

The Fight Against Racist Police Terror

The cops are at it again. One year ago this month unarmed 18-year-old Ramarley Graham was shot dead in the Bronx by an NYPD cop who chased him into his grandmother's bathroom. Charges are pending against the cop Richard Haste, and Graham's family has filed a lawsuit as well. Ramarley is one of the many Black and Latino youth who are victims of police terror in New York City and around the U.S. Young people like Reynaldo Cuevas in the Bronx and Shantel Davis in Brooklyn were killed by the police last year, and mass marches around the country protested the vigilante murder of Trayvon Martin in Florida.

A far wider range of Black and Latino youth in the city are further subjected to the daily harassment of the NYPD's notorious "Stop & Frisk" policy. This cynical manipulation of the notion of fighting crime has caused widespread anger in those youths' communities – and beyond. And yet the policy continues.

While the cops can't cease to be the armed thugs of this system, they can be frightened into retreating from carrying out systematic brutality and from certain policies like Stop & Frisk – if their ruling class masters fear the consequences. For instance mass protests won a partial victory, a conviction for involuntary manslaughter, against Johannes Mehserle, the cop who murdered Oscar Grant in Oakland on New Year's Day 2009. The organization of today's protest against Stop & Frisk and police brutality in general is itself a welcome event whose experience will give us all a chance to assess the state of the struggle and consider potential next steps.

UNITED MASS STRUGGLE NEEDED

What is clear is that while hundreds and sometimes thousands of people turn out for protests, there should be far larger ones. And while oppressed youth should not wait for others in order to defend themselves, we think that the struggle against police terror and racism generally should be firmly linked with the struggle of the entire working class. We also think that for this struggle to be truly successful it must lead to the conclusion that socialist revolution is a necessity. Why do we think this way?

It is our understanding that the capitalist system we live in is based on the economic exploitation of the working class – and that exploitation hinges on the existence of racism. The super-exploitation of Black and Latino labor is a cornerstone of profit-making. At the same time, the relative privileges of white workers are a force for their loyalty to the system. Turning workers against each other is the system's way of forcing down the wages of everybody and also preventing united mass action by the exploited and oppressed against the system. All these traits are further heightened with the growing economic crisis.

Since racism is **essential** to the bosses' system we say



The NYPD has a long history of police beatings and murders directed against people of color. And under the infamous "Stop and Frisk" program, massive numbers of youth have been unlawfully harassed and attacked. All forms of police brutality must be fought in New York and everywhere!

that overthrowing capitalism is **necessary** to end racism. We don't need the bosses – workers could rule society in their interests and those of the poor and other allies. But the bosses need us to make their profits and they need racism to rule over us.

Thus, we think demands focused on the interests of those worst hit by the system and its crisis are in the common interest of all who are exploited by this system. White workers, for instance, must and can be made to understand that their struggle, their livelihood, and their future **depend** on struggling against the oppression of Black people and immigrants. Demands like "Stop Police Terror!" are the kind that are likely to be well received by most Blacks and Latinos, but must also be aimed at gaining support from white workers.

At the same time, a key demand could be "**Jobs for all at a living wage.**" It is a demand that strikes at a core pillar of racism in this country: low wages and high unemployment rates for Black people who are "last hired, first fired." It will also help better-off workers, whose gains are being undermined with the threat of unemployment, see the need for a united struggle based on the interests of those worst hit by the growing crisis.

NO JUSTICE, NO PEACE, NO PROFITS!

If the working class is key to a successful struggle against racism, then the demands of this struggle must be championed by the only mass organizations the working class presently has: the trade unions. Despite years of defeat and decline the unions still have the resources and potential to mobilize hundreds of thousands and even millions. This is especially clear in New York City with a unionized workforce that can shut down the city and whose membership represents large numbers of Black, Latino and immigrant workers.

Consider the 2005 transit strike that shut down New York City. Transport Workers Union Local 100 organizes subway and bus workers who are largely from the same

communities targeted by police terror. They were able to pressure their union leadership to call a strike, but were not able to force them to adopt a fighting strategy to win the strike, or to build an alternative leadership that could do so. But what the strike did show is this: that the union could shut down NYC in a way no protest has done since.

That union has now been without a contract for over a year, and most other city workers are without contracts now as well – many of whom also come from communities targeted by police terror. A joint struggle against police brutality, for jobs, against budget cuts and for victories for the unions against Mayor Bloomberg and Governor Cuomo is both possible and necessary. This is why we think it is critical to organize to pressure the union leaders to act, all the while preparing an alternative political leadership that won't be a conservative brake on the movement in the future.

Mass demonstrations, political protest, work slowdowns, and strikes are key weapons in this struggle. For many workers, the possibility of truly massive demonstrations seems unlikely any time soon, while the idea of striking has become a sick – and scary – joke due to the fight-to-lose strategy the union leaders adopt. But the basis is being laid for far more, seeing that joint strike action, including a general strike of all workers in the city, is a practical necessity to win. Mass protests against police brutality can help build the confidence of workers to see that more decisive action is possible.

The world in recent times has seen dramatic outbreaks of struggles by workers, youth and oppressed masses. From China to Syria to Egypt to Greece the message is being sent that the status quo will no longer be accepted. Workers here have taken note. It is one of the key reasons that we feel the conservatism of today will turn to active struggle – and in turn be an inspiration for our brothers and sisters internationally. Once a sizeable section of the working class sees that capitalism's atrocities can be powerfully challenged, millions of other workers, who now feel too weak to achieve real changes, would begin to see that they have enormous power. Then workers and all those fighting oppression would see the possibility of a new society not ruled by the bosses and their hired racist hit-men, a socialist society governed by and for the working class.

WHY WE NEED A REVOLUTIONARY PARTY AND SOCIALIST REVOLUTION

Capitalism is dragging us all down. But protest is not enough. In the U.S., workers in the past, especially in the mass strikes in the 1930's, won unionization and other gains. But much of the wage and benefit gains spearheaded by the unions have been swept away. And now pressure is building in both the Democratic and Republican parties to shred social programs like Social Security and Medicare that were also gains of the mass struggles. Capitalism is based on profit-making, and the system here and in other countries years ago reached the point where it must drastically slash the living standards of workers and poor people to maintain its profits. Even the bosses who have done okay have taken advantage of retreating unions and cautious workers to press their attack. That is why we say to even

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The League for the Revolutionary Party (LRP) is a revolutionary socialist organization of workers and youth. For more information about the LRP, write to:

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FURTHER READING

All of the following are available from the LRP in printed form and are also posted on-line at the Internet addresses shown.

“Fight Police Terror!” –

www.lrp-cofi.org/pamphlets/fightpoliceterror.html

“Rebellion Against Police Terror” –

www.lrp-cofi.org/PR/CincinnatiPR63.html

“The Democratic Party: Graveyard of Black Struggles” –

www.lrp-cofi.org/pamphlets/demopartycontents.html

“2012 Election: Obama No Answer to Republican Reactionaries” –

www.lrp-cofi.org/statements/us_election_090312.html

“Marxist Analysis of the Capitalist Crisis: Bankrupt System Drives Toward Depression” –

www.lrp-cofi.org/pdf/bankruptsystem.pdf

“Immigrants’ Rights Are Workers’ Rights! Stop the Raids and Deportations! Unconditional Amnesty for All Immigrants!” –

www.lrp-cofi.org/statements/immigration050110.html

“Fight Racist, Anti-Worker Cop Attacks!”

(in *Revolutionary Transit Worker* No. 56) –

www.lrp-cofi.org/TWU100/RTW/rtw56.html#racism

defend the rights and working and living standards we have means to get rid of capitalism with a socialist revolution to re-make the world.

We think the most politically conscious workers and youth will come to see, by way of struggles today as well as the study of Marxist theory and the history of past struggles, that the working class can overthrow capitalism and build a better, socialist world. They will be the basis for a new political leadership – a revolutionary working-class party that fights for building the best possible defense today while drawing the lessons from every struggle in dialogue with our fellow workers to convince them as well of the need to overthrow the capitalists. That means replacing the capitalists' rule with a working-class state power dedicated to building a society of abundance, freedom and justice for all.

The League for the Revolutionary Party is a working-class revolutionary socialist organization that includes workers, students and others who see the need for a class conscious party. We fight for united struggle against the capitalist attacks while working to convince fellow workers and youth of revolutionary goals. We develop Marxist theory as a guide to action – a scientific analysis of this society and its crisis shows that socialist revolution is the only solution to our problems. We believe that to get to that revolution and to lead our struggles today, we need to build a revolutionary party based on the working class as part of struggles from all over the world. We hope that revolutionary-minded workers and youth will join us in this and look forward to discussing these ideas as we fight side-by-side for a better life for all.

Stop Stop and Frisk!

Stop Police Terror!

Stop Racist and Anti-Immigrant Attacks!

Democrats and Republicans:

Two Parties of Racist “Law and Order”!

Jobs for All at a Living Wage!

All Unions Must Fight Together! For Workers’

Mass Action against the Capitalist Attacks!

Workers’ Need a General Strike!

Socialist Revolution is the Only Solution!

Build the Revolutionary Party of the Working Class!