

RALLY, COMRADES!

THE VOICE OF THE LEAGUE OF REVOLUTIONARIES FOR A NEW AMERICA

VOLUME 29, EDITION 4

JULY-AUGUST 2019

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Voter Suppression and the Battle for Democracy

Voting has long been proclaimed the hallmark of American democracy. At the same time, American history could be written as the history of voter suppression. From the beginning, elections have been a battleground in the struggle for defining the aims and aspirations of the people, as well as a struggle for power, to determine how the dominant class can maintain its rule. To that end, the vote has been manipulated, suppressed and controlled to ensure the outcome is in the interests of the ruling class. American democracy may proclaim itself to represent the interests of all the people, but in the end, it is a form of class rule.

In the 2018 mid-term elections for governor of the state of Georgia, Brian Kemp, then current Secretary of State and candidate for governor, oversaw his own election while running against Democratic nominee Stacy Abrams. Since 2012, 1.4 million people have been removed from Georgia's voting rolls. Continuing that practice, "Purge by Postcard" was initiated, in which those who had not voted in previous elections were sent a postcard. Those who did not return the card were automatically removed from the rolls without notification. At least 340,000 voters were disenfranchised by this method.

"Exact Match" was another method of voter suppression passed by the Georgia legislature. It required an exact match in every detail of handwritten registration forms with existing records. Even one small discrepancy disqualified the voter. An estimated 53,000 voters were purged by this method in 2018. Widespread voter suppression in Georgia is the reason why Stacy Abrams is not governor of Georgia today. She lost the election by some 58,000 votes out of almost 4 million cast.

A REVOLUTIONARY RIVER

We have, in our time, seen the unfolding of a process in which millions of workers have been displaced, losing their jobs and their means of livelihood. They have been forced to fight for the very survival of themselves and their families. Forced to the margins, they are at the core of a rising social movement to obtain the necessities of life — housing, healthcare, food, clean water. This surging movement has entered into the electoral process as a means to achieve their aims. They are being met by voter suppression.

In her September 2018 *The New York Times* Opinion, "We are not the Resistance," Michelle Alexander, the best-selling author of *The New Jim Crow* wrote, "The long, continuous yearning and reaching toward freedom flows throughout history like a river... Every leap forward has been traceable to this revolutionary river." A new nation is struggling to



Protesters rally for voting rights and against voter suppression at Georgia capitol in Atlanta during the 2018 mid-term elections. Photo: Steve Eberhardt

be born she says, a nation in which every life and every voice truly matters. It is this revolutionary river that will carry us forward. We are not just resisting. We are fighting for a true democracy in which the basic needs of all human beings are distributed to all.

A HISTORY OF VOTER SUPPRESSION

Even as the Constitution was being written, the slaveholding section of the capitalist class moved to consolidate their hold on the new nation. They insisted upon the inclusion of the Three-Fifths Compromise, which provided that for every 100 slaves owned, the slaveholder could cast 60 votes on his own behalf to ensure their dominance of the House of Representatives and the electoral college. America was essentially a Southern country for 80 years. In addition, only white men of property were allowed to vote.

The rising tide of abolitionism and the election of Abraham Lincoln became the death-knell of the slave-holders' power. With the Civil War, slavery was abolished, and the reconstruction of the South began. The 14th and 15th amendments to the Constitution granted citizenship to the former slaves and extended voting rights to Black males. During Reconstruction in the South, of the four million newly freed former slaves, hundreds of thousands voted, and many were elected to office. By 1872, 320 Blacks had been elected to state and federal office.

In the 1876 presidential election, ostensibly due to widespread voter fraud, the outcome of the election was disputed. What resulted came to be known as the "Great Betrayal" of African Americans in the South.

The election was awarded to Rutherford B. Hayes, the Republican, but on condition that federal troops, which had guaranteed the Reconstruction reforms in the South, be removed and that the 15th amendment cease being enforced. State's rights prevailed. The ruling class of the old Confederacy was returned to power.

A reign of terror ensued. With the whip and the lynch rope, Blacks were driven from office and from the polls. New state laws nullified the 15th amendment. Literacy tests, poll taxes, and other voter suppression devices were adopted. Segregation laws were mandated. African Americans were pushed back into slave-like conditions. Jim Crow reigned supreme. The Black Belt South was reduced to a colonial, fascist backwater.

In the heart of American democracy, a brutal, dictatorial regime was established, which bore little resemblance to democracy. Voter suppression, entwined with white supremacy, was at the core of its foundation.

The Jim Crow South was also known as the "Solid South." No Republican, the party

of Lincoln, could be elected to public office in the South. Voting happened almost exclusively in the Democratic Party primaries, which openly proclaimed itself to be the party of white supremacy, and where only whites were allowed to vote.

With the ending of World War II, conditions in the world and in the South began to change in profound ways. The South had to be opened up for industrial expansion, ending its time as an agricultural reserve for Northern capital. This allowed for the emergence of a massive movement, led by African Americans in the South, to end Jim Crow segregation and oppression. At the core of this movement was the drive to end voter suppression and to obtain the full expression of the right to vote and to participate fully in the democratic process.

The passage of the Voting Rights Act in 1965 was a major step in overthrowing Jim Crow. It outlawed voter suppression measures, such as literacy tests and poll taxes. It required that all states with records of denying the vote be pre-cleared by the Justice Department, before it could enact any new voting laws or rules. African Americans by the millions poured into the electoral process.

But by 2013, the counter-revolution had resurged anew. The Supreme Court, in a 5-4 decision in *Shelby County v. Holder*, decided to gut Sections 4 and 5 of the Voting Rights Act, which removed requirements that the states had to get approval before enacting any changes in voting procedures.

Almost immediately new voter ID laws began to pop up all over the country, but especially in the South. In North Carolina, for example, not only were Voter ID laws passed, but also provisions to curtail early voting, eliminate same-day registration, prohibit extending voting hours, and to block voter registration drives conducted by African American churches and the NAACP.

A whole host of voter suppression measures, all allowed since 2013, have affected the outcome of elections. Gerrymandering is also a key factor in determining how elections turn out overall. "Operation Redmap,"

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A Cooperative Society is the Only Solution to the Demands of Our Class

Inside Rally, Comrades!

In this issue of *Rally, Comrades!* we address the growing movement for basic needs and also how it's being expressed in the electoral arena. The different struggles that make up this movement are linked by their common fight for the basic necessities of life. Their common cause is the foundation for building the unity and a vision to create a new, cooperative and peaceful world, that can combat fascism and the growing war danger.

"From the Editors: What They Say and What They Mean" shows how both political parties are preparing for more wars. As high-tech globalization destroys the economic basis of industrial capitalism, the global political relations serving that system are also being disrupted. Increasingly aggressive U.S. policies on trade and "national security" have been accompanied by an escalation of diplomatic threats and military mobilizations around the world. This is currently focused on overthrowing the governments of Venezuela and Iran, either through intimidation or outright war.

The cover article, "Voter Suppression and the Battle for Democracy" shows that we are seeing the unfolding of a process in which millions of workers have been displaced, losing their jobs and their means of livelihood. They have been forced to fight for the very survival of themselves and their families. Forced to the margins, they are at the core of a rising social movement to obtain the necessities of life – housing, healthcare, food, clean water. This surging movement has en-

tered into the electoral process as a means to achieve their aims. They are being met by voter suppression.

A summary of the recent city elections in Chicago is provided in the article, "Polarization of Wealth Defines Chicago Elections." It explains that after years of fighting around the battles for survival, mothers and fathers, teachers and former union workers, children and young adults are confronting their elected officials. Fed up with "town halls" and "community engagement" dog-and-pony shows put on by government, working class fighters are actually running for office. Many candidates have extensive experience in fighting against the refusal of the government to address the problems of the people. They won outright or forced their opponents into runoffs. The efforts in Chicago are a part of the developing practical fight to transform society to meet the basic needs of the people for homes, food, water, education and health care.

"Housing Policies Create More Homeless in California" points out that in the Bay Area, with some of the highest housing and rental costs in the country, more than 1.1 million workers, over one third of the total workforce, earn less than \$18 per hour. Most of them earn less than \$12 per hour. As a social force, with the thousands on the streets or in "emergency shelters," these are the people – a broad demographic that includes youth and middle-income families – who are fighting California's housing struggles against a ruling class that uses housing policy as a weapon against them.

Why a system that increases wealth for ruling class, by plunging millions into destitution is hopelessly broken is explained in

the article, "Corporate Landlords Should Be Outlawed and Housing Should Be Free." The economic system cannot distribute the abundance created by our economy because that would require the presence of money in the hands of people, and more and more people today have little or none of it. The struggle for housing challenges the private property system. When that movement demands housing as a human right, as a human necessity, it demands not treating housing as a commodity to be sold to the highest bidder. Since the rise of automation is reducing the cost of building homes to next to nothing, it is time for revolutionaries to project a vision of housing for all at the low or no cost that it actually takes to provide it.

"Thinking Anew About Today's Revolutionary Situation," shows that in periods of epochal change, the social movement unites with and is guided by a cause. We have a rich history of this through the Revolutionary War and Civil War in striving for a vision of freedom, peace and humanity. Today it is finally possible to achieve this vision. The struggles today all express the need to reorganize society to meet the needs of the people. We are finally able to move forward as one class, identified by its common interests, rather than fighting among ourselves, or based on our skin color, gender, or ethnicity. There is a new world to be won. The cause today – the distribution of the wealth of society according to need – is the foundation for realizing the vision. This vision is of a world without human want, without race and national hatred, without oppression. It is for a world where an ever-expanding technology delivers full lives for all, both materially and culturally, in a safe and healthy environment. **RC**

EDITORIAL POLICY

Rally: to bring back together and put in a state of order, as retreating troops [to return to attack]

Comrade: a person with whom one is allied in a struggle or cause

Rally, Comrades! is the political paper of the League of Revolutionaries for a New America. In this period of growing motion and developing polarization, *Rally, Comrades!* provides a strategic outlook for the revolutionaries by indicating and illuminating the line of march of the revolutionary process. It presents a pole of scientific clarity, examines and analyzes the real problems of the revolutionary movement, and draws political conclusions for the tasks of revolutionaries at each stage of development in order to prepare for future stages. It is a vehicle to reach out and communicate with revolutionaries both within the League and outside of the League, to engage them in debate and discussion, and to provide a forum for these discussions. Articles represent the position and policies of the League of Revolutionaries for a New America.

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League of Revolutionaries for a New America

Today, whether through words or deeds, vast numbers of socially conscious people declare themselves revolutionaries in opposition to the degenerating social and economic conditions. The League's mission is to unite these scattered revolutionaries on the basis of the demands of the new class, to educate and win them over to the cooperative, communist resolution of the problem.

The demands of this new impoverished class for food, housing, education, health care and an opportunity to contribute to society are summed up as the demand for a cooperative society. Such a society must be based on the public ownership of the socially necessary means of production and the distribution of the social product according to need.

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The *Rally, Comrades!* bilingual website provides online access to all issues of *Rally, Comrades!* It is a political resource for our readers, and provides up-to-date articles, statements and analysis of key questions of importance to revolutionaries.

Housing Policies Create More Homeless in California

When the most devastating wild fire in California's history tore through Paradise and other mountain towns in northern California last fall, thousands of residents – most of them low-income renters and seniors – were scattered across the country. Like communities across the world, the people of Paradise have been battered by the forces of a changing climate in crisis. Those without resources or places to go (their number currently unknown) joined the region's homeless residents as the winter rains gathered force.

No plans or proposals by the various agencies responsible for addressing the problem of housing in this situation, have advocated for the urgent and massive investment in permanent housing that is needed for people without assets or income.

Instead, according to the consensus among policy makers, funds are being directed to emergency shelters. Only a few hundred beds are provided, usually in barrack-like living arrangements that are inappropriate for many homeless people, especially those in families or those with disabilities. The recent funding proposed by California's Gov. Newsom, a billion dollars in "emergency" services, is being funneled primarily to temporary shelters. This funding points to the magnitude of the desperate situation of the tens of thousands living outside, not to a solution. It amounts to an annual grant of only \$7,400 per homeless person for the year, even if we accept the official count of 135,000 homeless residents in California, which is widely believed to be an undercount.

Mayors intend to use the funds to clear the streets and sidewalks, even though it could be spent on housing and to support survival strategies like the self-governed encampments advocated by many homeless activists. In Los Angeles, Mayor Garcetti recently announced the opening of a temporary shelter with 48 beds, built in the midst of a community of hundreds living in tents along roadways. At the same time, arrests and confiscation of property will be stepped up. "During the daytime, we do need these sidewalks to be clear," Garcetti stated.

Up to \$75 million is projected for temporary shelter in Los Angeles. Sacramento's mayor has announced that \$40 million will be spent to house 700 people for two years, costing more than \$1,000 per month per person, for a bunk bed and "services" that do not include the promise of stability and dignity.

For the fire victims of Paradise, the nonprofit North Valley Community Foundation collected \$43 million in donations. When confronted by a local activist pushing for rapid construction of new, low-cost units, envisioned as an ecological intentional community, NVCF responded, "We need to have more people leave the area before we commit money."

This response starkly reveals the broader policy trend to force out the people who can't pay the cost of housing. As New York's Mayor Bloomberg stated, "...if they can't afford to live here, they are the kind of people we don't want."

Six million low-income people left

California between 2007 and 2016. Fifty percent of residents can't afford housing. Homelessness is epidemic. The state needs 1.3 million units of affordable housing. Yet California has cut housing funds to one third of the amount spent as recently as 2012, even after housing bonds passed last fall. If the past practices are any indication, the funds will be directed toward politically connected developers.

THE NEW CLASS

To understand this ongoing dynamic of displacement, we have to look at the new class, part of the working class, that has been brought into being by the forces of electronic production. For the first time in history, the economic system no longer depends on human labor – our labor. Instead, increasingly intelligent robots dominate the production of goods and services. Of course, there are jobs for tech workers, but many of these jobs are also insecure "contract" positions. Tech jobs are concentrated in selected areas of the globe, like California's "megaregion" of 21 Northern California counties, where they employ about ten percent of the workforce.

The new class, mostly excluded from the world of technology, consists of many millions of people across the globe, from subsistence farmers to unemployed or barely employed workers in California. People of color are especially vulnerable. These millions of people have been driven to the margins of the economy. Companies today view labor "...as akin to staplers: something to be procured at the time and place needed for the lowest price possible." (Neil Irwin, Sept. 3 2017, "To Understand Rising Inequality, Consider the Janitors at Two Top Companies, Then and Now," *The New York Times*)

Generally, if not unemployed, the new class does insecure work; because it's cheap, it is not worth automating. Job growth in health care, social assistance, accommodations, food services, building administration and landscaping represents low wage occupations in which employers have little incentive to automate.

This, too, is changing. For example, strawberry picking, now in the process of being automated, will soon be performed by robots in the fields. This has been spurred by the loss of cheap labor, as migrant workers from across the border are threatened and forced out.

As the new class emerges, as in Paradise, it is being driven from communities and neighborhoods by the deliberate policies of the ruling elite – those who command the new economy and control the government. This ruling class refuses to fund basic necessities for those who have become a "surplus population."

RESHAPING OUR CITIES

The historically woven fabric of urban life is being destroyed by the new economy, as the ruling class reshapes our cities and expels its diverse, rooted communities and its small-scale businesses. The San Francisco Bay Area, one of the wealthiest areas in the country, is a good example of this transformation.

Clusters of specialized high-tech industries

What They Say and What They Mean

From the Editors

As high-tech globalization destroys the economic basis of industrial capitalism, the global political relations serving that system are also being disrupted. Increasingly aggressive U.S. policies on trade and "national security" have been accompanied by an escalation of diplomatic threats and military mobilizations around the world, currently focused on overthrowing the governments of Venezuela and Iran, either through intimidation or outright war.

The fate of millions of people is at stake in these two confrontations. In April, the Center for Economic and Policy Research estimated that President Trump's economic sanctions on trade with Venezuela have caused 40,000 civilian deaths since 2018. That's on top of the suffering caused by the sanctions imposed in 2015 by President Obama. On May 9, Acting Defense Secretary Patrick Shanahan briefed the Administration on preparations for sending up to 120,000 troops to the Middle East, if Iran acts to threaten U.S. "security."

Americans can't trust that these political representatives of the ruling class give a damn about our security. Their real goal is the security of that class' control of society's wealth, since today's technologies are making the capitalist system inoperable. To steer government steadily towards that goal into an unknown future, political leaders of both political parties are installing fascist policies and gearing up for war, while lying to our class about their real intentions.

In 2016, Donald Trump campaigned by denouncing the invasion of Iraq as "the worst single mistake ever made in the history of our country," yet now he's authorized the U.S. military buildup against Iran. And Robert Mueller, who Democratic leaders said could be trusted to investigate Trump, was also trusted when as FBI director he testified in 2003 that Iraq had "failed to disarm its weapons of mass destruction." That lie ultimately cost the lives of 5,000 American troops and, according to recent studies, the lives of half a million Iraqis between 2003 and 2011 alone.

Threatening Venezuela and Iran is not about democracy or making people's lives better. It only adds more danger to the maneuvering for global political supremacy between the United States, China and Russia. Venezuela's oil reserves are the world's largest, Iran's the fourth largest, Russia's the eighth and China's thirteenth, challenging U.S. future dominance of this crucial resource.

American attacks on Venezuela or Iran could also become a flashpoint for military conflict between the U.S. and China. New tariffs on Chinese goods have already added to the tensions. On June 1, Shanahan told countries attending the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore that the United States would react strongly against countries who steal new technologies and construct new military bases, clearly meaning China.

His statement was immediately praised by Dialogue attendees Senator Angus King (Independent, Maine) and Senator Tammy Duckworth (Democrat, Illinois), showing once again how the ruling class has united many politicians of both parties around its strategic interests.

This gap between the illusion the ruling class presents, and the reality of its intentions, provides a lesson to our class. In fighting for such basic needs as housing, healthcare, education and against mounting poverty, we have to assert our own class interests, not those of the ruling class. Our class has another vision – use the public ownership of society's wealth to meet the needs of all its people. That is the only way to guarantee that peace triumphs over fascism and war. **RC**

have located their headquarters in the Bay Area region. Corporations are financing mega-projects and building housing for the higher-paid workers, who are indispensable to keeping their operations profitable. Recognizing the housing crisis throughout the region, their spokespeople, planners, and governmental representatives are laying the basis for increased density along transit lines, so that future urban development serves their needs.

The current package of proposed Bay Area housing measures (CASA Compact) deserves careful examination, because it gives the illusion of tenant protections. As pointed out by one activist, these illusory benefits are actually designed to undercut the demands of the rising housing movement, without delivering any real rent control or eviction prevention. Another platform for urban development are the new, federally created, tax shelters, known as "Opportunity Zones," which facilitate in-

vestment in selected low-income areas and further incentivize" the displacement and expulsion of these low-wage workers in the new class. It rejects the call for housing as a human right. It is clear that selling or renting housing to the highest bidder, treating it as private property to be sold on the market like any other commodity, is not a workable way to house the millions who need it.

In the Bay Area, with some of the highest housing and rental costs in the country, more than 1.1 million workers, over one third of the total workforce, earn less than \$18 per hour. Most of them earn less than \$12 per hour. As a social force, with thousands on the streets or in "emergency shelters," these are the people – a broad demographic that includes youth and middle-income families – who are fighting California's housing struggles against a ruling class that uses housing policy as a weapon against them. **RC**

Thinking Anew About Today's Revolutionary Situation

In 1862 Abraham Lincoln, in his Second Annual Message, stated “The dogmas of the quiet past are inadequate to the stormy present. The occasion is piled high with difficulty, and we must rise with the occasion. As our case is new, so we must think anew and act anew. We must disenthrall ourselves, and then we shall save our country.”

Enthrall means “to hold in mental or moral bondage.” As long as the American people's thinking was limited to merely slowing the spread of slavery, or to preserving the Union while also preserving slavery, they were in mental and moral bondage. It was only when a mass of people *dis*enthralled themselves by embracing the abolition of slavery that the war could be won, and the country be saved.

Today the United States is made up of over 325 million people, spread over 3.8 million square miles, with over 82% of the population residing in cities and suburbs. Millions understand that the growing polarization, with wealth piling up on one side and want on the other, requires major change. The reason for the polarization is the profound change in the economy, not only in the United States, but around the world. It used to be that most families had a place to live, could go to the doctor when necessary, feed their children, have adequate transportation for work and even have some leisure time as long as they were employed.

As the way things are produced began to change, with the use of electronic means of production replacing the old heavy industrial machinery, everything that seemed stable became unstable. Our economy was once based on jobs. There are still some jobs, true enough, but most of them will be eliminated by high-tech production, and sooner rather than later. Like it or not, we are changing from a society based on jobs, to a society that can produce an abundance of goods with no human labor.

With these fundamental changes, the ruling class has to turn to fascism to facilitate a whole new world order based on private property without capitalism. Each step in this direction exacerbates the extreme polarization in wealth we see unfolding.

NEW SITUATION REQUIRES NEW THINKING

Because our case is new, we have to think anew. All kinds of ideas are being put forth over how to solve the problems of hunger, homelessness, unemployment, substandard education and health care. As more people fight against the inequities of this society, an understanding of why things are changing and what society can be changed to, has to be brought into the discussion. If our thinking is limited to what was possible in the past, we will not be able to transform society based on what the new situation demands. The development of the means of production has been such that it is creating not only a new economic order, but a social situation making it absolutely impossible for more and more people to live on the basis of the sale of their labor.

If we can no longer rely on jobs with wages to meet our basic human needs, and a

bounty of food, housing and clothing can be produced with no labor, we have to rethink what is actually possible. Production without wages demands that these goods be distributed without money. The sum total of the town hall meetings demanding health care, the teacher strikes demanding quality education, the demand that the homeless be housed, and that hungry children be fed, leads to this conclusion.

If we can no longer rely on jobs with wages to meet our basic human needs, and a bounty of food, housing and clothing can be produced with no labor, then what we need should be distributed without money.

A large section of society is developing that simply cannot live within this system, and it is growing daily. To maintain their position of ownership, wealth and privilege, the ruling class has historically fostered an ethnic form of struggle amongst the working class. The basis of workers fighting for “their group's” interests is being swept away, as more face the common problems of no access to health care, education and housing.

Homelessness shows this most starkly. Even those working multiple jobs cannot afford a place to live. According to a U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development study, 35 percent of homeless people in the United States were unsheltered in 2018, meaning they were living on the street, in abandoned buildings, or “in other places not suitable for human habitation.” The other 65 percent were living in temporary or emergency shelters. Among the country's 553,000 homeless people, 193,550 were living outside.

Homeless persons also have a mortality rate four to nine times higher than those who are not homeless. With an estimated 39.7 million Americans living in poverty, 19 million experiencing housing insecurity, and 27.3 million without health insurance, the risk of homelessness and poor health is a concern for one out of eight Americans.

TRANSFORMATION AND COMMUNISM

Societies change. They change because people change them, but people can't make changes unless they know what they are changing to. Communism is vilified by our rulers because it means the end of the system based on private property, exploitation and profit. Learning the history of humanity shows that the more primitive societies had to be organized along cooperative, communist

lines to guarantee survival. The fruits of their labor had to be shared if starvation was to be avoided. It was not a matter of being for, or against such cooperation; it was necessary.

What we are seeing today is the rise of a new class; a class that is created by robotics and being progressively pushed outside of the relations of capitalist production, whose relations are wage labor. In a very practical sense, it is a communist class. This new com-

tory is headed and how to work along those lines to transform society.

If the public gains control of society and its enormously productive electronic means of production, it will create a society based on cooperation instead of competition. It will become a paradise for all of unlimited abundance. There will be no jobs as we know them today, but there will be an opportunity for everyone to contribute to the well-being of humanity.

UNITING AROUND A COMMON CAUSE

The ruling class has relied on “divide and conquer” to prevent any real unity on the part of the workers. It was able to grant privileges and economic benefits to separate and confuse. Today, the ruling class has no use for labor that does not produce profit. Workers are finding themselves in the same boat. People in every state are suffering the ill effects of not having access to safe water, affordable health care and housing. They are not distinguished by color, gender or ethnicity, but rather by their economic position. Many are beginning to understand that they can only advance their cause with a better understanding of what they are up against and the need to fight forward to transform all of society.

In periods of epochal change, the social movement unites with and is guided by a cause. We have a rich history of this through the Revolutionary War and Civil War in striving for a vision of freedom, peace and humanity. Today it is finally possible to achieve this vision. The struggles today all express the need to reorganize society to meet the needs of the people. We are finally able to move forward as one class identified by its common interests, rather than fighting among ourselves, or based on our skin color, gender, or ethnicity. There is a new world to be won. The cause today – the distribution of the wealth of society according to need – is the foundation for realizing the vision. This vision is of a world without human want, without race and national hatred, without oppression. It is for a world where an ever-expanding technology delivers full lives for all, both materially and culturally, in a safe and healthy environment. **RC**

Join the League of Revolutionaries for a New America!

Society can now create the abundance the new technology promises, and so a new world: a cooperative society, with this abundance distributed according to need. In spite of worsening economic conditions, nothing can be accomplished until the American people hold a vision of where they want to go and what they want to be. Creating and imbuing them with such vision is the overriding task of revolutionaries and the foundation of our organization.

Join us! For more information or a free information packet, email LRNA at info@lrna.org, or call 773-486-0028, or write LRNA, P.O. Box 477113, Chicago, IL 60647. Sign up and stay informed at rallycomrades.lrna.org/contact-us

Outlaw Corporate Landlords and Make Housing Free

A national epidemic of evictions, homelessness, and housing insecurity is spreading to every region of the country. Its scale can no longer be dismissed or hidden. In California, for example, over half of renters pay over one third of their income for housing, and over a third pay more than one half. Hundreds of thousands are homeless.

This situation has caused the rise of the broadest and deepest movement for housing in the history of the U.S. Impulses toward unity are beginning to overcome the scattered, divided, and localized nature that has characterized the struggle so far. We are still often separated by housing status, with separate groupings fighting for the rights of tenants, homeless people, and homeowners. And we continue to be divided by America's long history of deliberate residential segregation, and by discrimination like the government's current campaign to evict people based on the immigration status of their family members.

night in California Gov. Newsom's office and managed to get four out of five rent relief bills moved out of committee, but they still face an uncertain future despite Democratic Party super-majorities.

At the same time, tent cities of homeless communities continue to survive pitched battles with law enforcement, despite repeated illegal sweeps, anti-homeless media campaigns, and Not in My Back Yard (NIMBY) mobilizations. When they are destroyed, they rise back up again because they have nowhere else to go. In Los Angeles, a coalition of seventeen organizations called Services Not Sweeps came together to defend the street homeless encampments. In Florida, communities have won important victories over official attempts to ban meal-sharing.

Because of their destitution and daily persecution, it is impossible for homeless people themselves to compromise. They need the breadth and numbers of the larger housing

past for most, as workers compete to provide services in areas where robots are not yet profitable.

Simultaneously, the people at the top – the ruling class – are cutting off life support. Their attitude is, “If you don't need them don't feed them.” Efforts are being made to cut Social Security to the bone. Corporations are refusing to pay taxes to support workers they do not intend to employ. In the area of housing, corporate tax avoidance has decimated state and federal programs, to the point where only 25% of people who are officially eligible for housing assistance today actually receive it.

Finally, automation has not only impoverished workers and government programs, it has also caused a declining rate of profit in the production sector. The result has been a dramatic shift of capital into speculative financial investment. A huge part of this speculative capital has entered the real estate market, wherein favored cities hedge funds are buying up housing, bundling rents into securities, and wringing out the ever-higher profits demanded by investors. Land, housing prices, profits, evictions, displacement, and homelessness have all skyrocketed.

FREE HOUSING

A system that increases wealth for the ruling class, by plunging millions into destitution is hopelessly broken. It cannot distribute the abundance created by our economy because that would require the presence of money in the hands of people, and more and more people today have little or none of it. The struggle for housing challenges the private property system. When that movement demands housing as a human right, as a human necessity, it demands not treating housing as a commodity to be sold to the highest bidder. Since the rise of automation is reducing the cost of building homes to next to nothing, it is time for revolutionaries to project a vision of housing for all.

The only way to ensure appropriate distribution of the social wealth today is for the public to take ownership of the means of production and give out the social product on the basis of need. This is what a cooperative society looks like. In the case of housing, public ownership of the land would eliminate speculation and guarantee that every person has

a home. This is already being modeled in a small way by limited equity housing cooperatives and by community land trusts that permanently remove land and housing from the private market place.

The rising movement today has to demand housing for the new class that is being replaced in production by electronic technology. They are the people at the margins of the economy, with insecure “gigs,” temporary low wage work, or none at all. They have little or no money for rent. They are at the heart of the housing movement. They have both the power and the incentive to transform the housing movement from one demanding fair rents and fair eviction laws, to one demanding that rents and evictions be abolished altogether. Corporate landlords should be outlawed, and housing should be free.

The government should turn over vacant government or corporate-owned housing to the homeless and take rental housing from corporate landlords and turn it over to the people who live in it. The people of Berlin, Germany are engaged in a campaign for exactly that. Six thousand took to the streets on April 6 in a march against “rental insanity,” demanding that the government ban landlords with over 3,000 housing units, and “socialize” the 200,000 apartments that the large owners possess now. A ballot referendum is being prepared that will “expropriate” this landlord property and turn it over to democratic councils composed of tenants, administration, and community members.

No strategy can succeed if it is based on patching or repairing a system that is falling apart. The role of revolutionaries is to teach that the emerging new class of propertyless workers cannot coexist with the private property system. We build the movement's strength and capacity by making it conscious of its role as part of a revolutionary, class-based struggle for a cooperative society. Going on the offensive in this situation means spreading these ideas from within the movement. The fight is for an economic system where distribution is based on need instead of money. Revolutionaries work with the movement to create a vision of where we want to go and what we want to be. At this point, to learn and to teach is the unique role of revolutionaries. It is a matter of survival. **RC**

The struggle for housing challenges the private property system. In its place it puts forward a vision of housing for all. It demands housing as a human right, as a human necessity, not as a commodity to be sold to the highest bidder.

In this difficult environment a number of national networks of housing campaigns are developing. As the government increasingly refuses to meet the needs of the people, the movement is polarizing between those who emphasize compromise with politicians and those who have to fight to survive. Compromises will not and cannot bring back the “good old days,” before rents began spiraling out of control. The daily reality of the housing crisis is forcing new leaders to organize around the vision of housing as a human right.

The question today is to define exactly what that means. As one Washington, D.C. homeless leader stated, “I know housing is my right because I read about it in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. But if it is my right, why do we have to beg for it at budget time?” There is a growing realization that neither rent control, nor so-called “affordable housing,” will address the fact that millions can no longer pay for any housing at all.

ON THE DEFENSIVE

In spite of our increasing militancy and our insistence on our right to housing, we are still often forced to fight from a defensive position. The ongoing campaigns for rent control are a good example. We are fighting for fair rents against a ruling class that is demanding unlimited rents. In April, tenants sat in all

movement to be able to win. At the same time, the renter and anti-foreclosure movements need the moral power they gain when they unite with the battle against homelessness. Together they can rally the popular imagination and deflect the divisive propaganda of the government that portrays homeless people as inhuman, criminal, and worthless.

SYSTEMIC CAUSES

As the housing crisis threatens millions across the country, more and more leaders are seeing the need to take the offensive. On the one hand, we cannot fight and win larger campaigns if we do not learn how to defend ourselves, build our unity and independence from unreliable politicians, and recruit and train leaders in the course of day-to-day battles. But on the other hand, we can only build an effective movement when we understand the real causes and solutions to the housing crisis. We need this understanding to sustain us through the see-saw outcomes of our reform battles, and to help us formulate a plan to win this struggle and attract the millions who have every reason to join us.

The capitalist economy is failing us. Automation dominates the production of things everywhere across the world. Robots cost less than human workers, jobs are disappearing as we speak, and they are not coming back. The “living wage” is a thing of the

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Polarization of Wealth Defines Chicago Elections

In the midst of the Chicago election season during January 2019, Illinois' wealthiest man, Ken Griffin, bought a condominium in New York City for \$238 million, the most ever spent to purchase a home in the U.S. Last year he bought a condo in Chicago for \$58 million. He gave \$1 million to the election campaign of Bill Daley, scion of the Daley dynasty that ruled Chicago for almost a half century. A few blocks from Griffin's home, people live in the streets under Wacker Drive. Tent encampments dot the Chicago urban landscape. The online newsletter *Curbed* describes 42 high-rise buildings under construction in Chicago, including 4,400 housing units. Provisions for affordable housing? None.

The stark contrast in wealth and poverty is more visible. Disinvestment in the neighborhoods stands side by side with privatization, violence and gentrification. The working class of Chicago is recognizing this disparity. Sections of the working class, including those who are most disenfranchised, are grouping themselves to take the offensive. They are making their voices heard in Chicago's electoral arena. Elections have become a battlefield over class interests.

RESHAPING CHICAGO

The Chicago Democratic Party in the 1930s crafted a political machine based on an expanding industrial economy, with powerful ward organizations capable of dispensing favors and jobs. As the industrial economy's tax base waned, the ward organizations were weakened. The Democratic Party machine is transforming, as the ruling class reshapes Chicago into a "world class city." Nothing symbolizes the rulers' vision of "world class city" better than tax giveaways for the massive mixed use real estate developments, totaling 27 million square feet of space, called Lincoln Yards and The 78. These plans demand a compliant city council.

Outgoing mayor Rahm Emanuel held a breakfast for his allies after announcing he would not run again. There he passed out \$20,000 checks to protect some of his key supporters, who faced stiff challenges. The regular Democratic Party, corporate, developer, and real estate money flowed into the incumbents' campaigns.

At the mayoral level, 14 contended for the mayor's office. Bill Daley, the expected favorite, raised more money than anyone else, some \$8 million. Despite all this money, two African American women made the runoffs for Mayor. Trade unions contributed significantly to both campaigns. The building trades gave Lori Lightfoot, the winner, over \$500,000. The Service Employees International Union and the teachers' unions contributed over \$4 million to Toni Preckwinkle. At stake for the unions are union construction jobs, public service workers pensions and contracts.

Despite all the money thrown into these elections, the turnout fell to almost a record low. The Democratic Party machine was unable to turn out the vote for candidates who excited no enthusiasm. Many ward organizations are on life support. The

After years of fighting around battles for survival, mothers and fathers, teachers and former union workers, children and young adults are fed up and are running for office. Many candidates have had extensive experience fighting against government that refuses to address the problems of the people.

Democratic Party and city hall have moved to maintain control through a network of not-for-profit organizations clamoring for all-class unity.

BATTLEGROUND OVER CLASS INTERESTS

Voters showed their disgust for many long-serving aldermen by supporting challengers who voiced some of the demands that people have been making. Andre Vasquez and Maria Hadden ousted two of the most powerful, heavily bankrolled incumbents. They took up the call to house those experiencing homelessness, to fight for rent control, to oppose foreclosures, and to limit taxes. Police accountability and safety in the communities, public education, mental health, environmental issues, and sex trafficking are some of the life-and-death issues that people are bringing to the electoral arena.

The bottom line is that a whole new section of the working class is being driven out of the system as their jobs are replaced by automation in one sector of the economy after the other. Within this section are those who work but cannot afford food, housing and health care. They are confronting the system that has abandoned them. New housing construction, aimed at high-paid tech and management employees, leaves this new class to fend for themselves on the streets or get out of town. This is a reason hundreds of thousands of African American and Latino workers have left the city from the south and west sides in the last couple of decades.

And that is why, after years of fighting around these battles for survival, mothers and fathers, teachers and former union workers, children and young adults are confronting their elected officials. Fed up with "town halls" and "community engagement" dog-and-pony shows put on by government, some of these working-class fighters are actually running for office. Many candidates have had extensive experience fighting against government that refuses to address the problems of the people. They won outright or forced their opponents into runoffs. The efforts in Chicago are a part of the developing practical fight to transform society to meet the basic needs of the people for homes, food, water, education and health care.

Much is being made of the fact that six aldermen are Democratic Socialists. What this tells us most of all, is that a shift is tak-

ing place in the consciousness of the people of Chicago. After years of vilification, the word "socialism" is not as important as "will government help me when I'm down and out." Each of the socialist candidates probably has a different idea of what socialism is, but there is a common denominator in addressing Chicago's most pressing problems. Jeanette Taylor exemplifies this. For more than two decades she fought in local school councils for children's education on Chicago's South Side. She helped lead a hunger strike to keep her local high school open. In this election she was backed by United Working Families, the Chicago Teachers Union and Democratic Socialists of America.

WHAT CAN REVOLUTIONARIES LEARN?

The people are seething with anger over dreams constantly deferred. At this point, that

anger has expressed itself by working class leaders entering hotly contested races in key wards. Although Chicago politicians have masterfully convinced the electorate: "You can't fight city hall," the sweeping changes in the aldermanic races may indicate a turn away from the despair we have seen. The field is fertile, where so many people turned out to volunteer for the "reform" candidates – including candidates who spoke openly about the need for revolution.

Tactically, the Democratic Party dragon once again reared its ugly head, corralling as much as it could within its grasp, successful in its mainstay wards on Chicago's South and West side. They continue to use their network of not-for-profit organizations to diffuse the class response, with calls for all-class unity. Strategically, they are stuck because they cannot solve the problems that confront the voters.

The new Chicago city council members will find themselves in a fight for, or against, the privatization of our lives. The city is shoveling tax money that should have been dedicated to schools and other public spending, into the pockets of real estate goons. Rahm Emanuel is making sure his imprint will remain on the city for decades, with projects like the multibillion-dollar giveaway to Lincoln Yards. The new mayor and her henchmen will dig into a time-tested Chicago bag of tricks to punish and undercut their opposition. The crucible that will test the new councilpersons will be the very real battle for the *public* way: housing for all, public health care, immigrants' rights, public education, and the curbing of police power. **RC**

Voter Suppression...

(Continued from page 1)

funded by millions of dollars in dark money from major unnamed donors, set out to draw congressional districts in their favor in states all across the country. The results: in Wisconsin, Democratic candidates for the state assembly won 54 percent of the vote but won only 37 percent of the seats. In both Ohio and North Carolina, the vote was 50-50, but Republicans won 75 percent of the seats in both states. Nationwide close to 1000 statewide seats were flipped.

A VISION OF A NEW AMERICA

Today, new conditions are being developing that set the stage for how we go forward. The Civil War and Reconstruction marked a turning point in the battle for democracy. What followed was a regime that, in the heart of America, could only be described as fascist – a brutal regime of terror that replaced any semblance of democracy.

Today, more than a century later, we are once again at a point of crisis. This time, as millions are on the rise in response to an assault not only on their rights, but of their very access to the means of life, the ruling class, drawing upon the darkest moments of American history, is fighting to continue as a ruling class and to preserve its treasure and private property at all costs.

In this current context, we see how the whole array of voter suppression measures are part of the process of the ruling class replacing democracy by legal means, and of instituting a fascist State. Of course, we have to fight all of these measures in all of their forms. But we also understand that we are a part of the rising tide of the revolutionary river that has coursed through American history from its beginning.

You cannot stop a river. You can attempt to divert it, even to dam it up, but it will in the end achieve its destination. For us, that destination is a new world in which every human being is valued, in which everyone can contribute to their fullest, and in which the treasure of society is distributed to all in need. That is the true meaning of democracy, and that is our destiny. **RC**