to enlist in the Union Army. Another 30,000 blacks served in the Navy. The courage and determination with which they fought for their freedom, as well as the efforts of the estimated 300,000 who provided logistical support, was a decisive factor in the victory of the North and the destruction of the slave system.

The Civil War was followed by Reconstruction, the most dynamic and progressive period in Southern his-

tory. Blacks gained control of many state legislatures, and black and white poor farmers banded together in some areas to defend their common interests against the former slavocracy. But Reconstruction was betrayed in 1877 by President Rutherford B. Hayes, who agreed to remove federal troops from the South, thereby leaving blacks to the tender mercies of the ex-slaveholders. This resulted in the enactment of a spate of Jim Crow laws, which remained in force for nearly a century.

Under these conditions, black-separatist sentiments appeared once again. Booker T. Washington, who emerged as the principal representative of black America in the post-Reconstruction period, accepted segregation as a “necessary evil.” He argued that blacks should forget about equality and concentrate instead on acquiring skills to “better their lot,” with the aid of white phil-anthropists.

During World War I thousands of blacks flocked north to take jobs in industry, while many more joined the Army. According to Robert Mullen’s *Blacks in America’s Wars*, blacks comprised “more than one-third of the entire American forces in Europe.” The American government responded to the revolutionary wave touched off by the Russian Revolution of 1917 with a reactionary campaign to deport foreign-born leftists. The nativist, anti-communist sentiments whipped up quickly spilled over into attacks on blacks, who were deemed to be especially susceptible to communism. The *New York Times* commented that there was “no use in shutting our eyes to facts...Bolshevist agitation has been extended among the Negroes” (quoted in *Red Scare*, R.K. Murray). In addition to vigilante attacks on foreigners and leftists, the summer of 1919 saw murderous race riots erupt in 25 cities, aimed at driving black workers out of traditionally white jobs and housing.

By the mid-1920s, the Ku Klux Klan, which played a leading role in organizing and promoting the attacks on both blacks and “foreign subversives” in the post-war period, was at the height of its power. But something had changed. In many places “lynch law” terrorists were met by armed black self-defense. One of the more militant black groups which stood up to the racists was the African Blood Brotherhood, many of whose members later joined the Communist Party.

The white-supremacist terror campaign after World War I gave rise to Marcus Garvey’s “Back to Africa” movement, which combined militant denunciations of racism with declarations that integration was hopeless. Garvey’s program was both utopian and reactionary: utopian because there was no way that most American blacks could or would emigrate to Africa; and reactionary in abandoning the fight for freedom at home.

The CIO and the Struggle for Black Equality

The Garvey movement, which at one point claimed a membership of millions, was eclipsed in the 1930s by the rise of industrial unionism under the banner of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), which rejected the Jim Crow craft unionism of the American Federation of Labor. From the Chicago stockyards to Henry Ford’s auto factories, many employers routinely used blacks to break strikes. The CIO countered this by organizing

black workers and actively seeking to break down barriers to working-class unity.

The 1939 convention of the CIO adopted the following resolution:

“Whereas, employers constantly seek to split one group of workers from another, and thus deprive them of their full economic strength, by arousing prejudices based on race, creed, color or nationality, and one of the most frequent weapons used by employers to accomplish this is to create false conflicts between Negro and white workers, Now, therefore, be it—Resolved, that the CIO hereby pledges itself to uncompromising opposition to any form of discrimination, whether political or economic, based on race, color, creed or nationality.”

—quoted in *Caste, Class, and Race*, Oliver Cox

To a large extent the CIO lived up to that resolution. Blacks soon saw that unionization was a means to fight for a decent life and social equality, and they flocked to the CIO. Unlike the Garveyites’ “Back to Africa” pipe dream, the CIO was *real*, and many former Garveyites became CIO organizers. Black union members played important roles in the militant battles that established the CIO as a vital factor in American social and political life, and black community organizations provided important auxiliary support in many battles with the bosses.

The relative success of the CIO in its first decade in breaking down racial barriers, despite the continuing backwardness of a large section of its white membership, was not attributable to the moral caliber of its leadership. It was a practical necessity of the class struggle. And it is this connection of the *black* question to the *class* question that is the key to black liberation in America.

From Civil Rights to Black Power

The civil rights struggles which erupted in the 1950s were, in part, the legacy of the industrial battles that created the CIO in the 1930s. It also resulted from the unwillingness of the half-million black soldiers, sent overseas to fight for “freedom” during World War II, to accept Jim Crow when they returned. The original goal of the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 60s was the full *integration* of blacks into American society. The leadership of the movement thought that black emancipation could be won by removing the *legal* barriers to equality.

We do not in the least disparage the dedication and courage of the thousands of blacks and whites who risked (and in some instances, gave) their lives in the lunch-counter sit-ins, freedom rides and voter registration campaigns that demolished the framework of legal segregation in the South. But as the civil rights movement went North, it encountered an obstacle to equality far more formidable than legal segregation: the *economic* segregation of black people into ghettos, and into the lowest-paid and least secure sectors of the working class. It was chiefly as a result of the *failure* of bourgeois integrationism to overcome this obstacle that nationalist moods began to dominate the black freedom movement. When Martin Luther King Jr. went to Chicago in 1966, against the wishes of some of his fellow clergymen, he was stoned by white racists. This proved to be a turning

point. Many black youth quickly grasped that racism was not just a temporary obstacle to the fulfillment of “the American Dream,” but a fundamental part of the social order. Rejecting King’s “love-your-enemy” pacifism, they were drawn to the militancy of the black nationalists, who proposed that the goal of the movement should be “self-determination,” and asserted their right to self-defense “by any means necessary.” The failure of liberal integrationism and the default of the ostensibly Marxist left, which for the most part adapted to the reformist leadership, led the best militants to reject the whole perspective of integration.

Black Panthers: High Point of Black Nationalism

The early years of the Black Panther Party marked the high point of the black-nationalist movement. The Panthers proclaimed the necessity of a revolution to win black liberation. They took a militant stand against the pervasive police repression in the black community, and called for community self-defense. Initially, armed Panther patrols in Oakland met with success. However, they were soon targeted by a coordinated police campaign of state terror and assassination which, within a few years, had decimated their leadership. While those who survived ultimately degenerated into Democratic Party electoralism, the Panthers’ courage, sacrifice, and revolutionary spirit continue to inspire black and radical youth today.

Yet the politics of the Panthers were fundamentally flawed. In common with the vast majority of 1960s radicals, both black and white, the Panthers considered white “Middle America” to be a solid, undifferentiated reactionary mass. The white working class was not seen as a potential ally in revolutionary struggle, but as part and parcel of the American imperialist Babylon—hopelessly racist, bought-off and corrupted by capitalist consumerism.

The New Left imagined that revolutionary potential existed in the ghettos, whose residents were supposed to be beneath the consumerist mentality, and on the campuses, where radicalized petty-bourgeois students were presumed to be above it. Given that radical students and ghetto youth were a minority of society, it followed that the main impetus for revolution would not come from within the U.S., but from without.

Consequently, there was a tendency to look for inspiration from Third-World liberation struggles, and particularly the Stalinist-led deformed social revolutions in China, Vietnam and Cuba. But all of these movements were peasant-based guerrillaist formations with little connection to the working class. As a result, the simplest elements of the class struggle in an advanced capitalist country (strikes, picket lines and trade-union solidarity) were completely foreign to the majority of the radicals of the 1960s.

The Panthers saw the struggle of black people in America as one of self-determination. While they talked vaguely about socialism, their operational program focussed on advocating “community control” of the ghettos. But Watts, Roxbury and Chicago’s South Side are characterized by the *absence* of everything that makes

life enjoyable and rewarding. The notion that the highest goal of black people should be to win “control” of these miserable slums is essentially defeatist in that it implicitly *accepts* the segregated and marginal existence to which capitalism has consigned them. Separate can *never* mean equal. Moreover, “community control,” when generalized, encourages every racial and ethnic group to see itself as inhabitants of exclusive enclaves, fighting for control of its own turf. Thus, it tends to divide the working class, instead of uniting it in a struggle against capitalism.

While the road to revolutionary intervention in the working class is not a smooth or an easy one, it is not an impossible one either. The late 1960s and early 1970s saw a wave of militant class struggle in this country. In 1970 there was a bitter strike by workers at General Electric. That same year there was a militant and successful national postal workers strike, where black and white unionists stood together on the picket lines. But the political potential of these integrated class battles was not seen by the Panthers. The class struggle simply did not enter into their strategy for black emancipation.

In the Detroit auto plants a black nationalist formation evolved, known as the League of Revolutionary Black Workers (LRBW), which *did* orient to workers at the “point of production.” The LRBW grew out of the Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement (DRUM), which was initially organized in the 60 percent black Chrysler Hamtramck plant in 1968. DRUM led a successful wild-cat strike against some racist firings and carried out several other actions. But DRUM’s nationalist politics, which led it to exclude white workers regardless of their politics, prevented it from ever seriously challenging the pro-capitalist bureaucracy of the United Auto Workers. By 1971 the LRBW had decomposed into several competing factions which variously degenerated in economist, syndicalist and bourgeois-electoralist directions.

The decline of the powerful black movement of the 1960s is ultimately attributable to the inadequacies of the politics of its leadership, both the peaceful-legal reformism of the civil rights mainstream, and the more militant, but equally impotent, alternative posed by the younger nationalist radicals. Despite the heroism of thousands of subjectively revolutionary youth who embraced “black power,” the net effect was to deepen the isolation of the most militant elements of the black movement from the mass organizations of the proletariat. The derailing of the potentially revolutionary social movement for black equality helped clear the way for the current right-wing assault on the rights of the poor and oppressed. Today many of the minimal gains of the civil rights period have been reversed. Instead of a “war on poverty,” the ruling class has declared a “war on drugs,” which is little more than a war on black neighborhoods.

The Charles Stuart Case: Justice American-Style

The climate of bigotry is so pervasive today in America that, last fall, when a white Boston yuppie decided to kill his pregnant wife to collect a million-dollar insur-

ance policy, he could think of no surer way to beat the rap than pinning it on an anonymous black man. The eagerness with which the police, the media and the mayor swallowed his story, despite strong evidence to the contrary, touched off a wave of racist hysteria. In the days that followed, seven hundred black men were randomly stop-ped and interrogated by the police. The mayor of Boston, Raymond Flynn, and Massachusetts Governor Michael Dukakis showed up at Carol Stuart’s funeral. The whole affair became a major political event.

When Charles Stuart found out that his brother had gone to the authorities with the real story, he jumped off a bridge. But there is a lot to be learned about how the American “justice” system works by looking at what happened in the meantime. The police had already arrested a black suspect, William Bennett, and extracted a “confession” from him. They even got his nephew to testify that he had heard Bennett brag about the murder. To wrap up the case, the cops told Stuart who to point out in the line-up (a routine police practice called “coaching”).

If Charles Stuart’s brother had not come forward, Bennett would have been convicted. How many other black people have been jailed, hanged, electrocuted, or gassed after a “fair trial,” simply because of their color? No one knows, but a conservative estimate would put it in the tens, if not hundreds, of thousands. Needless to say, the cops who framed Bennett are not going to jail. This is the juridical face of the color-caste system of American capitalism.

The Crisis of Leadership in the Black Community

In the black community today there is not only a lack of revolutionary leadership, there is a virtual leadership *vacuum*. Even when the organs of state power are clearly exposed, as in the Stuart case, there is little or no pressure for any form of restitution or accountability. Black Democrats claim that the answer is electing more black officials to local and national office. Tell that to the victims of the MOVE massacre! If the eleven men, women and children murdered in Philadelphia in 1985 could speak today, they’d hardly be grateful to have been burned alive by a black mayor instead of a white one.

The Jessecrats, that is, the would-be socialists and nationalists who work for Jesse Jackson in the Democratic Party, sometimes like to pretend that they are “using” the Democratic Party as a springboard to build a powerful new movement for social justice and equality. But the Democratic Party is no springboard for social movements—it’s a graveyard. From the days of the Populist movement of the 1890s, to the CIO of the 1930s, and more recently the civil rights, women’s and anti-war movements, the story is always the same. Once the Democrats lock on and coopt the leadership, the popular protests disappear.

Revolutionaries offer no support to Jackson, a Judas-goat for the capitalists. We call for a *break* with the Democrats, the “left” face of racism and imperialist war, and for the creation of a *workers party* based on the unions

to fight for the interests of *all* the oppressed. Such a party must be organized around a perspective of class struggle—the expropriation of the capitalists and the creation of a workers government.

The absence of a militant leadership in the labor movement has opened the door for the likes of Louis Farrakhan, kingpin of the “Nation of Islam.” Farrakhan is a dangerous, anti-Semitic demagogue, yet his denunciations of racism strike a powerful chord with many blacks. However Farrakhan can offer no road forward for America’s brutally oppressed black millions. His program, apart from calling for veiling women and a prohibition on sex between unmarried people, proposes that blacks should liberate themselves through “black capitalism.”

The strategy of “black capitalism” is a cruel hoax. There may be enough space for a few small-scale, sweatshop operations, but how many black entrepreneurs can afford to start up car plants or television networks? For the masses of black people capitalism can offer nothing but an endless cycle of poverty and misery. What Marxists counterpose to the fraud of black capitalism is the program of *workers power*, of socialism. Despite the illusions of the American proletariat, and the tremendous social and political backwardness that weighs it down, the working class is the only historical agency for the creation of a society that can provide for the needs of all of its citizens, and ensure real social equality for all.

The black question is key to the development of a revolutionary movement in this country because racism has historically been the most important obstacle to class-consciousness in the white working class. Black workers, because of their oppression and their strategic weight in the working class, are destined to play a leading role in the coming American Revolution. But American imperialism cannot be overthrown by a “Black Revolution.” For a revolutionary movement to succeed, it must enjoy broad support from the whole proletariat. This means that it must be built on a program that, while championing the interests of blacks and other specially oppressed layers, is also capable of uniting *all* sectors of the working class.

The Power of Ideas

One of the key tasks of American revolutionaries is to try to reach the most class-conscious elements of the black community, and win them to a materialist understanding of the origins of racial oppression. The starting point for this is the proposition that *ideas have no color*. Karl Marx, Vladimir Lenin and Leon Trotsky were all white men. But their revolutionary ideas contain powerful tools for *ending* the social system that perpetuates racial oppression.

A socialist revolution of course is more than just a matter of ideas. It ultimately boils down to the question of state power—of defeating and disarming the thugs who serve and protect the system of forced segregation and racist terror. All the same, the battle of ideas—the struggle to change people’s consciousness about their lives and the world they live in—is an important part of preparing the ground for revolutionary change. The

capitalists do not rule by force of arms alone. They also rely on the dominance of bourgeois cultural and political values. The communications corporations—television, radio and newspapers—are all in the business of making money. However, at the same time, they are more than merely business enterprises, they are the chief purveyors of bourgeois ideology.

The role of capitalist ideological instruments is to shape perceptions of the world beyond the audience’s direct experience in such a way as to make existing social reality appear natural and even inevitable. This is achieved through a process of selection, emphasis, presentation and exclusion; all guided by a tacit consensus about what exists, what’s possible, what’s worth covering and from what angle.

One of the most invidious implicit assumptions of capitalist propaganda is that of supposedly unlimited opportunities in the “home of the free.” Every American is supposed to be the master of his or her fate. The implication is that poor people stay poor either because they do not *want* to better themselves or because there is something wrong with them. Accepting this notion leads to internalization of oppression, which is ultimately the most effective mechanism of control. One important function of a revolutionary movement is to enable the oppressed and exploited to see through the carefully constructed “reality” presented by the capitalist media, in order to understand how the world they live in really works, and how it can be changed.

Black Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!

Because of the structural dependence of American capitalism on maintaining the racial divisions in the working class through promoting white chauvinism, the struggle for black liberation is tied, at every step, to the class struggle. Take the recent escalation of racist violence against black Americans. There are three interconnected levels to this. Firstly, there is the rising tide of police violence against blacks. Secondly, there is lynchmob terror. (Michael Griffith was murdered in Howard Beach by a gang of white punks because he committed the “crime” of setting foot in a white neighborhood; Yusuf Hawkins was gunned down last year in Bensonhurst for the same reason.) The third level of this violence is closely connected to the first two, and that is the rise of organized Klan and skinhead terrorism against blacks and other racial minorities, gays and leftists.

How do Marxists propose to deal with this? First, we uphold the *right* of blacks (and others) threatened with racist violence to defend themselves. But that is not enough. It is also necessary to link the struggles of the labor movement to those of blacks and other specially oppressed layers. It is not an accident that the rising tide of racism is paralleled by attacks on labor. The recent turn of corporate America to violent union-busting, and the widespread use of scabs in strike situations, means that the union movement is going to *have* to organize self-defense guards if it is to survive.

The fat-cat bureaucrats who are today running the unions into the ground are, of course, opposed to such

tactics. But there is a lot of sentiment in the rank and file for doing something besides turning the other cheek, or going through the rigged “proper channels,” when the bosses use the cops to start trucking in scabs. We call for organizing *workers defense guards* to counter the violent attacks of the bosses and their thugs. Such formations, which would inevitably be composed of the most militant and class-conscious workers, could be a natural starting point for organizing joint defense squads with members of minority communities against racist and fascist attacks.

The struggle against unemployment is another key issue in which unionists and members of the black community share common interests. Likewise, the struggle for the integration of black workers into the skilled trades, and other “non-traditional” sectors of the work force, is a vital part of the fight for real equality. During the height of the civil rights movement, marchers carried signs that read: “For Full Employment!” and “Jobs for All!” But with the decline of that movement, the watchword became “jobs for us.” This sometimes goes by the name of “affirmative action,” or “preferential layoffs.” These policies were, for a time, being pushed by the government, partly as a response to pressure from the black community and the women’s movement, but more importantly, as a pretext for encroaching on the seniority system and other union prerogatives. Today, with the union movement on the defensive, the Reaganite Supreme Court majority has come out against such programs as “discriminatory” against white males.

Whether or not the union bureaucrats are guilty of racist discrimination, or any other abuses of the membership, Marxists oppose calling on the capitalist courts to intervene. Such interventions can only open up the organizations of the working class to control by the class enemy. Instead, we counterpose a strategy which *unites* black and white workers around their common class interests against the bosses and their labor lieutenants in the union leadership. We call for reducing the hours worked per week without reducing the wage package to create jobs and end unemployment. Linked to this is the call for union hiring halls and recruitment programs to get women, black and other minority workers into skilled positions and other jobs that have been denied them in the past.

Another concrete demand which addresses the special needs of the black population is the call for free tuition and open admissions to universities. In addition, it is necessary to fight for special remedial programs and student stipends to make it possible for more blacks to go to college. In the public school system we support busing and any other measures which, although partial, represent a step toward greater equality for black students. For the same reason, we support special minority programs in schools—in fact, we think that black history should be part of the curriculum for all students.

The Necessity of Revolutionary Leadership

We do not propose that black people should scramble for crumbs from the imperialist rulers. The capitalists are both unable, and unwilling, to integrate black Americans into this society on the basis of genuine equality. The struggle to end the oppression and degradation of black America requires nothing less than a socialist revolution. This is why the Marxist program for black liberation is one of *revolutionary integration*.

Only the organized labor movement has both the objective interest and the social power to lead a successful struggle against black oppression, because only the pro-letariat has the capacity to overthrow capitalism. Yet, in itself, the class is simply raw material for exploitation. For the labor movement to take up the struggle for socialism, it is necessary to organize a political struggle within the unions, led by organized formations, or caucuses, of individual militants committed to a program of consistent class struggle. Such caucuses must be constructed on the basis of a program which connects the immediate, day-to-day shop-floor issues with the historical necessity for the proletariat to expropriate the capitalists and establish its own government.

The establishment of an egalitarian, socialist society will not only benefit blacks but *all* the oppressed and exploited. All workers have a material interest in the fight for black liberation, which will prove a powerful motor force for proletarian revolution in the U.S. The road to black liberation lies in building a Leninist combat party capable of connecting the factories to the ghettos, and leading the struggle to uproot this system of exploitation and racial oppression. ■