

# REVOLUTIONARY TRANSIT WORKER

Supported by the League for the Revolutionary Party (LRP)

LABOR DONATED

Number 60

July 25, 2016

## Black Lives Matter! But Nothing Has Changed Where is the Struggle Going?

*The following leaflet was distributed at protests outside the Democratic Party convention in Philadelphia by transit workers who support the League for the Revolutionary Party (LRP) and its newsletter, Revolutionary Transit Worker, along with other supporters of the LRP.*

*Inside Local 100 we are fighting for our union to seriously mobilize in the struggle against the reign of police terror that is faced especially by Black people in this country. We want to raise workers' awareness that the cops' essential function is to enforce the "law and order" of a capitalist society designed to keep working-class and poor people down, divided by racism and prevented from uniting in struggle to defend their interests by laws like the Taylor Law that bans transit and other municipal workers from striking.*

*For those reasons we are emphasizing the need to end Local 100's shameful alliance with New York cops' Patrolmen's Benevolent Association (PBA) which has seen their outrageously racist leader Pat Lynch embraced as a "brother" by current union president John Samuelsen, as he was by previous Local 100 president Roger Toussaint. Local 100 leaders have long promoted an alliance with the PBA to try to avoid mobilizing the union in struggle to defend workers' interests. Sell-out leaders like Samuelsen have tried to present transit workers as forces for "law and order" deserving special reward for their role, just like the cops. But this alliance has only helped demobilize and demoralize transit workers and encouraged an indifference to the PBA's racism. And it hasn't stopped the police from brutalizing transit workers like when an off-duty cop assaulted and choked a platform conductor in 2014, only to be spared felony charges and get away with a slap on the wrist.<sup>[1]</sup> That's why we say that all unions must break ties with the PBA and all the cops' phony "unions."*

*We encourage transit workers who are interested in joining these efforts to get in touch with us.*



*A protest in Minneapolis in February demanding justice for Jamar Clark, an unarmed Black man shot dead by police last year.*

Despite one horrifying video after another capturing the murder of Black men and women by police, despite years of mass protests, and despite the hopes raised by the election of this country's first Black president – when it comes to the reign of police terror facing Black people in this country, nothing has changed.

That was the bitter truth recognized by millions of people across the country after watching the videos of police killing Alton Sterling in Louisiana and, just a day later, Philando Castile in Minnesota. It has only been confirmed by subsequent outrages like the shooting of Charles Kinsley in Miami while he was lying on the ground with his hands raised.

And it was the bitter truth that nothing has changed that at least partly motivated the decisions of two young Black ex-military men to take matters into their own hands and carry out deadly ambushes of police in Dallas, Texas and Baton Rouge, Louisiana before being killed by police themselves.

In fact, since the rise of the Black Lives Matter protest movement two years ago, the cops' racist reign of terror has gotten worse. Whereas 238 Black people were killed by police in 2014, more than 300 were killed the next year, with young Black men dying at the hands of police at a rate 5 times higher than for

whites of the same age. [2]

Under these circumstances, the desire for revenge against police for the blatant absence of justice after their many crimes is understandable and widespread. Such attacks remain rare, however, because the strongest desire of the masses of Black and other oppressed people is for peace and justice, not vengeance, and unlike the vigilante shooters, most still hope that they can find a decent life in this society.

Attacks on cops have been rare also because no matter how outraged people may be by the cops' atrocities, most recognize that the attacks actually help the police and the politicians who are determined to block any real change. They give the cops the opportunity to appeal for sympathy by pretending to be victims despite their daily brutality, and they allowed politicians to stoke fears of anarchy and rally support for the restoration of "law and order" against protesters.

Indeed, racist politicians and police responded to the Dallas and Baton Rouge ambushes of police by rushing to blame the Black Lives Matter movement for inspiring the shooters – a dirty lie designed to build support for a crackdown on a protest movement that has called for justice for the victims of police murders and brutality, not vengeance and relied on non-violent mass protest to press its demands. And while President Obama's response to the shootings avoided the racist demagoguery of those who directly blamed Black Lives Matter, his comments made clear that he shares their aim of strengthening the position of the police and ending the protest movement. Obama referred to the Dallas and Baton Rouge ambushes as "cowardly and reprehensible ... attacks on all of us ... and they have to stop," a far cry from his description of the videos of killings by police as merely "disturbing" and his insistence that Black Lives Matter protesters "stop yelling" and be patient because "change is hard and incremental."

What everyone committed to the struggle against the cops' racist reign of terror must recognize, however, is that while the calls by racist politicians for a

crackdown on the Black Lives Matter movement are a serious threat, it is the "soft cop" approach of President Obama and the Democratic Party that continues to represent the most effective opposition to the protest movement's demands for justice and reform.

The nationwide movement that has become known by the slogan *Black Lives Matter!* only exists because the uprising of protest against the murder of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri in 2014 succeeded in defying the attacks of militarized police and the occupation of the city by the National Guard under the direction of the state's Democratic Party governor. Long trapped in depression-like conditions of unemployment and poverty enforced by brutally racist police, the city's working-class and poor Black youth defied the calls for "peace" by old-guard civil rights leaders, politicians, and clergy and rose up against the odds because they knew they had little to lose and were in a fight for their lives. The heroic, weeks-long rebellion made it possible for a nationwide movement of protest to grow as new atrocities in other cities – the choking to death of Eric Garner in New York and the refusal of authorities to charge the cops with any wrongdoing, the killing of Freddie Gray in the back of a police van in Baltimore, and others – drove masses of people into the streets.

The movement lost momentum in other cities, however, when it could not overcome the influence of Democratic Party-aligned leaders. This was particularly clear in New York City, when tens of thousands of protesters hit the streets to protest the decision not to charge with any crime the cops who were caught on video choking Eric Garner to death. Garner's death was the direct result of liberal Democrat mayor Bill de Blasio's "Broken Windows" policy, which directs police to prioritize cracking down on petty "quality of life" misdemeanors in Black and Latino neighborhoods. While old-guard "civil rights" leaders like Al Sharpton had lost any authority to control the movement, Democratic Party-aligned Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) claiming to champion the struggle against police brutality stepped in to organize protests. But they directed them anywhere but to City Hall and a confrontation with the mayor. The energy of the protests was thus exhausted, allowing de Blasio to renew his support for the police, refusing to end his "Broken Windows" policy and even vowing to veto a City Council bill that would ban police using chokeholds! [3]

The movement was similarly exhausted when pro-

## Contact RTW!

Phone: (212)330-9017

E-Mail: [LRPCOFI@earthlink.net](mailto:LRPCOFI@earthlink.net)

Website: [www.lrp-cofi.org/TWU100/RTW/](http://www.lrp-cofi.org/TWU100/RTW/)

**League for the Revolutionary Party (LRP)**  
[www.lrp-cofi.org](http://www.lrp-cofi.org)

testers were led to place their hopes in President Obama, urging him to act where local politicians refused. When young people of color were dismissing old-guard “civil rights” leaders and their efforts to control the movement, Obama made a point of bringing particular Black Lives Matter youth leaders to Washington for a summit. As the recent Wikileaks publication of hacked e-mails from the Democratic National Committee makes clear, however, at least some of these “youth leaders” had been vetted by the White House to act as surrogates loyal to its agenda – namely DeRay McKesson and Brittany Packett of the pro-public school privatization NGO Teach for America.[4] So when Obama told these leaders that the point of their protests was to be heard and the fact that they were in the Oval Office was proof that they had achieved their aim and should now shift to patiently discussing ideas for reform, none of the “youth leaders” present complained and instead encouraged hopes that Obama would take action.

Since then, however, Obama’s Justice Department refused to press charges against the cop who killed Michael Brown. It has taken no action against the cops who killed Eric Garner. And it has taken no action against the cops who, without warning, shot 12-year-old Tamir Rice to death in Cleveland after he had been seen earlier in the day playing with a toy gun in a park but who was not even holding the toy when police arrived. No wonder Tamir Rice’s mother, Samaria, recently declared: “President Barack Obama, I don’t know what you’re doin’. I don’t know how you’re able to sleep at night and just sleep and wake up and see that another murder has happened on behalf of the government and nobody’s getting any justice ... I don’t even know what category to put [Obama] in, it’s just: I’m very disappointed.”

After the recent killings in Louisiana and Minnesota, Obama again summoned McKesson and Packett to the White House, along with figures like Al Sharpton, to help him appear to be preparing to take meaningful action. While fakers like McKesson and Packett are quickly becoming exposed in the eyes of activists committed to a real struggle against police injustice, the movement still faces a terrible crisis of leadership. No nationwide coordinated protests have been organized, and many activists remain hesitant to mobilize protests against the Democrats who are in power – for fear of aiding the Republicans and their loathsome presidential candidate, the openly racist Donald Trump.



*Local 100 president John Samuelson continues shamefully embracing racist PBA head Pat Lynch. We say labor must break all ties with the cops’ phony “unions.”*

Not mobilizing a struggle against both the Republicans and Democrats, however, means allowing the cops’ reign of terror to continue unchallenged and to cede authority to the Democrats. And Hillary Clinton, along with her husband, are more responsible than any other politician for the current nightmare of racist policing, because of their tough-on-crime laws and expansion of the country’s police forces and prisons.

Mass protests against racist police injustice targeting all those in power, Democrats and Republicans alike, are desperately needed. And the spectacle of the media and White House being able to select the most compliant figures to represent the movement shows that democratic organizations of struggle need to be built through which the masses in struggle can determine what actions to take, what demands to raise and

who represents them. But questions remain: how can the cops' reign of terror, along with the systemic racism and poverty they enforce, be challenged?

### A REVOLUTIONARY LEADERSHIP MUST BE BUILT

Police terror and racism are not accidental policies, but the necessary conditions for the survival of the capitalist system. As the system has lurched into a deepening financial and economic crisis in recent years, it has no way out but to further drive down the living standards of all workers, which in turn depends on repressing the protests that emerge from those layers which already face the worse conditions.

The essential role of the police and the rest of the state apparatus of courts, prisons and soldiers is not to protect and serve the people, but to protect and serve the capitalist ruling class. In this, brutality and murder are part of their job. Racism was created by the capitalist system and is needed to keeping the working class divided and exploited to maintain the ability to turn a profit.

Only when the working-class and oppressed people hold a state power of their own and seize control of the economy from private profiteers in order to direct economic production toward the masses' needs, will they be able to solve these problems by building a socialist society of freedom and abundance.

As revolutionary socialists, we in the League for the Revolutionary Party believe that all the problems faced by working-class and oppressed people can only be solved when all of our struggles culminate in a revolution that overthrows the capitalist system. The fight for justice for victims of police abuse and for reforms that limit police powers can win limited and temporary relief from some of the worst abuses. But these struggles have an even greater significance: they can raise revolutionary consciousness. Uprisings of struggle by those who suffer the worst in this system, Blacks and all people of color, can win the respect and support of white working-class people and provide them an example to follow in joining united struggles against all the capitalist system's injustices. And the more that working-class people test the possibilities of reforming the system, the more they can become convinced that it will take a revolution to win their demands. By showing the great power that the workers and oppressed have when they unite in action and become more organized to fight for their interests, mass strug-

### Receive Future RTWs for Free!

- Sign me up to receive future issues of *RTW*.
- Send me a bundle of future issues to give to co-workers.

Name .....

Address .....

.....

Local 100 Division: .....

Phone ..... E-mail .....

Send to: *RTW*, P.O. Box 1936,  
Murray Hill Station, New York, NY 10156  
**website:** [www.lrp-cofi.org](http://www.lrp-cofi.org) **e-mail:** [lrpnyc@earthlink.net](mailto:lrpnyc@earthlink.net)  
**phone:** 212-330-9017

gles can show that revolution is not only necessary but also possible.

We believe that a party dedicated to socialist revolution will be needed to empower our class, and that it will have to be built by working-class and poor people themselves, especially the most oppressed who are the primary victims of its attacks today. Those who can see this now must come together, even if our numbers are small at the moment, to build a leadership independent of the ruling class, its parties and its organizations, one that will challenge all their attacks and their fake "solutions."

We urge interested readers to contact us to discuss these ideas more. ★

### Contact the League for the Revolutionary Party

**e-mail:** [lrpcofi@earthlink.net](mailto:lrpcofi@earthlink.net)

**website:** [www.lrp-cofi.org](http://www.lrp-cofi.org)

### NOTES

1. See *RTW*, "Jail Time for Racist, Brutal Police!" March 11, 2015, [www.lrp-cofi.org/TWU100/RTW/rtwsupplement\\_031115.html](http://www.lrp-cofi.org/TWU100/RTW/rtwsupplement_031115.html).
2. Tony Ortega, "Black Americans killed by police in 2014 outnumbered those of died on 9/11," *Rawstory*, April 8, 2015, [www.rawstory.com/2015/04/black-americans-killed-by-police-in-2014-outnumbered-those-who-died-on-911/](http://www.rawstory.com/2015/04/black-americans-killed-by-police-in-2014-outnumbered-those-who-died-on-911/); Mapping Police Violence, <http://mappingpoliceviolence.org/unarmed/>; [www.theguardian.com/us-news/2015/dec/31/the-counted-police-killings-2015-young-black-men](http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2015/dec/31/the-counted-police-killings-2015-young-black-men)
3. See LRP, "How Many Dead Eric Garner's Does Mayor de Blasio Want?" [www.lrp-cofi.org/statements/deblasio\\_011915.html](http://www.lrp-cofi.org/statements/deblasio_011915.html).
4. See, for example, <https://www.wikileaks.org/dnc-emails/emailid/3452>