



REVOLUTIONARY WORKER

Voice of the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA

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THE

Inequality, Poverty and Hype in the "New Economy"

DOWN SIDE



A recycling/redemption center in upper Manhattan.

OF THE BOOM

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As of March 14, 1999 Chairman Gonzalo (Abimael Guzmán) has been held in isolation for...

6 Years, 151 Days

In October 1992, Chairman Gonzalo—leader of the Maoist Communist Party of Peru—was sentenced to life imprisonment by hooded military judges of the U.S.-backed regime in Peru. The fascist regime in Peru is holding this revolutionary leader of the Peruvian people under very brutal conditions in an underground concrete dungeon at a naval base. He is being denied visits by lawyers, doctors and relatives and deprived of proper medical care and reading materials. Peru's President Fujimori has publicly threatened to execute Chairman Gonzalo and boasted of applying psychological torture on him. Fujimori changed Peru's constitution to legalize the death penalty, which could be used against Chairman Gonzalo and other revolutionary prisoners. The Peruvian regime must be prevented from killing Chairman Gonzalo through the death penalty or by other means. Fujimori has repeatedly claimed that Chairman Gonzalo has made a call for negotiations from prison. In this situation, what possible excuse can Fujimori now offer for continuing to deny Comrade Gonzalo independent contact with lawyers, doctors and friendly and neutral visitors from outside the prison in a way that meets the basic international standards for treatment of political prisoners and prisoners of war? It is vitally important for people in Peru and around the world to hear what Chairman Gonzalo's views are from Chairman Gonzalo himself—directly and unimpeded. This heightens the urgency of the fight to create an international political climate which compels the Peruvian government to grant access to Comrade Gonzalo by his legal representatives and other friends who can meet and talk directly with him.



Support the People's War in Peru!
Support the Communist Party of Peru!
Defend the Life of Chairman Gonzalo,
Fight to Break the Isolation!

Three Main Points

by Bob Avakian
 Chairman of the RCP, USA

What do we in the Revolutionary Communist Party want people to learn from all that is exposed and revealed in this newspaper? Mainly, three things:

1) The whole system we now live under is based on exploitation—here and all over the world. It is completely worthless and no basic change for the better can come about until this system is overthrown.

2) Many different groups will protest and rebel against things this system does, and these protests and rebellions should be supported and strengthened. Yet it is only those with nothing to lose but their chains who can be the backbone of a struggle to actually overthrow this system and create a new system that will put an end to exploitation and help pave the way to a whole new world.

3) Such a revolutionary struggle is possible. There is a political Party that can lead such a struggle, a political Party that speaks and acts for those with nothing to lose but their chains: The Revolutionary Communist Party, USA.

This Party has the vision, the program, the leadership, and the organizational principles to unite those who must be united and enable them to do what must be done. There is a challenge for all those who would like to see such a revolution, those with a burning desire to see a drastic change for the better, all those who dare to dream and to act to bring about a completely new and better world: Support this Party, join this Party, spread its message and its organized strength, and prepare the ground for a revolutionary rising that has a solid basis and a real chance of winning.

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Reporter's Notebook

Life in Occupied New York:

The People Take the Streets

by Debbie Lang

After the murder of Amadou Diallo, the New York RW bureau organized a multinational team, including a French translator, to go out to different neighborhoods and talk to the people. The following is the fourth in the series of Reporter's Notebook as a result of this work:

This year people in New York celebrated International Women's Day with a major demonstration focused on police brutality and the murder of Amadou Diallo. Outraged at the system's refusal to arrest the cops who fired 41 times at Amadou, over 1,000 people gathered for a rally called by Women For Justice. Their leaflet said, "Death Squads are terrorizing our communities and gunning down our sons, our children, our men. On International Women's Day, we invite all women to join us in the continued struggle against racism."

As we gathered, many sisters sang along to the song "We Who Believe In Freedom Will Not Rest" and Bob Marley's "No Woman No Cry" which were played over the loudspeakers. People pressed against the NYPD's metal barricades to get a better look at the stage. Most of the protesters were women, of many nationalities and ages, but there were lots of men, too. The rally began with prayers from various religions in different languages. The favorite slogans were "Arrest the Cops!" "Keep the Pressure On!" and "Amadou!" One sister after another said, "When you touch a woman, you touch a rock!"

Young people took the stage first. Sister Aurora, a Black woman in her early 20s, read a poem she wrote for Amadou Diallo. In one emotional part she counted the number of bullets fired by the cops—up to 41—and the crowd joined in. A paper banner

with the names of dozens of people murdered by the NYPD was unfurled, and the names were read call-and-response style. Then the names of political prisoners were called out, among them Leonard Peltier and Mumia Abu-Jamal. Shaka Shakur spoke from the Black Panther Collective. And Andre English represented the October 22nd Coalition Against Police Brutality, Repression and the Criminalization of a Generation.

As the youth left the stage a member of Women for Justice took the mike: "The times now require relentlessly, unceasingly that we be in the streets. And it also requires, as we go back to our very neighborhoods where we live under siege and terror, that you must have in your mind what it is you're gonna do... When the death squads roll up on your street and you look down from your window and you see it's not your son, you're not just gonna close the window no more. Whatever you're doing, drop it! Run down the stairs if the elevator isn't working and stand in the street! Stand in the street for justice!"

Women came on stage with pictures of their children who had been murdered by the police, and many of them spoke. Margarita Rosario—whose son Anthony and nephew Hilton Vega were shot in the back: "There's many children whose mothers are not here today because they're not able to sustain the pain. They're not strong enough. But we will be their strength. We will fight for them!" Iris Baez, whose son Anthony was choked to death: "When they murdered my son I didn't know what I was going to do. But I knew one thing, that he did not go in vain. I knew that I was going to be in for the long haul in the struggle. I knew that we had to bring his name up and



International Women's Day rally, New York, March 8.

RWOR photo

every other victim that came before him and after him." Milta Calderon pointed to a picture she held: "This was my son, Anibal Carrasquillo, Jr., who was shot January 22 in '95, shot in the back by Police Officer Marco Calderon. My son was just 21 years old when they shot him... My son had a future and they just took it away, they ripped it away like nothing."

Yon Xin Huang was 16 when cops shot him in the back of the head. A statement by his sister Chin Xin Huang was read: "I want to say to the family of Amadou Diallo I am an immigrant like your son. Every day I struggle to survive, as I'm sure he did, in a country that does not treat our people well. And I am sorry he had to go back to your country in this way. My family still grieves the loss of my brother and will never stop missing him as I'm sure you grieve the loss of your son. I never knew your son, but I will always remember him and I will never stop fighting for justice for my brother and for your son."

Evadine Bailey's son Patrick was murdered by the same cop from the Street Crimes Unit who was one of the four involved in killing Amadou Diallo. She had this message for Giuliani: "I would like to tell him on behalf of myself, my son and all the others that his men have killed, murdered, brutalized. I want to tell him that all these children's blood are pouring down his head and going down to his feet... This was my only son, Patrick Bailey. I don't have another one. Mr. Giuliani, how would you like to lose your only son? What would it feel like? We are tired of crying. We have

decided to take the tears away and fight. We are going to fight!"

Kadiadou Diallo, Amadou's mother, sent a taped message from her home in Guinea in west Africa: "I thank you for your sympathy and support [in regard to] the brutal murder of my son Amadou Diallo that has secured my family and myself a lot of moral comfort. Through your organization I would like also to thank sincerely all the people of all races and all religions that have fought with us to protest against the police brutality and claim for justice. My family and myself do appreciate the invitation to take part for the rally that will be held at the occasion of the International Women's Day on Monday, March the 8. I am very sorry that I won't be there, but be sure, my sisters, that I will be with you with my heart and soul. At this event, the International Women's Day, our thoughts are going to all the victims of all kinds of violence and segregation around the world. I wish that my son's blood and our tears will feed the battle for justice, liberty and freedom for everyone in the world."

As Kadiadou's voice faded hundreds of voices rose as one: "Amadou! Amadou! Amadou!" Sisters from countries in Africa, the Caribbean and South America took the stage and spoke briefly in English and French. The rally ended with speeches by activists from different political trends. Many upcoming protests were announced, including daily civil disobedience at police headquarters.

Some speakers at the rally called for revolution. Some put forward other solutions to end police brutality. Everybody agreed it was time to unite, stand up and fight back. I thought about this strong desire for unity and remembered a statement given to the press by Galen Sherwin, who was at the March 8 demonstration. Galen is president of the National Organization for Women, New York City chapter. She said in her statement: "It is hardly a coincidence that one of the few details the police have leaked to the press about the killing of Ahmed [Amadou Diallo] is that he was a rape suspect. This was a calculated attempt to divide the people. While we do want improved responses to the problem of violence against women in New York, we cannot allow the NYPD to act as a lynch mob... This was a racist incident and the mayor's failure to acknowledge it is unacceptable. Women in New York of all races must join together in decrying this incident. We must end violence against women AND we must end racism. This is NOT an either/or proposition. To Giuliani and to the NYPD, we say: NEVER at this price; NEVER in the name of women; NEVER again!"



Members of Women for Justice at the IWD demo, New York City, March 8.

RWOR photo

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The People Take the Streets

Continued from page 3

Hip Hop Generation in the House

Conrad Muhammad of CHHANGE (Conscious Hip-Hop Activism Necessary for Global Empowerment) called for a "hip hop generation" demonstration at city hall on March 10. The Student/Youth Network of the October 22nd Coalition united with this and issued a call for kids to walk out of school and go to the protest. Radio stations started to report the call for walkouts. It got to a point where schools chancellor Rudy Crew and Mayor Giuliani were compelled to tell students to stay in school. Students were furious—they remembered that last year Giuliani let them out of school to go to parades for the Yankees and astronaut John Glenn. A girl from LaGuardia High School told cable TV station NY1: "If they have a right to shoot some guy 41 times, we have every right to just leave school!"

Over a thousand converged on city hall chanting, "It Don't Take 41 To Kill A Man Without A Gun!" and "Whoop! Whoop! That's the Sound of the Police! Whoop! Whoop! That's the sound of the beast!" Youth represented from high schools, middle schools (junior high) and colleges around the city. A handful of elementary school kids came with their parents or with older brothers or sisters. The high school kids had to deal with the police right when they walked out—because Giuliani has put the NYPD in charge of security *inside* the city's public schools. One group of high school kids were stopped and questioned by a cop on the way to the rally. He took their names and broke a sign they'd made from the cover of *New Yorker* magazine—a drawing by Pulitzer-winning cartoonist Art Spiegelman, showing a cop aiming his gun at silhouetted figures of a man, a woman and a kid at a carnival "shooting gallery." At one school, the principal and assistant principal told students where the demonstration was and advised them on how to get past the police.

Two figures from the earliest days of hip hop, D.J. Cool Herc and emcee Afrika Bambata, were in the house. Young rappers were there, too, including U-God from the Wu Tang Clan. (Wu Tang Clan's ODB was shot by the Street Crimes Unit in January.) Some of the others who spoke: Rev. Herbert Daughtry; Ron Daniels from the Center for Constitutional Rights, people's lawyer Ron Kuby and Rev. Jamal Harrison Bryan, the National Director of the Youth and College Division of the NAACP. Leslie Nelson represented International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal. By the response to her speech it was clear lots of kids were closely following the battle to stop the execution and free Mumia.

As the crowd cheered wildly, members of the Crips, Bloods, Latin Kings and Zulu Nation stood together on stage in a show of unity. A representative of the Zulu Nation said: "When you see gang members, you not seeing Bloods, Crips, Kings and Zulus—you seeing them blue coats out there with the badges and the guns. You got your head gang leader who's no other than Adolf Hitler Giuliani. We all got to unify, because if we don't unify, yo, we will be enslaved." Conrad Muhammad told the youth, "Brothers and sisters, this is not a Black thing because we recognize the universality of the hip hop generation. Black, brown, we got to stand together as one. Black, Latino, Asian, white, we will all stand together to work against racism. We're gonna fight all of the forces that seek to destroy the hip hop generation."

Miles, a high school student from the Refuse & Resist! Youth Network, said: "Police brutality has become such a growing epidemic, not even just here in New York City but in Los Angeles, Chicago, Miami and everywhere in between and primarily against young people of color. But it's going even broader than that. In addition to police brutality, our generation is being criminalized. They're building prisons, they're cutting schools and they've got plans for us. But we shouldn't get discouraged—because they only criminalize and go after people who they're scared of... Everybody be strong and the future is ours!"

Time to Speak and Be Heard

Before the rally started I got a chance to talk to some of the kids there. Almost



The "hip hop generation" demo, New York City, March 10.

RWOR photo



The "hip hop generation" demo, New York City, March 10.

RWOR photo

everybody had been a victim of some type of police brutality. A Black student from Brooklyn College Academy said, "I came to represent because it's a shame that I have to live my life in fear of whether I'm gonna get shot by a cop." A sister who was listening to me do an interview called out, "You're not safe in your own community no more because of the cops."

A Puerto Rican student from East Side Community High School said: "I was at the Puerto Rican Day parade where people want to represent for their country, whatever island. And the cops go against that and they want to stop it. So they beat 'em down. They hit this dude with the nightstick." He talked about the time he was playing in the snow with a Black friend and a couple of cops—one white and one Black—stopped them for "disturbing the peace." When his friend spoke up, the cops called him a "n****r boy." The Puerto Rican student told the cops, "How can you call him a n****r boy when you're Black yourself?" The cop's answer was, "You ain't shit. You ain't nobody."

I spoke with a Black student who goes to LaGuardia: "My uncle, he was arrested by police cause he was out at about one o'clock in the morning. For a grown man, you could be out any time you want—there was no reason for him to be locked up.... Sometimes it's time to be quiet. Right now is the time to speak and be heard."

Mike is a white student who goes to Stuyvesant High School, considered one of the most "prestigious" public schools in the city. He explained why he came to the rally: "It's the way he was murdered. I mean 41 shots, that's a lot of shots. And I

up because he didn't do nothing wrong. Even if he did do something wrong, 41 shots. You can stop a man with one bullet. Why 41? Even if he was a suspect it doesn't matter. They had to go through procedures. They had no probable cause, no nothing. This was just a man in front of his house, you know? ... We can't be violated anymore. We're so-called minorities—we need to be heard. That's it. Look how many young faces are out here.... They called us Generation X and now we gotta do something to voice our fears. It's time for us to be heard."

Danny from East Side told me this story: "My cousin's light skinned. I'm darker than him. We got pulled over in a car because me and my cousin play fight. And the cop was like, 'Oh, I thought you were trying to rob the driver of the car.' And he searched me, this and that. He has no right to do that." Danny had a strong opinion about the idea that more Black and Latino cops will make things better: "I ain't gonna feel safer because an officer's Puerto Rican or Black. I ain't gonna feel safe. They gonna do the same thing. It don't matter what color cop it is. It matters who's behind the cops... Even if it's not me I'm gonna support the next man who has a problem with the cops or the system. You know, a lot of people say, well we hate white people or this and that. It's not white people that we hate. It's the system that they're running. We need to change that system. Whether it be forcefully or peacefully, we just need to change it."

Maryann, a 15-year-old LaGuardia student, heard about the walkout on the radio that morning. "I feel that the police have been totally unfair and it was brutal what they did." I asked what she thought it would take to get justice for Amadou Diallo: "If it takes more than this, there is a problem. There is definitely a problem. Then we'll just keep going. We will, because we want this over with. We'll do it. Kids will have to do this."

Various programs and solutions were out at this rally, and the youth were checking out with these questions. A lot of speakers told the kids they need to vote, and during the rally Conrad Muhammad passed voter registration forms through the crowd. Other speakers talked about the need for revolutionary change.

At one point in the rally, Andre English from the Student/Youth Network of the October 22nd Coalition took the stage with Sister Aurora, who said, "Red, white and blue ain't my fucking colors! Red, white and blue ain't our colors... Fuck the pigs!" She pointed to the crowd: "You are the leaders, you, you, you, you, you, you. This is my war. This is our war. I'm not taking it no more! Revolution! Revolution! Revolution!"

Carl Dix, RCP national spokesperson for the RCP and a member of the national coordinating committee of the October 22nd Coalition, told the youth, "The only thing that's gonna make them back up on giving a green light to these cops to brutalize and murder us is us raising hell. That means you've got to take to the streets. That means you've got to go back to your schools and to your communities and organize people. That means people gotta be ready to defend themselves and others when the police come at 'em foul. We gotta be ready to do all that, sisters and brothers. We say it's gonna take a revolution to end all this bullshit once and for all." □

don't think they treated him like a person. I don't think they saw him as a person. That's what was most disturbing about it." Mike hasn't been physically assaulted by a cop, but he told a story about what happened when he went to the Yankees parade last year: "I went up to the cops to ask them a question. And the cop, I thought he was gonna pull a gun on me. He started yelling at me for no apparent reason. He told me to get the 'f' away from him.... They don't show any respect. They see themselves as higher, a lot of them."

Jonsi Smith came with a group of her friends. Her 24-year-old brother Justin Horton Smith was beaten to death by the police in Tulsa, Oklahoma last year. She told me, "They have people pulling over on the side of a dirt road and getting beat to death, and that's really disgusting. Just because a cop gets a shield and a gun, they think they have all the power in the world." She described her reaction to the murder of Amadou Diallo: "That blew me away because he was unarmed. How can you shoot an unarmed man? ... They didn't even have their badges taken away. They gave the cops new guns. That's ridiculous!... Police brutality, it really has gotten out of hand. I mean it's always been out of hand—like down south, all over America and with the KKK being a part of a lot of police departments... I'm glad to see that people are taking charge and protesting and marching. Because rallies and marches, they add up and something will happen. Something will change when people take a stand."

About 20 kids came from East Side Community High School. Two Black students from East Side told me, "It's messed

by Michael Slate

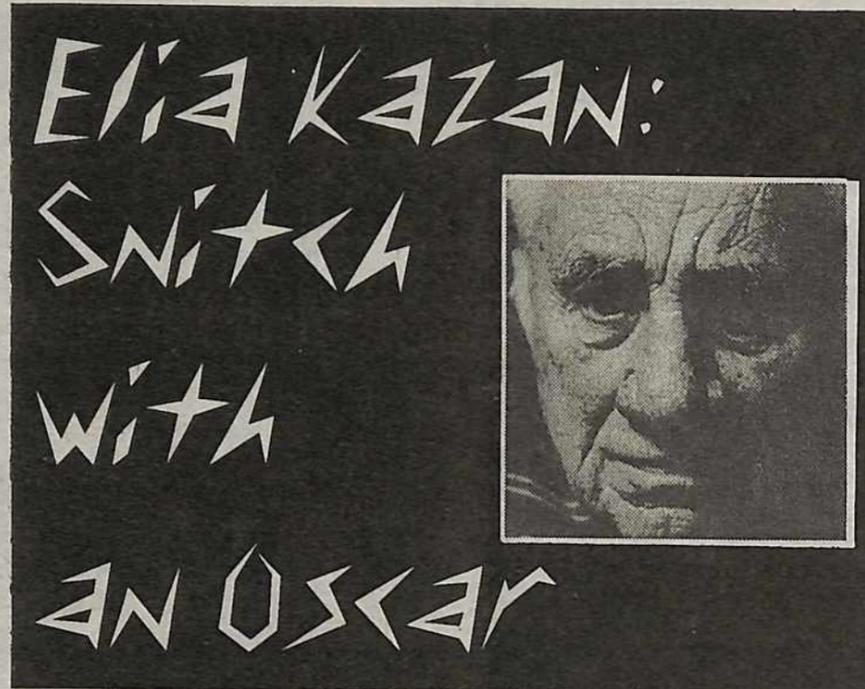
On January 7, the board of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences announced that it was going to present Elia Kazan, director of *On the Waterfront*, *Viva Zapata*, and dozens of other films and stage plays, with an honorary Oscar for his lifetime achievements. Kazan is infamous as the most prominent Hollywood figure to cooperate with the 1950's witch hunts led by Senator Joseph McCarthy and the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC). When Kazan was called to testify in 1952 he provided the government with the names of people he knew to be associated with the Communist Party USA when he worked with them in The Group Theater during the 1930s.

When I heard about the award to Kazan, I was very angry. As Mao said, reversing correct verdicts goes against the will of the people. The McCarthy hearings and the Hollywood blacklist that resulted from these hearings was one of the ugliest campaigns of political repression against artists in modern history.

But as I began to talk with the new generation of artist resisters about the situation, I knew I had to find a way to bring home the significance of this award happening today. Sometimes you got to work hard to make the connections, sometimes the system—just working the way it does—lays it all out for you. In mid-January, Rage Against the Machine was viciously attacked in the media and by the authorities for organizing a concert in support of Mumia Abu-Jamal. And I think we have to see Kazan's Lifetime Achievement Oscar as a bridge—bringing together the witch hunts of the 1950s with the ongoing political harassment of artists and the culture wars of today.

Several times before, prestigious film organizations have tried to give Kazan an honorary achievement award and public outcry forced them to back down. And in the last few years other arts organizations have criticized their own role during the McCarthy years. Now the Academy is pressing ahead. Many survivors of the "blacklist"—the people who weren't allowed to work in Hollywood for decades because the government listed them as subversives—have spoken out against Kazan as an informant who turned on his friends. Some artists who stood strong against the witch hunts back then have eased up over the years and now talk about honoring Kazan for his good works while criticizing him for the bad things he has done. Still others try to justify the Oscar by arguing that we should separate Kazan's art from his politics.

So we need to be straight about what this award means today. And to do that we need to be clear on what happened in the 1950s. The HUAC hearings on the influence of communists in the film industry occurred in a world that was very different than today. Back then there was a socialist camp—the Soviet Union and China were socialist countries and their example was inspiring people all over the world to stand up against



Senator Joe McCarthy, 1954, with map claiming to show Communist Party organization.

U.S. imperialism. In Korea and Indochina, people were waging armed struggle against colonialism. It was a time when the powers in America were very seriously thinking about launching a full-scale war against the socialist countries. And in this conflict, there is no question that the interests of humanity were in opposing the United States and standing with the people of the socialist countries. While the Communist Party USA was not a very revolutionary organization at the time, it was an organization that especially supported the Soviet Union and would have strongly opposed any American attack on them. At the same time, the CPUSA had fostered American patriotism and faith in bourgeois democracy in its ranks which made it hard for people to really stand up to the HUAC inquisitors.

As conflict deepened between the U.S. and the Soviet Union and China, there was no way that the U.S. rulers were going to allow communists and other progressive

people to continue to work in places where they could shape public opinion against U.S. war plans. The HUAC hearings were full-scale political persecutions aimed against communists and all politically progressive people. Thousands of people were criminalized for their political beliefs, including many pacifists and anti-racists, as well as communists and die-hard liberals.

While the witch hunts in the arts are probably the most well known, similar inquisitions occurred in schools and universities, among doctors and lawyers, and in many federal agencies. Communists were driven out of the trade unions. It was a time when whispers and rumors could end careers, invite subpoenas, and bring on jail time. Reactionary companies and newsletters were created for the sole purpose of listing the people named as subversives. By the time it was over, more than 100,000 people from all walks of life were listed in raw information files kept in Congress. Artists who were named in testimony before

the Committee or who refused to cooperate with the Committee were unable to work under their own names, in many cases for 10 and even 20 years. Artists like Paul Robeson were driven from concert stages. Some artists were never able to work in their field again. And some were completely broken—dying an early death from suicide or the ravages of alcohol.

The first round of hearings launched in the Spring of 1947 produced defiance as the Hollywood 10—a group of actors, writers and directors—refused to cooperate with HUAC and resisted. Some of the 10 were members or sympathizers of the Communist Party USA but they all refused to answer any questions about this and specifically refused to give up the names of other artists. By the end of 1950 the Hollywood 10 had been sent to jail and HUAC was pushing out full force. There were friendly witnesses who cooperated with HUAC and supplied a list of names of people to be persecuted for their political beliefs. But the government still needed a big name to put the stamp of legitimacy and integrity on their inquisition. This is when Elia Kazan, one of the most successful, respected and well-known progressive directors in the film industry, walked onto the stage. On April 10, 1952 Kazan, who was once a member of the Communist Party himself, performed for HUAC with gusto. He laid out everything he knew about the role of the Communist Party and communists in Hollywood. He gave up the names of old friends who had been in the CP with him when they worked with The Group Theater in the 1930s. And when Kazan finished testifying he took out an ad in the *New York Times* that justified his performance and called on others to follow his example.

In his autobiography Kazan details how he saw his testimony as helping to smash a worldwide communist conspiracy against the American Way and the system that had taken good care of him. And as the possibility of the U.S. going to war against the socialist countries increased along with the need for unquestioning loyalty, Elia Kazan's dedication to the imperialist system was just what the U.S. power structure needed. Kazan's performance during the HUAC hearings and afterwards helped unleash a number of other friendly witnesses and, even more importantly, was a major effort to create a favorable atmosphere for the system's witch hunt.

Elia Kazan chose to throw himself behind a vicious campaign of political persecutions. He chose to stand with the oppressors against the people of the world. And he has continued to take this stand and defend his actions for almost 50 years. While some have argued in favor of Kazan receiving his Lifetime Achievement Oscar on the basis of separating his politics from his art, Kazan never considered separating anyone's politics from their art when he was working with HUAC. In fact, Kazan stated more than once that communists should not be allowed to practice their art in the film industry solely because of their political beliefs. And his own work is peppered with political justifications for his actions and cynical explorations on the impossibility of revolutionary change.

The HUAC hearings, with the blacklist and the atmosphere of political terror, was an enormous and deep attack against the people. The changes that have occurred in the world—the fact that capitalism was restored in the Soviet Union in the 1950s and in China after the death of Mao—should not be allowed to blur these dividing lines. Nor can we allow the very real shortcomings of the CPUSA to excuse Kazan's snitching. There is no justification for being a snitch for the U.S. power structure.

The impact of this political repression has been felt for decades. It was echoed in the attacks against the so-called radical chic in the 1960s—artists who stepped out in support of the Black Panther Party. HUAC left its fingerprints all over the FBI harassment of composer/conductor Leonard Bernstein and the suicide of actress Jean Seberg for their association with the Panthers. And the repercussions of this attack continue to be felt today when artists are politically and professionally harassed for standing in support of Mumia Abu-Jamal, for condemning U.S. wars of aggression or for taking a stand against police brutality.

This is the real legacy of Elia Kazan. And by honoring Kazan with a Lifetime Achievement Award, the Academy can't escape the shameful reality that it is honoring "all that." □



Protest in support of the Hollywood 10 in the 1950s.

Sacramento:

HIP HOP FOR MUMIA

Sacramento, February 20—Hundreds of youth of all nationalities gathered on the steps of the California State Capitol at the culmination of three days of activities called "Hip Hop for Mumia Abu-Jamal." Shouts of "Free Mumia!" mingled with hip hop rhythms and intense spoken word performances. The rally was sponsored by the "Sacramento City North Star" Chapter of the Universal Zulu Nation. There were performances by Socialistiks, Super Natural Turntable Artists, Kermetik Sunz, Zion 1, DJ Badroc, DJ Snaykeyz, SoReal and others. The other events during "Hip Hop for Mumia" included break dancing, DJs and rap groups. These events also drew hundreds of young participants, and there were presentations on Mumia's case.

"I'm here today to help free Mumia because I know a lot about the case, and it's a travesty," a young hip-hop record producer told the *RW*. "I think that Mumia is one of those great minds that history will compare to Malcolm X and Martin Luther King... Mumia is not pop-culture; he's humanity-oriented. His society revolves around humanity as does mine—and that's how I relate to him."

A young organizer with the Universal Zulu Nation said, "We want to promote political and social awareness—not just among hip hop culture but among all the youth. It's not about time—it's *been* time for the youth to get organized and start making some changes. That's what we're about." The Zulu Nation is a hip hop centered activist group that was first started in New York in 1973. The organizer first



Hip hop for Mumia, Sacramento, February 20.

Photo: Jay

heard about Mumia through hip hop performers like KRS-One, Public Enemy and the Coup. "The injustice-making judicial system created political prisoners like As-sata, Leonard, Mumia, and, back in the day, the Panthers and the MOVE organization—I could go on and on... We got to give it to the young people. We hear it in the lyrics, we read about him, but we have to make action for him. We have to do everything we can to further the struggle and hopefully take over."

An article on the Capitol rally in the

Sacramento Bee newspaper suggested that "it has become fashionable to support the Abu-Jamal cause." The article also mentioned the recent major concert in New Jersey by Rage Against the Machine; a recent show in San Francisco where the rap group Black-Star had the audience chanting "Free Mumia!"; and an episode of the TV drama "Homicide" in which a socialite hosts a benefit dinner at her home for Mumia.

A T-shirt made for the rally featured a quote from Mumia from the essay, "The Lost Generation," in his book *Live From*

Death Row: "This is not the lost generation. They are the children of the L.A. rebellion, the children of the MOVE bombing, the children of the Black Panthers, and the grandchildren of Malcolm; far from lost they are probably the most aware generation since Nat Turner's; they are not so much lost as they are mislaid, discarded by this increasingly racist system that undermines their inherent worth. They are all potential revolutionaries, with the historic power to transform our dull realities. If they are lost, find them." □

MILLIONS FOR MUMIA



Mumia Is All of Us

Saturday, April 24, 1999

Philadelphia—San Francisco—Throughout the World

Revolutionary political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal is on death row. He was framed on charges of killing a Philadelphia cop, and sentenced to death for his political beliefs. Last October, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court denied Mumia's appeal for a new trial—a clear sign that the government has made a political decision to press ahead with plans to execute Mumia.

We cannot let the powers-that-be take Mumia from us—he is precious to the oppressed and all those who hunger for justice. It is up to the people to step up the struggle and make it clear to the government: WE WON'T LET THEM KILL MUMIA ABU-JAMAL!

On April 24, Mumia's birthday, in Philadelphia and other cities around the world, a massive outpouring of people will demand: Stop the Execution of Mumia Abu-Jamal!

Initiating organizations include:

- International Concerned Family & Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal
- Academics for Mumia
- Bruderhof
- Campaign to End the Death Penalty
- Critical Resistance
- Jericho Movement
- Million Women March National & Universal Movement
- Mobilization to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal
- National Afrikan Liberation Front
- National People's Campaign
- New York Free Mumia Coalition
- Peoples Video Network
- Refuse & Resist!

Individual and organizations are asked to add their names to the list of endorsers. Send endorsements to:

- International Concerned Family & Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal
- Box 19709, Philadelphia, PA 19143
- Tel: 215-476-8812; Fax: 215-476-7551
- Millions for Mumia Mobilization
- 39 W 14th St., #206, NY, NY 10011
- Tel: 212-633-6646

CHICAGO: SHOWDOWN AT BRIGADE HOUSE

"Sisters and Brothers, as we begin the new millennium we must cast away illusions and prepare to struggle. The Chicago Housing Authority/Department of Housing and Urban Development, the City of Chicago and their money-hungry, land-grabbing partners in real estate will stop at nothing to drive residents of public housing from their homes. They don't have the interests of the people of public housing at heart. They never have and never will."

from a leaflet by the
Revolutionary Communist Party
(Chicago Branch)

"This letter is a reminder that your clients' lease...expires March 31, 1999. On that date, the premises must be vacated... Please be further advised that the property is scheduled for demolition on April 1, 1999 and your clients should act accordingly."

Letter from the Chicago City authorities to the residents of 1142 N. Orleans



A recent meeting about people getting displaced from CHA projects.

The Revolutionary Communist Youth Brigade (who live at 1142 N. Orleans) and the RCYB 2 Defense Committee responded to this City Hall threat by calling on people to help "Draw the line against urban cleansing!"

People are organizing to "Rally around 1142 N. Orleans" at 3:30 p.m. on March 31.

1142 N. Orleans stands on the eastern edge of Cabrini Green. To the east of this Brigade House lies the Gold Coast, one of the wealthiest neighborhoods in the United States. To the west is Cabrini Green, one of the poorest neighborhoods in the United States. 1142 stands smack in the way of the bulldozers that are supposed to remove most of Cabrini Green so that the Gold Coast can expand.

Many people from Cabrini, the RCYB, and supporters throughout Chicago have united over the last year to stop the demolition of the house, which has developed as a center of struggle against urban cleansing and police brutality. Official lies, threats and bribes have met with resistance. The authorities have been exposed as this struggle has gotten increased coverage in the local media. Long-time residents of Cabrini Green have stepped forward to explain that Medgar Evers—a major civil rights leader murdered by the White Citizen's Council in 1963—lived at 1142 N. Orleans while he was investigating the Mississippi lynching of Chicago youth Emmett Till. Community activists and educators are making plans to use parts of this historic site as a combination school and museum.

The routine brutalization and repeated murders of Black youth by the police are deliberately used by the authorities to drive the people off this coveted real estate. But the recent murder of Brennan King gave rise to large-scale protests by Cabrini residents—and the Brigade House has been deeply involved in that resistance.

On March 7, 60 people gathered at 1142 N. Orleans for International Women's Day. They heard a broad range of speakers link the struggle for liberation of women with some of the key battles going on in the projects.

Clearly there is a mood in Cabrini and among supporters of public housing to defend 1142 N. Orleans. One Cabrini youth said as he left his first International Women's Day celebration, "We all need and fight for the House—and see it all the way through, because we're all under fire."

The RCYB says "All out for the rally at 1142 N. Orleans—March 31, 3:30!"

Free the RCYB 2! It's Right to Rebel Against the Destruction of Public Housing!

On March 22, RCYB members AK Small and Shawn Wall go on trial for disorderly conduct and resisting arrest. If convicted they could face a year in jail. These charges came from a dramatic February 22, 1997 protest. Three hundred people disrupted the unveiling of Chicago Mayor Daley's "redevelopment" scheme for destroying Cabrini Green. These "uninvited guests" included lots Cabrini youth

and other residents, tenant leaders, Coalition to Protect Public Housing activists and the Maoist revolutionaries of the RCYB. The bold action disrupted more than just a meeting. It disrupted the plans by the authorities to press ahead with the rapid destruction of Cabrini Green.

Chicago is famous for its back-door politics of bribes and deals. The city authorities want to play their usual games of "Let's make a deal" and "Divide and conquer"—making promises to some residents in exchange for "public approval" for the destruction of public housing. Lots of promises have already been broken over and over again, while the authorities claim that they have "broad community support" for *destroying the community!*

The forceful action on February 22, 1997 was an example of the mass, militant, unified resistance that has a chance of defeating the system's plans. That protest made it much harder for City Hall to pretend they had "community support" and to deny that building demolitions mean intense hardships for the people.

That is why the city has been determined to punish AK and Shawn for their role in that protest—and that is why it is so important to defend the RCYB 2.

It has recently come out that the Chicago police have used their "anti-gang" database to maintain illegal political police records on Brigade activists. AK Small, for

example, is listed in the police gang database with a "gang affiliation" of "communist"—the police computer immediately sends out an "officer safety alert" whenever street cops enter AK's name into the computer. Chicago's police conducted notorious political repression and surveillance in the past—including the assassination of Black Panther leaders. The political use of "gang contact cards" is an important sign that the police are actively targeting resistance forces among the people.

Leaders from the Cabrini Green community are set to testify at the RCYB 2 trial. The RCYB has called for a press conference and rally at the court building—1321 S. Michigan, 8:30 a.m., March 22. These two dedicated revolutionary organizers are needed *on the streets of the community!*

The Battle to Save Public Housing at a Crossroads

The battle for 1142 N. Orleans and to free the RCYB 2 comes at a crucial time. The authorities are determined to press ahead—to destroy 1142, to attack the RCYB activists, and to carry out their plans for the destruction of public housing.

This last bitter winter revealed the hard fact that the authorities have *nowhere to send the people they intend to evict!* During the year-end blizzard and cold snap, pipes throughout the housing projects froze and

burst—creating frozen sculptures of waterfalls in staircases and covering walls and landings with thick sheets of ice. Thousands of families suffered without heat or water. Three-month-old Tyrese Walker died under these inhuman conditions.

The response of the authorities was to evict people and step up their plans for demolitions. 885 families were forced to evacuate. The city authorities announced that 10 more highrises will be shut down in the fall of 1999—saying that the high level of vacancy contributed to the breakdown of pipes and other facilities. Yet there are *thousands* of people on waiting lists for public housing, and those vacancies could be filled overnight.

It suddenly became clear that the authorities are determined to drive people out of public housing—and have *no permanent low-income housing for the people to move to.*

In this winter crisis, they had to put people up in hotels and motels. They asked churches to open up their facilities—and asked residents to find space with relatives. And yet these authorities want to move 42,000 more people out of public housing! According to the Coalition to Protect Public Housing there are two families looking for every unit of low income housing right now. For years, the Coalition has asked, "Where are all the people supposed to go?" It's clear the authorities don't have a clue.

Imagine the suffering the people will experience if militant resistance is not organized—right now—against the official demolition plans.

Help "Draw the Line" at 1142 N. Orleans. The RCYB 2 must stay free, out on the street.

What can people do to stand with CHA residents and activists who are fighting to preserve public housing?

- Join with and mobilize for the protest to Save 1142 N. Orleans, 3:30 p.m., March 31, 1999.
- Send money to help pay the many legal expenses. For more information, call Revolution Books at (773) 528-5353.
- Fax State's Attorney Dick Devine at (312) 603-3000 to demand that charges against the RCYB 2 be dropped. Fax copies to Revolution Books (773) 528-5353.



Shawn Wall and AK Small (holding sound system) at a demo protesting the closing of a school at Cabrini Green.

Inequality, Poverty and Hype in the "New Economy"

by Raymond Lotta

The politicians and businessmen brag about it. The mainstream economists wheel out statistics. Clinton repeats it like a mantra. The message? "This is the best economy in 30 years." So good that some of its boosters have called it a "new economy."

A few days after Clinton's State of the Union address, when he reminded us of "how good things are," I spoke with a staff member of Second Harvest, the largest supplier to the country's emergency food centers. "You know," she said, "on paper, a lot of the economic numbers look good, but we're seeing a substantial rise in the demand for emergency food."

She ran down some numbers to me from the U.S. Conference of Mayors. In major cities across the country in 1997, requests for emergency food increased by an average of 16 percent over the previous year.

My inquiries took me to an economist at the Congressional Budget Office. He also shared some numbers with me. In 1994, a year after Clinton took office, those households that made over \$200,000 a year (about 1 percent of households) received 14 percent of national income. In 1997 this elite group increased its share of total household income to 20 percent—an astonishingly rapid rise in concentration of wealth at the very top. Some people do have reason to celebrate.

Boom Times for Them

The U.S. economy is indeed growing faster than it did in the early 1990s. America's growth is outstripping that of the other imperialist economies. Official unemployment has come down from 7.3 percent in 1993 to 4.5 percent in 1998. The federal budget balance has gone from a \$300 billion deficit to a \$70 billion surplus. Inflation is at its lowest level since the early 1960s.

The best of all times? Well, as always, the real question is... for whom, and according to what criteria? The top 20 percent are doing quite well; for the top 5 percent and especially for the top 1 percent, these truly are bountiful times.

But most Americans "don't have it so good." The 1990s have been years of "running to keep from falling behind" for most people.

The State of Working America, 1998-99 documents the trend. Between 1989 and 1997, wages and benefits fell 4.2 percent for all workers. At the end of 1996, and this was after five years of economic recovery, median family income was still below where it stood in 1989. (Median means that half of families had higher incomes and half of families had lower incomes.)

It was not until 1997 that median family income got back to and slightly exceeded its 1989 level. But this slow recovery in income didn't happen because of wage and salary improvements. The main reason that the average married-couple family with children was able to hold its ground has been the longer hours worked by family members—six more full-time weeks per year in 1996 than in 1989. People are working longer for less!

Young families, those headed by someone under the age of 25, have been especially hard-pressed. In 1997, these young families had \$5000 less income to spend (in real purchasing power) than such families had in 1967 when they were starting out.

The economy is expanding and more workers are being hired. But jobs are less secure in the 1990s than they were in the 1980s and earlier. Corporate downsizing and layoffs are still the order of the day, even in a brisk economy. And almost 30 percent of workers in 1997 were employed in situations that were not regular full-time jobs (Manpower Inc. has replaced General Motors as the largest private employer in the United States). These conditions have put downward pressures on wages.

Through the 1980s and 1990s, capital has been "restructuring" jobs and labor markets to raise profitability. Job tasks are redefined and expanded; more workers are hired for limited periods of time; large manufacturing companies subcontract an increasing share of production to cheap labor firms. More middle class professionals are forced to continue their workday into the night at home.

New jobs are less likely to offer health and pension benefits—so fewer of us are seeing doctors today than in 1989. The percentage of the labor force in unions fell rapidly in the 1980s and continued to decline in the 1990s—so fewer of us have contract protections. Labor costs have been pushed down by employers and this is an important reason that more people have been hired. It's not some miracle of "job creation."

Poverty Amidst Growth

The bottom 20 percent of the population in income and the bottom 10 percent of the labor force have been hit hard. In 1997 and 1998, real wages rose for low-paid workers. But the hurtful effects of cuts in welfare, food stamps, and other social programs are beginning to be felt more widely. A 1998 survey by the Children's Defense Fund found that in the early stages of "welfare-to-work," only a small fraction of new jobs found by welfare recipients paid above-poverty wages.

In the U.S. economy, there is a large pool of low-wage workers, and this pool will grow larger as more people are thrown off welfare, competing for low-wage jobs. In 1996, nearly a third of all workers were stuck in lower-skilled jobs paying less than \$15,000 a year. These jobs offer few prospects for on-the-job training and advancement.

The overall situation facing those on the bottom is creating enormous burdens and insecurities—in terms of people being able to meet basic housing, health, and food needs.

The government points to a drop in the official poverty rate in 1996 and 1997. But the U.S. Census Bureau report on poverty in 1997 shows that the ranks of the very poor (those with incomes below 50 percent of the federal poverty line) increased sharply in those two years. And more children are impoverished today than in 1989—here in the richest country in the world 20 percent of all children and 37 percent of Black and Latino children live in poverty.

We're constantly told that education is the ticket for the disadvantaged. It doesn't quite work that way. Black and Latino women college graduates actually saw their wages decline during the 1992-97 recovery. Meanwhile, young Black and Latino males are being locked up in prison at a terrifying rate.

Wealth Gap Widens

The headline economic event of the decade has been the soaring stock market. But look again: 60 percent of U.S. households own no stock, and close to 90 percent of the spectacular market gains of the 1990s went to the top 10 percent of households.

This highlights an important trend of the 1990s. Through seven years of economic expansion and Clinton social policy, income inequality has continued to widen. By 1997, the gap between the income of the richest 5 percent of the population and the lower 20 percent was at its highest level since 1947.

Inequality, poverty, and hype. This is the story told in the statistics and commentary that follow. This is capitalism in its turbulence and cruelty.

THE DOWNSIDE

Health Care as a Luxury

Despite the growing economy, the number of people without health insurance has been rising sharply. In 1997, 43.4 million had no health coverage. This is 16.1 percent of the population, the highest level of the decade. 22 percent of Black people and 34 percent of Latinos are without health coverage. The working poor make up the largest segment of the uninsured. (See Charts #1 and #2.)

Why is this happening? One, most of the new jobs in the economy are in small businesses that are less likely than big companies to provide health insurance. At the same time, many large-scale employers are cutting back health benefits, both for employees and their dependents. A survey by the Kaiser Foundation showed that in 1985 nearly two-thirds of all businesses with 100 or more employees paid the full cost of a worker's care; in 1995, only one-third did so.

Two, "welfare reform" is eroding health support from Medicaid (the government health insurance program for the poor). Six million people have left the welfare rolls in the last five years. The jobs they typically find do not provide health insurance. Some of these people can still get Medicaid coverage for a year, but then they are dropped. In many states, income limits for Medicaid are set so high that even many poor people do not qualify. For immigrants, new laws have created an intimidating atmosphere that keeps many who might otherwise be eligible for Medicaid from applying.

Three, more and more people simply cannot afford to pay for private health insurance.

The growing lack of health coverage and the rising cost of health care are taking their

toll. Medical costs are rising faster than workers' wages. As compared with people who have health insurance, the uninsured are less likely to get check-ups and treatment, less likely to get prescriptions filled. Many of the uninsured wait until they become very sick and resort to hospital emergency rooms.

There is evidence that late detection and treatment of diseases like cancer are leading to higher death rates for poor people and Black people. It is a problem linked to declining access to health care.

Chart #2: WHO ARE THE UNINSURED? % people in each category who do not have health insurance.

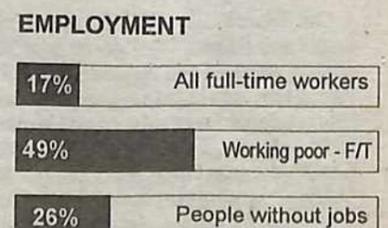
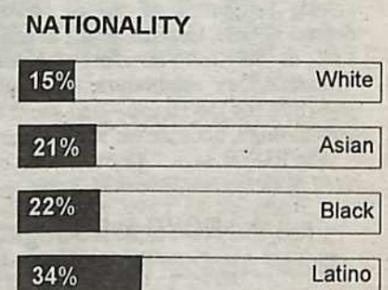
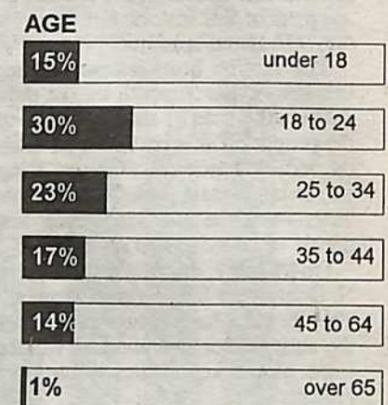
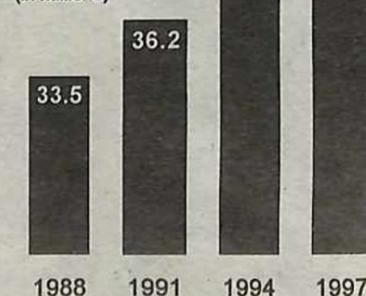


Chart #1: More People Without Health Insurance (in millions)



Source: Census Bureau

N DE OF THE BOOM



A young woman who has three children faced with welfare cuts in Florida.



Prisoners at the Tallulah Correctional Center for Youth in Louisiana.



Waiting room at a Chicago clinic.

The Lock-up Boom

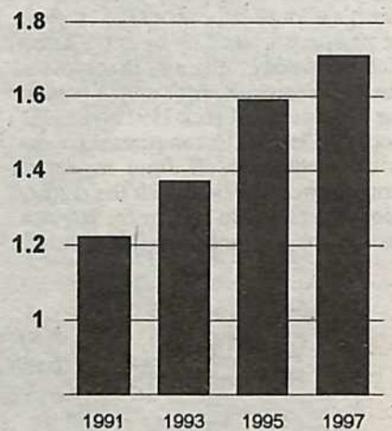
The number of people locked up in federal, state, and local prisons is close to 1.8 million—an increase of 500,000 since Clinton came to office. (See Chart #3.) The United States has the largest penal system in the world. Nearly 1 of every 150 people in the United States is in prison or jail—a rate of incarceration that ranks close to the top of the world. The lock-up frenzy continues even though crime rates are falling.

The prison population is mostly young and poorly educated. While Black people make up 12 percent of the U.S. population, starting in the 1990s Black people accounted for more than 50 percent of the people being sent to state and federal prisons.

The United States has 1.5 to 2 percent of its potential workforce in jail.

Chart #3:
More People Behind Bars

Population in federal, state & local prisons (in millions)



Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics

Unemployment—Looking Behind the Official Numbers

Over the last year the government has been trumpeting the “low rate” of unemployment: 4.5 percent in 1998, down from 7.3 percent in 1993. But this statistic gives only a partial picture of joblessness and misses the problem of underemployment.

To begin with, different groups of people are affected differently by the economy. For instance, the Black unemployment rate in 1997 was 10 percent—a distressingly high level of joblessness and double the overall unemployment rate.

More generally, the official unemployment rate doesn't reveal longer-term unemployment and “underemployment.” Not included in the unemployment statistic are those people working part-time but who want to work full-time, people who want to work but who have been discouraged from looking because they fail to find jobs.

If you put these categories together, you get an “underemployment rate” of 8.9 percent in 1997—which is considerably higher than the official unemployment rate of 4.9

Continued on page 10



Some of the hundreds of people lining up for jobs at a new hotel in New York City.

THE DOWN SIDE OF THE BOOM

Continued from page 9

percent. For 16- to 25-year-old Black males with a high school degree, their unemployment rate was 23 percent and their underemployment rate was 37 percent. For those without a high school degree, their unemployment rate was 37 percent and their underemployment rate was 51 percent.

Having a job does not mean you keep a job. Layoffs and downsizing have persisted

through the "boom economy." Between 1992 and 1995, 15 percent of all workers holding jobs for one year or longer lost those jobs. While many found new jobs, on average the new jobs paid 14 percent less than before. Older workers who lose jobs, including white collar and middle-manager professionals, have a very hard time finding comparable jobs.

Labor Statistics forecast the fastest-growing jobs through the year 2006. The profession with the most growth: cashier!

In 1997, 28 percent of the workforce earned poverty-level wages. It's been at that

range throughout most of the 1990s, not exactly testimony to a robust economy supposedly "lifting all boats." 35 percent of employed women are earning poverty-level wages or less.

High-Tech Hype: Virtual Jobs, Real Layoffs And Low Wages

With the economy growing, 18 million more people are working today than in 1993. But we have to look more closely at the job situation.

There's a lot of hype about the employment prospects opened up by new "information technology." But jobs in computer-related fields accounted for only 4 percent of the job growth between 1992 and 1996.

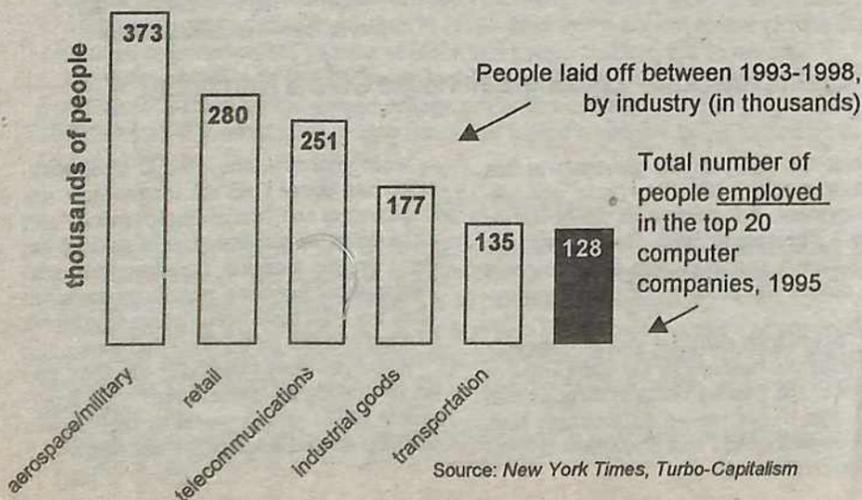
Look at Chart #4. It compares the numbers of people laid off from major industries between 1993-98 with the number of people employed in 1995 by the 20 "new titans" of the computer chip and software

industry, like Microsoft and Intel. The total employment of these firms was close to 130,000. That compares with 721,000 working for General Motors in the same year. People losing jobs in other industries will not be able to simply upgrade to the high-tech sector. The well-paying high-tech firms are not big employers.

Manufacturing jobs that once paid middle-class wages are increasingly replaced by retail and service jobs which pay low wages. Together, these low-wage industries accounted for 79 percent of all new jobs in 1989-97. In 1997, the Bureau of

Chart #4:
Hi Tech Myth

It's a myth that the people laid off in basic industry will simply find new and better jobs in the hi tech computer sector



Poverty in the Expanding Economy

In 1997, the poverty rate (the percent of the population living in poverty) stood at 13.3 percent. To be "in poverty" means not having enough money to meet basic needs. It means living below the so-called "poverty line." Over 35 million people were poor in 1996 and 1997.

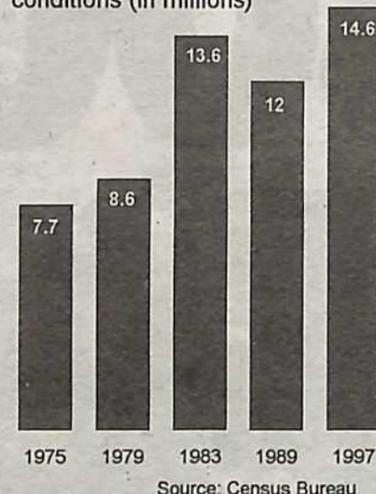
With the economy growing, the poverty rate fell from 1993 to 1997. But the poverty rate in 1997 was still higher than it was in 1989 (the peak growth year before the last recession). In other words, the poverty rate is higher than in previous years with a strong economy.

There is another important characteristic of poverty in the 1990s. More and more poor people are living in *extreme* poverty. (See Chart #5.) In 1997, 14.6 million people had incomes of *less than half* the poverty level. This was an increase of over 500,000 from 1995. 40 percent of all poor people in 1997 were in this "deeply poor" and often desperate situation.

In California, nearly 30 percent of children under 6 were living in poverty in 1996. More than 1 in 10 children in the U.S. were living in *extreme* poverty.

The robust economy of the 1990s has not been bringing about a significant reduction in poverty. Why? Low-wage workers have a hard time working their way out of poverty. Sharp cutbacks in government assis-

Chart #5:
The Growth of Deep Poverty
People living below 50% of the "poverty line" -- under desperate conditions (in millions)



tance to the poor are creating a more desperate situation for many of the poor. And while the economy has been growing, income and wealth continue to be concentrated at the top levels.

Hunger and Homelessness

In the midst of economic growth, hunger and homelessness remain serious problems. Some of the people who suffer from hunger and homelessness have been poor for a long time. But homeless shelters and soup kitchens are also serving *working* poor whose jobs don't pay enough to put food on the

table or a roof over people's heads. Recently published national studies show 4 million or more children and many millions of adults regularly don't get enough to eat. Based on 1995 data, the United States Department of Agriculture estimated that 11 million Americans living



Immigrant worker from Mexico living in a tent in San Diego County, California.

in 4 million households are experiencing "moderate or severe hunger"—this means, for example, that adults are regularly forced to seriously cut back on what they eat so their children don't starve. An additional 24 million people live in 8 million households where people regularly skip meals or leave the table hungry because of lack of money. In all, about 35 million people in the United States experience varying degrees of hunger.

A study carried out in March 1998 by Physicians for Human Rights among Latino and Asian legal immigrants in California, Texas, and Illinois found that more than one in three of the immigrant households suffered from "moderate or severe hunger."

"Welfare reform" is creating new problems. A study released in Wisconsin, a state "pioneering" welfare reform, found that people who moved off the welfare rolls into jobs were 50 percent more likely to say they did not have enough money for food than people still on welfare.

Between 1994 and 1998, the number of people on food stamps dropped steeply, from 28 million to fewer than 19 million. Some people are no longer eligible. A significant number of people who are eligible for stamps aren't getting them because of the hostile climate that has been created around such assistance.

This is a major reason that emergency food providers in major cities report continued long lines and requests for food, particularly among working families and households with children.

Homelessness is hard to measure—there is little interest by government agencies to develop detailed figures. The two trends most responsible for the rise in homelessness over the last 15 years are the shortage of affordable rental housing and the increase in poverty.

Earlier this year, the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty estimated that 700,000 people are homeless on any given night, and up to 2 million people are homeless at some time during any one year. A 1995 study estimated that 12 million adults in the U.S. have been homeless at some point in their lives.

In 1998, the U.S. Conference of Mayors found that applicants for public housing in 30 survey cities had to wait an average of 24 months from the time they applied until the time they received a space.

The lack of affordable health care contributes to homelessness. As the National Coalition For the Homeless put it: "For families and individuals struggling to pay rent, a serious illness or disability can start a downward spiral into homelessness, beginning with a lost job, depletion of savings to pay for care, and eventual eviction."

Deepening Inequality of Income and Wealth

Inequality has increased sharply over the last 20 years. Chart #6 shows the widening gap between the upper income and lower income groups, greater now than at any time since 1947. It has consistently increased over the Reagan, Bush and, now, Clinton years.

Between 1979 and 1997, the income of the bottom 20 percent of families was falling by 6.4 percent a year, while the income of the top 20 percent was growing substantially.

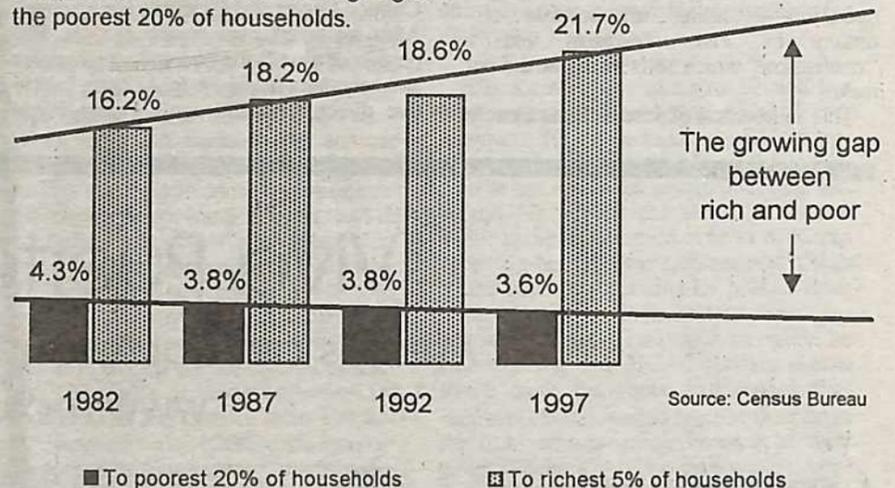
What this has meant in terms of the dis-

tribution of income is this:

In 1979, the lowest fifth of families received 5.4 percent of all family income, but in 1997, their share declined to 4.2 percent. In 1979, the top fifth of families received 41.4 percent of all income, but in 1997 received 47.2 percent of all family income. The wealthiest fifth now averages 11 times more income per family than the poorest fifth. The middle 60 percent saw their share of income fall from 53.2 percent in 1979 to 48.6 percent in 1997. In the 1990s, the income gains were greatest for

Chart #6: The Rich Get Richer

The share of total household income going to the richest 5% of households, compared to the income share going to the poorest 20% of households.



the very rich: the top 1 percent of families saw their incomes grow by 10 percent.

So the rich have gotten richer, the poor have gotten poorer, the middle has been squeezed.

But this pattern of income inequality doesn't tell the whole story. It doesn't include bank accounts, holdings of stocks, bonds, and other forms of wealth. The distribution of wealth in America is much more unequal than the distribution of income. In 1995, the wealthiest 10 percent of households controlled 72 percent of total wealth. The top 1 percent alone controlled nearly 40 percent of total wealth! The bottom 40 percent of households had only two-tenths of a percent of wealth.

What we have been looking at here has been unequal distribution of income. This

inequality stems from unequal ownership of the productive resources of society. A tiny minority of the population, the capitalist-imperialist class, controls the means of production and exploits an international class of laborers. The economy and society are structured to serve the interests of the capitalist class. Inequality and poverty are built into capitalism.

Tremendous wealth is being created over this period of economic expansion in the U.S. But true to the nature of capitalism, this wealth pools up in the upper reaches of society.

America never was and never will be an egalitarian society...until there is socialist revolution. In fact, it is a society which continues to grow only more unequal. □

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José Solís: Independentista Railroaded in Federal Trial



Supporters and family of José Solís at a vigil March 13.

On Friday, March 12th, the 46-year-old Puerto Rican independentista José Solís Jordán was taken from a federal courtroom to prison—after being convicted of four felonies in an outrageous trial. Solís had been accused of carrying out an armed action in Chicago to demand freedom for imprisoned Puerto Rican independence fighters. He now faces six to eight years in prison. The federal court will sentence Solís this summer.

The U.S. government now has a *sixteenth* Puerto Rican political prisoner behind bars—the latest victim in U.S. imperialism's century-old campaign to suppress the just struggle for Puerto Rican independence.

"How can you sit in the courtroom in Chicago," commented one of the Solís defense attorneys Jed Stone, "and watch a Puerto Rican professor on trial and not understand it was a colonial power trying a colonial subject."

Dr. Solís was denied the right to stand trial in his own country—Puerto Rico. He was tried before a jury without any Puertorriqueños or Latinos at all. The evidence arrayed against him was weak and carried the markings of an FBI Cointelpro operation—including unbelievable testimony by FBI informants and a "confession" which Solís insists he did not make.

This railroading of José Solís is closely



José Solís (2nd from right) with his legal team: Joe Guastefero, Linda Backiel, and Jed Stone.

tied to a larger FBI campaign to target pro-independence Puerto Rican activists in Chicago organized around the Puerto Rican Cultural Center and Clemente High School. After his arrest over a year ago, the FBI demanded that Solís become an informant and help them imprison José Lopez, executive director of Chicago's Puerto Rican

Cultural Center. When Solís refused, he was himself accused of participating in a 1992 attempted bombing—and put on trial.

Supporters of Solís and Puerto Rican independence repeatedly packed the courtroom during this trial—even though the federal authorities repeatedly harassed and threatened them. At one point a woman was

ordered out of the courtroom and was roughed up by cops in the hallway. Hearing her scream, people raced to confront the U.S. marshals and were threatened with pepper spray.

When the unjust guilty verdict finally came on March 12, it was greeted with sorrow, disgust and outrage in the courtroom.

Solís supporters immediately announced that they intend to continue the campaign to free Dr. Solís—and held a vigil that same night. An appeal is being filed—including charges that the U.S. government violated international law when they seized a "colonial subject" in his home country and put him on trial in the colonizing country, the United States.

José said, the day before this unjust verdict arrived, "I will continue to struggle, whether it be from behind a desk at the University of Puerto Rico or at home with my family, or whether it be from behind prison bars. I am a free man. They can't take that away from me."

For more information, contact the Committee in Solidarity with José Solís Jordán P.O. Box 577826, Chicago, IL 60657-7826 Phone: 312-409-0801 Email: solis42566@aol.com Website: www.defendsolis.org.

¡Viva Puerto Rico libre!

Articles available on the RW Online website

www.mcs.net/~rwor

- Viva Puerto Rico Libre! — July 25, 1998 Marches Mark 100 Years of U.S. Colonialism
- Free Puerto Rico! Free Puerto Rican Political Prisoners/POWs! — Message from the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA on the 100th Anniversary of the U.S. Invasion
- Puerto Rico: General Strike Sweeps the Island — July, 1998
- The Persecution of Puerto Rican Independentista José Solís
- Free Puerto Rico — from Chairman Bob Avakian
- Puerto Rico's Fight for Independence The Early Years—1898-1954
- Jíbaros Under the Yankee Sugar Lords
- The Yankee War Machine in Puerto Rico
- U.S. Opens Fire on Puerto Rico — May 12, 1898
- The Puerto Rican Independentistas
- 1898: The Bloody Rise of U.S. Imperialism





Unemployed workers at a labor market in Shenyang in southern China.

WOMEN IN CHINA: FREE MARKET OUTCASTS

During the first half of the 20th century, the people of China waged an epic struggle to throw off oppression. It was Mao Tsetung who pointed out that three mountains weighed on the Chinese people. They were feudalism, bureaucrat-capitalism, and imperialism. Each of these mountains produced untold suffering for women. But in 1949, after more than 20 years of armed struggle led by the Chinese Communist Party and Mao Tsetung, the Chinese people overthrew these mountains. From 1949 until 1976, there was great struggle against women's oppression and the life of women improved dramatically. Today, these three mountains of feudalism, bureaucrat-capitalism, and imperialism have returned, and so too the most horrendous oppression of women. Once again, these mountains will have to be destroyed.

"When we first started work, our ideological level was not very high. Most of us were working just to get more money. Then we came to understand that our jobs were an important part of building socialism. But we didn't really have a thorough understanding of this. During the Cultural Revolution we all studied together. We read works by Mao, especially 'Serve the People.' We learned that all our jobs serve the people, whether they are high or low. After the Cultural Revolution we linked up our present work with the world revolution... We have the whole world in view so we will never leave the revolutionary road."

A revolutionary woman in socialist China in the early 1970s

"Secretary, Beijing resident, female, under 30, above 1.65 meters, must have regular features."

ad for job placed by Jinzhuyuan Garment Co. in Beijing Youth Daily, 1998

"Promotion girl, female, under 28 years old, above 1.65 meters tall, white skin,

skinny, healthy."

ad placed for job with L'Oreal Cosmetics in China, 1998

Tianjin, China: Every afternoon, in the small courtyard outside the Machang Street Re-employment Center, small groups of laid-off workers anxiously scan the day's help-wanted listings. They are all women, all over 35 and all unskilled.

"If you're over 35, it's very hard to find work," said a 43-year-old woman who said she had been laid off this year from a food-processing plant and was preparing to go out on an interview for a part-time job cleaning windows at 60 cents an hour. "What can you do?" she asked. "You have young and old ones to look after. You're old to learn new skills. You're not attractive anymore. Nobody wants us."

The New York Times, "In China, 35+ and Female = Unemployable,"

October 13, 1998

Tianjin, a coastal manufacturing city of nine million people, is a center of the textile industry in China. In 1997, 320,000 people were laid off here and women were hit the hardest.

China's Ministry of Labor reported that in 1997, women accounted for only 39 percent of China's work force but nearly 61 percent of its laid-off workers. Surveys showed that 75 percent of laid-off women were still unemployed after one year, compared with far fewer than 50 percent of the men who were laid off at the same time. And since jobs at state industries have historically come with a wide range of social benefits, laid-off workers often lose, in addition to their job, medical care, child care and funeral benefits.

The cruelty of free market capitalism is in full effect—making it even more difficult for older women to find jobs. With state-owned industries closing and shrinking, women over 35 years old are far more likely to be laid off and far less likely to find a new job than any other group in China.

Many of these women are unskilled and companies are also reluctant to hire older women, since they usually bear full responsibility for taking care of children as well as older parents.

Standing in line at an unemployment center, Sun Jingqi, a 41-year-old former textile worker, told the *New York Times*, "At our factory everyone who was laid off was a woman. Look around you, everyone here is female. Now what can we do? We're not young enough. We don't have experience."

Official laws promote, in words, equal job opportunity for women. But in real life, companies openly favor men over women for many types of work. One law school graduate looking for a job said many companies thought jobs were too strenuous for women if they involved travel or work in rural towns. "It's harder for women to find work," she said. "When they are willing to hire a woman, they want someone who's beautiful and capable, too."

Not surprisingly, Chinese surveys have found higher-than-normal rates of depression, family violence and divorce in households where women have been laid off.

Socialist revolution liberated China in 1949 and for over 25 years, Mao Tsetung led the people to build a new society free of all oppression. Fighting for the equality and full participation of women in all spheres of life was an integral part of building this new socialist society.

In the countryside, for the first time, women were given equal rights to work the land. In city factories, the wage system was changed to narrow differences and inequalities, including those between men and women. And measures were taken to make sure women's special needs were taken into account.

Before the revolution, women were stuck in the home and kept very isolated from the broader life and struggle that went on in the community and workplace. After the revolution, there was a lot of struggle to set up collective kitchens and childcare in order to free women from the oppressive

conditions of individualized household chores. In the countryside there was tremendous struggle against traditional feudal traditions which made women totally subordinate to fathers, husbands and mother-in-laws.

In the cities, small "street factories" were set up to allow women to work part time and bring their children to work where they were taken care of. Many of these small factories grew into larger collectively owned and run factories employing hundreds of workers and producing all kinds of goods. In Beijing, 180,000 women were involved in setting up more than 400 street factories and 2,900 street production units.

Many factories got rid of bonuses and material incentives (giving workers more pay for more and better work)—which tended to favor men who were stronger and more free to work overtime. And while differences in wages still remained, big efforts were made to "bring the bottom up"—increasing benefits and wages of workers in the lowest paying jobs, where a lot of women were still concentrated.

In all this, women were brought forward as leaders in the revolution. In order for women to really be liberated they had to participate in revolutionizing every part of life—not just those things which narrowly concerned family, children and the household. The Communist Party set up special groups for women to study and discuss Marxism-Leninism-Maoism. And a lot of times this meant combining political study with teaching women to read. These groups also helped women overcome various obstacles that had prevented them from becoming politically active. For instance, they made sure there was childcare so women could attend meetings.

After Mao died in 1976 and capitalism was restored in China, all these steps toward liberating women were brought to a halt. Under socialism, women were treated as a precious resource in building a new society. But today, the dog-eat-dog laws of capitalism are making it hard for millions of women to even find a job. □

Higher Learning II: Talking

On January 14, 1999 dozens of classrooms in Oakland devoted the day to discussing the case of Mumia Abu-Jamal. The next day, Mumia's lead attorney, Leonard Weinglass, spoke to several classes at two high schools in Oakland. The activities made national news, and the controversy was all over the Bay Area news media for weeks.

Before, during, and after the day of Mumia activities, teachers and students came under fire for daring to discuss the case. Administrators banned planned school-wide assemblies and teach-ins, forcing resourceful teachers to organize classroom events ranging from mock-trials to discussions of Mumia's writings in English classes. Oakland's new Mayor Jerry Brown lashed out at teachers and students for departing from standard curriculum, saying that in a school district with low test scores, the teachers should not be talking about Mumia. Newspaper editorials and the Oakland Police Department demanded the discussions be banned because they coincided with the funeral of an Oakland cop who was shot, and a right-wing talk show host incited his followers with rhetoric blaming Mumia's supporters for a so-called epidemic of cop killing. (See *RW* No. 991, "Higher Learning: Mumia Shakes Up Oakland Schools")

Recently I had a chance to talk with some teachers, students, parents and activists who were part of "Mumia Day" in the Oakland schools, and I learned a lot more about the powerful effect they had on others, and the changes they went through themselves to stand up for Mumia. [I've changed the names of the students and teachers to help protect them from reprisals from the authorities].

Not Appropriate for Oakland Schools?

One of the ways the authorities went after the Oakland Schools teach-in was to say that it was inappropriate to teach kids about Mumia when their test scores are low. Karl, a social studies and media studies teacher, was outraged by this. He told me that the day he devoted to Mumia was "One of the most exciting lessons I've had in a long time. The students got very engaged."

In Karl's media studies class, students learn how to critically analyze news coverage. He said he incorporated a lesson on Mumia in this topic "because Mumia's case has been completely censored. I did a search on the web just for the Bay Area's major papers—the *Chronicle/Examiner* and the *Oakland Tribune*. In 1998, despite the fact that this case has gotten tens of thousands of people behind it, and it's known internationally, and there's ongoing events related to it that are newsworthy, there was one article in those three papers, in the entire year of 1998, that really discussed the case. Mumia's name came up in a search; a few articles just mentioned a demonstration that was held, but no information on his case. So, it seemed very appropriate to then look at the case in a Media Studies class, to say, what is this issue?"

Janelle is a student at Oakland High. After watching the head of the Oakland school board demand a ban on discussion of Mumia in class because overall test scores in the Oakland schools are low, she said "A lot of people are making decisions for us, as far as what we should be learning and what we shouldn't be learning. They said on the television that a high percentage of kids are doing bad in English and Math, but most of the time it's the counselors or teachers who put you back because they don't have enough space to put you in the proper class. That happened to me last year. I went to my counselor a couple times to try to get my classes changed and it still hasn't happened. So I'm going to take summer school. But then people make decisions for us, and tell us what we should be learning, when it's our decision. I mean, if something comes up that has to do with a lot of us, it's an everyday thing that we talk about. So why can't we talk about it in school?"

Martin teaches Media Studies and English, and he was unapologetic about discussing Mumia in class. "I took it up more as somebody who is sympathetic to

Mumia. It's OK to be partisan. But at the same time I presented something that is objective, and showed both sides. This is a major issue, as far as I'm concerned, in the world. It's like, what would you do if Malcolm X was in this position, right now? You would try to get the facts out there, try to get people to examine it. And that relates to the death penalty—what kinds of people are in jail? What is three strikes all about? Those are issues that are vital, that need to be examined.

"My students are not outside of all this. Two months ago they brought in a military band, and had a pitch afterward about joining the army. Now, don't tell me that that's part of the goddamn curriculum. So, if they can do that, we can sure as hell try to bring in the case around Mumia and bring in important people like from Amnesty International (a speaker from AI was among those banned from schoolwide teach-ins by the administration)."

Monica, a 16-year-old who participated in discussions in class, said, "They should bring out more cases like this, and start showing us what's going on, because, if you look at Mumia's case, there's so many things about that case that are just not right at all. Then you look at the system, and you think. Our teacher told us the whole story, and I looked at the evidence, and I thought, that man deserves a new trial... Now, I think they should change the system in some type of way because it's not working."

Janelle thought adult authority types are scared of what kind of information is discussed with teenagers. "They don't want us to open our eyes, and see that we can make a difference. We can understand what's going on. They just think that all teenagers are stupid."

Disrespectful?

Shortly before the scheduled Oakland teach-ins, an Oakland cop was killed. An editorial in the *San Francisco Chronicle* said "of course" there should be no Mumia teach-in since the police officer was killed. The official spokesman of the Oakland Police Department demanded that the teach-ins be cancelled. Janelle talked about how students in her class felt about the police and authorities trying to use this incident to ban discussion of Mumia: "It didn't make any sense to them. They didn't see a connection. Mumia Abu-Jamal has nothing to do with the death of this police officer. This is about looking at whether someone has gotten justice or not, whether he's innocent or guilty of the crime he's accused of. They didn't feel it was fair they had to stop this educational process they were already engaged in when a police officer is killed, and nobody gives them the same kind of consideration. It really made a statement to them, I think, that they were supposed to give greater importance to this police officer being killed than to people in their own lives..."

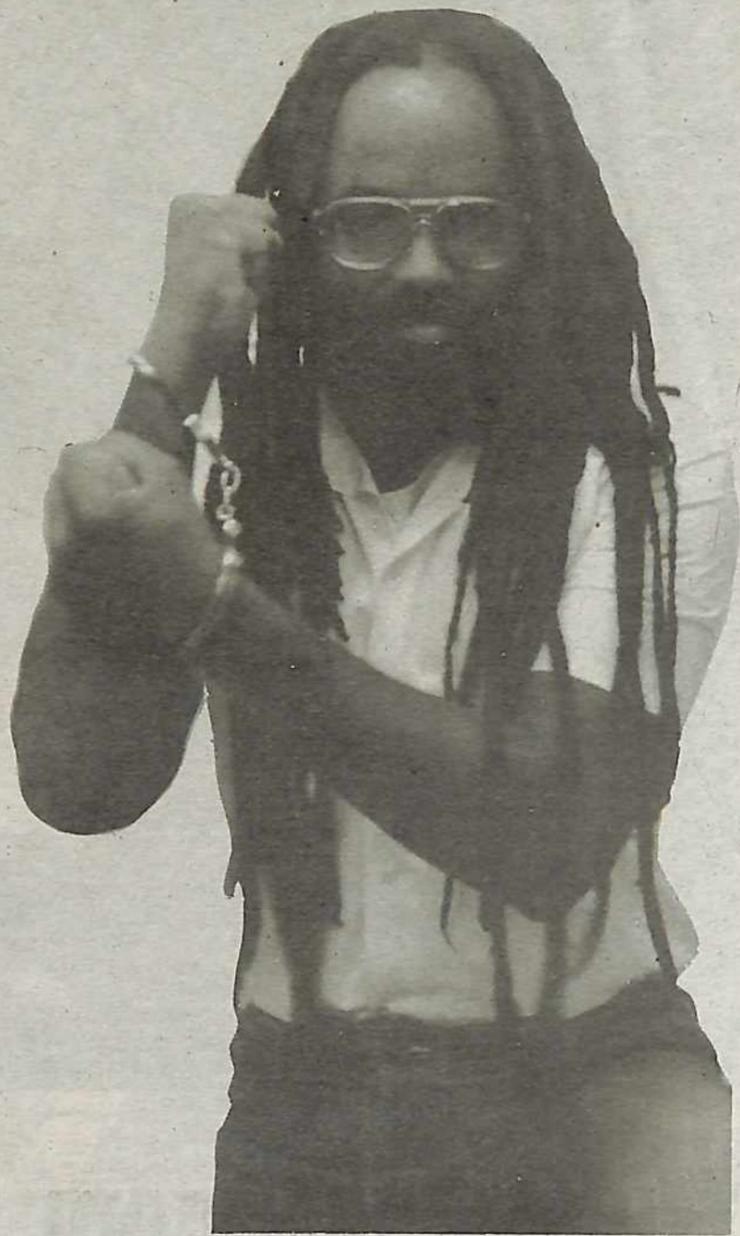
Monica thought the death of the cop "was a good excuse for them, too, they was happy to have that come along so they could use that as an excuse."

But Janelle added, "We weren't gonna stop just because they said so. We talked about Mumia. What about Mumia's kids, and his wife? He can't touch nobody, he can't do nothing."

An Oakland parent, who's children had discussed Mumia in an elementary school class, was angry that thousands of police had motorcaded through Oakland for the officer's memorial on the same day as the Mumia discussions. He said, "I believe there's a lot of innocent men and women on death row, there for something they didn't do. Even on drug charges, there are cops out there who will plant drugs their own selves. They're trigger happy, billy-club happy."

Higher Learning

Karl's students compared the ABC 20/20 episode on Mumia with the HBO feature "A Case for a Reasonable Doubt." "With a lot more certainty than I expected, students identified the 20/20 piece as being very biased." Karl said that after the class he also found how 20/20 had cut the interview with Leonard Weinglass to change the



Mumia Abu-Jamal

meaning. "20/20 said, 'Well, your own forensic analyst said that it was a 38.' And they have Leonard Weinglass saying, 'he did.' And then Sam Donaldson says, 'Yes, so why do you have any doubt?' And when Leonard Weinglass spoke in front of the school building, he said that in the case of that particular quote, what happened was that he said, 'It was, if you only took that fragment, but there was another fragment that could have been a larger caliber.' And he said they cut that. So, that's an excellent example, a very blatant example, of slanting by network TV."

Martin's English students read essays from *Death Blossoms*, and wrote thoughtful and moving papers about how they were affected by what they read. Martin also organized a mock trial in one of his classes, where students put an important witness, William Singletary on the stand. Singletary's testimony was suppressed in the trial. When Leonard Weinglass visited their class, Martin's students wanted to know how the police could get away with keeping Singletary's testimony out of the trial.

Monica said, "I looked at Mumia's case from both sides, and it's just not fair at all. I put both sides together... Mumia's not getting his fair justice if new evidence has come along and they just act like it's never there. I don't know how Mumia can deal with it, if it was me, I'd be going crazy... We've seen a whole bunch of new evidence come into light. I think they should use it, instead of just throwing it away, saying this is not good evidence like the judge was saying. If any new evidence comes to light, you should use it, and try to make a new trial. They're talking about a man's life, they've got to realize that."

The students and teachers got a first hand look at how the media distorts Mumia's case and struggle around it. In Martin's class, an *Oakland Tribune* reporter sat in for several hours, and didn't include any description in his story of the thoughtful discussion that took place.

Janelle was angry at how the mainstream news distorted what she had to say. "This lady came in from a radio station, and she acted like she wanted to hear what we had to say. She actually asked us questions, we talked and everything, a lot of us had a lot

of good things to say. But then the news went on a half an hour talking about the President and Monica, and then not even 5 to 10 minutes on us, and it made us seem stupid. All she had us saying was 'yes,' 'I think so,' and 'I don't really know.' She put it together in pieces, like these teenagers don't know what's going on."

Monica added that "they tried to make it like we don't know what's going on, that our teachers are just telling us what to say. But we ain't even like that. I decided for myself what I think. I got my own mind."

Andrew and Ed have done community outreach work around Mumia before in Santa Cruz. When they heard about the teach-in controversy, they got in touch with teachers they knew at Bishop O'Dowd, an elite private high school in Oakland. Ed talked about how they saw the connection between speaking at Bishop O'Dowd, and the controversy in the Oakland Public Schools: "Our goal in going to O'Dowd was to cover all the bases. When we heard about the Oakland Public School teach-in, we were hyped. To me, it was totally unexpected. I didn't expect that big of a thing to go on in public schools at this point in the movement. We just thought how we could contribute to that, and we were in pretty good with a teacher at our old school so we did that."

Andrew said that when he and Ed spoke in classes, "One of the most frequently asked questions, one of the most basic questions, was how could this travesty of justice possibly occur? I guess a lot of people at Bishop O'Dowd have sheltered lives, so they're not really aware of a lot of the things that are going on. They're not really aware that there is a huge amount of police brutality against people of color, against lower class people in economic status. They're not aware of the way the death penalty is applied unfairly along lines of class and race and gender. So, it just came as a shock to a lot of people, it was really eye opening. And some of them want to get involved, and some of them will go back to their everyday world."

And Ed added that "the most important thing is that they have all learned who Mumia is, and they know that there's at least controversy about it. If they don't

About Mumia in Oakland Schools

have an opinion, they at least know that it's a big deal. In some classes, a lot of people did take more information, and to me that was a good sign of interest. And one guy said he wanted our phone number to get more information, because he was planning on writing his term paper on Mumia."

The Impact of Mumia on Youth

I wanted to know what Monica and Janelle and their fellow students thought about Mumia, now that they had learned more about him. Monica talked about the impact of learning about Mumia: "He is special to some kids. I can't really speak for other kids, but I can speak for myself, because I'm not just a person who just thinks about myself, I think about what other people are going through.... And in his case, I looked into it, and it makes me feel real bad. What really got me starting to look into his case was the evidence that he's not getting justice. It seems like, just because of who he is. He seems like a nice man, from what I've been hearing. He spoke about nice things on the radio, he had a family, wife, kids. I heard he was a good father and good husband. He was a pretty good man from what I heard. And then I read two of his books, I read *Death Blossoms* and *Live From Death Row*, and another book about the case I got from my teacher, and another book I got from a lady who was selling them. In *Death Blossoms*, Mumia wasn't really talking about his case, he was just saying how he gets through prison. That's another thing that made me real sad, what he has to go through. Locked in a cell 23 hours a day."

Janelle and Monica both had been thinking about how Mumia's case fits into the future for youth: Monica said that "Just locking people up, just giving people the death penalty. It don't look like it's helping anything to me, it looks like it's just getting worse. Why aren't they saying, 'Maybe our punishment is not doing a very good job, let's think about a different thing we can do?' Don't they see things are just getting worse? You know you can go crazy in that jail. I already thought about what if I was in his position."

"They don't want us to have any discussion of this," Janelle added, "but what if they sent up my brother to get the death penalty? That's when it's gonna grab my attention but I can't do nothing about it no more. Janelle thought that what was hap-

pening to Mumia was "no different from the witch trials we used to have in the 1600s, where because they didn't want women to be smarter than men—I'll accuse you of being a witch.'"

Janelle and Monica were also interested in Mumia's history, and his involvement with the Black Panther Party especially. Monica said, "I don't see what's so wrong with being a Black Panther, why did they have to use that as an argument for his death? I don't see why that is an argument for his death."

And Janelle asked, "Why is it that a lot of police officers were going after the Black Panthers, you know? They were just standing up for their rights."

Standing up for Mumia

The teachers and students who participated in Mumia activities had to deal with the risks involved, given that authorities had banned teach-ins, and tried to intimidate teachers from even discussing Mumia in class. At Karl's school, the principal forced teachers to sign statements that they would not discuss Mumia in their classrooms, and banned Leonard Weinglass from speaking. The fact that the Oakland Education Association had called for the teach-ins gave the teachers some backing, as did statements of support from activist Noam Chomsky, actor Ossie Davis, Mark Taylor of Academics for Mumia Abu-Jamal, and from Mumia himself. Teachers who discussed Mumia have gotten many messages of support from parents, and nobody yet has come up with a student who complained about learning about Mumia—in fact many teachers reported that attendance, enthusiasm and involvement was never greater than when they devoted a class to Mumia.

As one of the teachers who had been on the news publicly saying he would discuss Mumia in his class, Martin said how important he thought the stand was that he and other teachers took: "It was broadcast internationally, that the Oakland teachers and students took up Mumia's case. It made a big impact. It also gave other people some backbone to think maybe they can do something like this. Then they had a big concert with 16,000 people in New Jersey for Mumia, and they tried to ban that. What's happening is that this kind of thing that we did in Oakland is part of changing the atmosphere, it has made it possible for more

people to say we should do something too. It's a good question, what can we do about this? But one thing is to step out ourselves and step up. Mumia was just the age of these students when he joined the Black Panther Party, and we need people stepping forward like that now."

For both Monica and Janelle, getting involved around Mumia was their first political protest activity. They talked about some of the challenges they are up against, knowing what they know about Mumia. Janelle said, "I think this is to tell me, and other people who are great speakers, our age, to go out and say something about this. Because now it's grabbing my attention. Before, I was against the death penalty, but it didn't really get to me like this. I thought maybe people did deserve it, because the way they put it on the television, and how they talk about it. But now that I look at it, I'm like, how come I didn't know about Mumia? He's been in jail from about the time we were born. And we never heard anything about him until now, when we're 16 years old and just now hearing about this man!"

"I really want to do a lot," added Monica. "I have many ideas to do some-

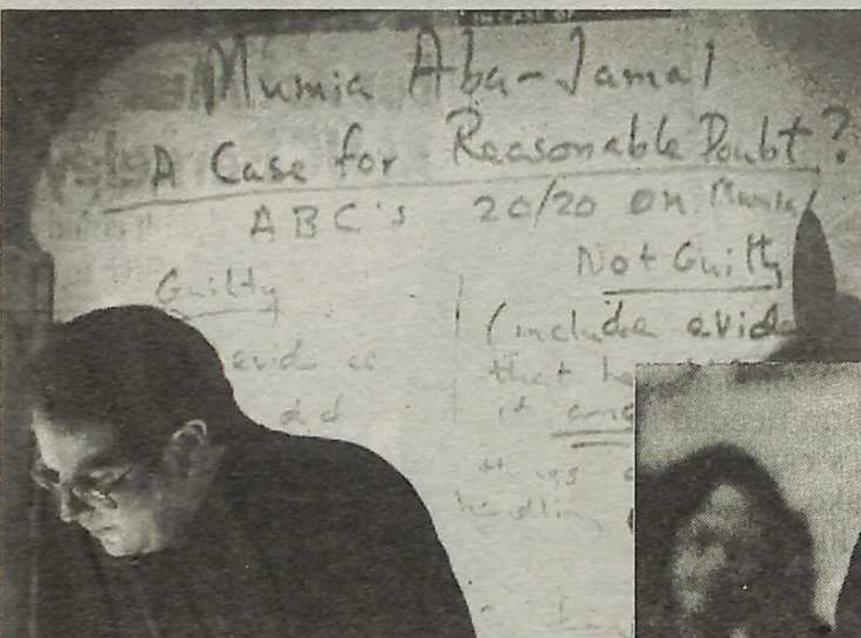
thing about this, because I'm really upset about this. I've got a big mouth, and I will tell it. □

"We've seen a whole bunch of new evidence come into light. I think they should use it, instead of just throwing it away, saying this is not good evidence like the judge was saying. If any new evidence comes to light, you should use it, and try to make a new trial. They're talking about a man's life, they've got to realize that."

Oakland student



Speakout at the Oakland school board, January 13.



An Oakland teacher leading a discussion in class comparing the HBO video "Case for Reasonable Doubt" with the ABC "20/20" attack on Mumia, January 14.



An Oakland classroom discussing Mumia's case.

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