Program of the Party for Socialism and Liberation

The Program of the Party for Socialism and Liberation was adopted by the First Party Congress of the PSL in February 2010, and amended in subsequent congresses in 2013, 2016, 2019, and 2022.

Part 1: The struggle for socialism

The Party for Socialism and Liberation exists to carry out the struggle for socialism inside the United States, the center of world capitalism and imperialism. The PSL stands in solidarity with working-class and oppressed people around the world who are resisting capitalist exploitation and imperialist domination. The need for the socialist reorganization of society becomes more apparent and urgent with each passing day. While a tiny part of the population grows ever richer, tens of millions of workers here in the United States and billions of workers around the world sink deeper into poverty. Monumental advances in science and technology, which could have uplifted the many, instead have mainly enriched the few. The great wealth of society is the product of both natural resources and the labor of working people. Yet, that wealth is increasingly the private property of those who produce nothing of value — the tiny class of capitalist owners. This irreconcilable conflict defines life for the vast majority of people in the world. The development of capitalism — as already foreseen by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels in the mid-19th century — binds the world ever more closely together. Today, there is a vast and growing international working class, of which the U.S. working class is but one section. The working class is defined by its relationship to the means of production and to those who own the means of production, the capitalist class. The working class, deprived of ownership of private property, must work for wages or salaries paid by those who own the means of production. The working class also includes the "army of the unemployed," those who are kept as a reserve labor force. This army of reserve labor has become a permanent feature in modern capitalist society. While the working class is not a monolithic entity, it is united by its defining features: the lack of ownership of private property and the requirement to work for those who own private property, the capitalists, or for the capitalist government. The capitalists own the banks, corporations, factories, warehouses, retail outlets and major media. In a very real way, they control the lives of workers and the unemployed. But the working class sets into motion the means of production, distribution and communication. It can shut down production and the capitalist economy as a whole. It is the vast majority of humanity and has vast potential power. It holds the ability to create a new society.

21st century imperialism

As Marxists in the United States, our starting point is an assessment of the world situation, of the struggle between the classes on an international scale. Only by taking the international situation as the point of departure is it possible for our strategy and tactics to conform to the needs of the working class and oppressed peoples worldwide. Nowhere is this approach more critically important than in the United States, the most powerful imperialist country in the world today. Twenty-first century capitalism in the United States and the other imperialist countries is monopoly capitalism, which is dominated by the giant banks and other institutions of finance capital. Because of their economies of scale, marketing muscle and deep financial pockets, huge monopolies have increasingly squeezed out independent small- and medium-sized businesses and farming operations. This has largely eliminated the "free market." At the same time, the increasing domination of monopoly capitalism has greatly sharpened the contradictions inherent in the system. The growing tendency toward catastrophic crises, militarism and war has resulted in the monopolies becoming increasingly intertwined with the capitalist state and government. Big banks and corporations now

dominate the global economy, oppressing entire nations and continents, as well as the working class as a class. While Wall Street is the center of world finance capitalism, the Pentagon is the headquarters of a military machine that occupies many lands and has bases in more than 100 countries. The military is the enforcer and protector of U.S. capitalism and its global empire, similar to the role played by the racist, anti-worker police and prison system inside the United States. The imperialist occupations of oppressed nations around the world mirror the reality for oppressed communities within the United States. The past century has shown that imperialism is simultaneously at its most dangerous and most vulnerable when at war. For socialists in the imperialist countries, opposition to imperialist war and support for the right of self-determination of countries targeted by one's "own" ruling class must be a top priority. This opposition is based on the irreconcilability of the interests of the working class and all who are oppressed by monopoly capitalism, who must sacrifice and die in these wars, with the imperialists' interests — their drive for profit and domination.

The political reality: The dictatorship of the rich

Modern economic crises have exposed key aspects of the present system that formerly remained largely hidden from view in "ordinary" times. For example, the capitalist crisis that began in 2007 and its aftermath demolished the myth of "free enterprise," proving instead that the U.S. system is the most corrupt form of capitalism that has ever existed. Without massive intervention by the federal government in the form of trillions of dollars in direct grants, loans and loan guarantees, the entire private finance/banking sector and many other major corporations would have collapsed. The bank bailouts showed that while the government rules over the people, the banks rule over the government. Not only were the biggest banks each given tens of billions of dollars, they were not required to report on how they were going to use the money. Instead of the CEOs and other top bank executives awarding themselves huge bonuses out of the bailout funds and continuing to run the banks on behalf of wealthy shareholders, the banks should be seized and turned over to committees of workers and community representatives to be run in the public interest. The bailouts proved that the long-propagated notion that "the money is not there" for health care, education, housing and other social programs is a lie. Had the bailout money been used to meet people's needs, all of the unemployed people in the United States could have been hired at a living wage. Instead, the capitalist government continued to slash vital food, health, education, rehabilitation and other services. The idea that any contemporary economic system can survive without major government intervention has been shown to be a total fallacy. The remaining question is not whether government intervention is necessary, but which class will benefit — the vast majority of society, the working class, or a tiny minority, the superrich? Above all, the economic crisis has revealed that behind a façade of "democracy" the United States today is a dictatorship of the capitalist class. This reality will not change without a socialist revolution. The oppressors have never surrendered their power voluntarily.

Climate crisis: Unsolvable under capitalism

The climate catastrophe demonstrates the disastrous self-interest of the capitalist class. To avoid excessive warming, as well as the many severe environmental threats produced by capitalism, it is necessary to shift from fossil fuels to renewable energy. But the capitalist class is driven to protect its investments in coal, oil and gas, as well as associated industries. It will do whatever it takes to hold on to power, even if that means destroying much of the world. The struggle to adapt to and mitigate the impacts of global warming is therefore a class struggle. It is a struggle for power — not a struggle over morality or individual consumer

choices. All people are not equally responsible for the climate change. Imperialist countries reaped the benefits of fossil fuels while they exploited the resources of countries they colonized. Within industrialized countries the proceeds of workers' labor were channeled into the pockets of the capitalists while the neighborhoods of working, poor and oppressed people were treated as sacrifice zones, dumping grounds for the toxic waste products of the carbon economy. The class war around the climate is also an imperialist war. Countries damaged by imperialist exploitation and colonialist expropriation are the first to experience the devastation of rising sea levels and disrupted weather patterns. The imperialist response to climate change appears in the closure and militarization of borders. Ever more people are forced to migrate. Yet immigrants are violently apprehended and imprisoned in concentration camps. The imperialist dimension of climate change is undeniable when we recall that the U.S. military is the world's biggest institutional danger to the environment. Dismantling the U.S. war machine is thus crucial for human survival. Addressing the climate catastrophe and environmental racism in an equitable and just way requires specialized planning at multiple levels — international, state, regional, and local. Agriculture, transportation, shipping, construction, mining and virtually all heavy industries must be reconstructed. Even information networks — from the coltan used in cell phones to the vast amounts of energy used by massive server farms — will have to be reconfigured. The work force of all these industries is immense. Capitalists try to convince workers that threats to the carbon economy are threats to the working class. But of course, the capitalists' interests are antagonistic to the workers. Such transition to socialist production is to guarantee economic stability for workers who transition to sustainable jobs.

The U.S. working class today

The technological revolution that has continued to this day has fundamentally changed the social composition of the U.S. working class, contributing to the possibilities of unity and the building of a revolutionary movement. The overall effect of the high-tech revolution has been the de-skilling of many job categories accompanied by ruthless wage-cutting. This has dramatically affected the living conditions of formerly privileged sectors of the white, male working class. It has also meant a more abundant army of the unemployed and underemployed, disproportionately hitting the Black and Latino communities. A third of the workforce are people of color and half are women. This unintended effect of capitalism's drive for greater profits is creating its own gravediggers. Since its formation, the U.S. bourgeoisie consciously created a complex system of white supremacy and apartheid to prevent class-wide unity and rebellion by all oppressed and exploited sectors of society. Over and above the genocide carried out against Native peoples, the enslavement of African peoples and its racist ideological justifications have been central to both extracting super-profits from the oppressed nationalities within the United States as well as preventing the multinational working class from acting in its own interests. The collective experience of the civil rights, women's, immigrant rights, LGBTQ and climate justice movements is now blended into the U.S. working-class experience and is something to draw from as it gains consciousness of itself. Racism, sexism, and anti-LBGTQ bigotry continue to play a critical role in dividing workers – but there exists an even stronger material basis for workers to overcome that bigotry.

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More importantly, it is now objectively possible to build a unified workers' movement with a multinational leadership. In fact, the very real opportunity of political leadership by the historically most oppressed sectors puts the working class today in a stronger position to struggle for power.

The right of revolution

The present form of government is destructive of the rights of the great majority. It is not a government "of, by and for the people." The existing government and state — the military, police, intelligence agencies, courts, prisons, bureaucracy and so on — defend the interests of the capitalist class. Racist, anti-working-class police brutality is rampant. A monstrous state machine has imprisoned more people in the United States than in any other country. In recent decades, under the pretext of the "war on drugs," whole communities of Black, Latino and Native young people have been locked away, turning the U.S. government into the world's biggest jailer. The existing state apparatus and government institutions were established to protect and defend the interests of the capitalist ruling class. The much-heralded system of "checks and balances" is really an undemocratic means of protecting the rich against the poor. At every level of government, from the presidency to city councils, elections have become exercises in "dollar democracy." Corruption is business as usual — corporate lobbyists buy legislators' votes on a daily basis. All the important decisions are made behind closed doors, with the "debates" nothing more than a public show. The federal court system, comprised of judges who are appointed for life, has vast powers to overturn legislation and is dedicated above all to safeguarding the rights of private property. The capitalist system has proven to be incapable of meeting the needs of the people — even in the richest capitalist country in history. Every year, millions more people are forced into abject poverty, many while working full time, and many are denied the right to a job. Simply reforming the capitalist system is not enough. For the capitalists, reforms are a threat to the status quo. Reforms for the working class mean something different. They ease the burdens of living

under capitalism through the extension of civil rights or other beneficial social or economic policies. While reforms must be fought for, and can be won, they are under constant attack by the ruling class. Capitalism itself cannot be reformed. Its supreme law and driving force is the maximization of profit. The only force capable of putting an end to this criminal system is the organized working class. Capitalism cannot be voted out of power—it will take a revolution. The capitalist class will stop at nothing to prevent or overturn reforms by repressing, misdirecting or quelling any form of popular rebellion. Without a complete uprooting of the system that causes all the problems workers and oppressed peoples face, exploitation and oppression will still exist. The capitalist state will continue to rule. Capitalism is a failed system that, in its insatiable appetite for ever greater profits, threatens global ecological destruction on an unprecedented scale, with workers and oppressed people bearing the disproportionate burden of the environmental disaster. More than at any other time, it is the working class that holds the future for humanity. For the people and planet to live, capitalism must go. The Party for Socialism and Liberation is dedicated to building a revolutionary workers' party in the United States. A party that can unite the multinational U.S. working class is an essential and irreplaceable element in the struggle for socialism. The PSL participates in the labor, anti-war, anti-racist, immigrant rights, women's, lesbian/gay/bi/transgender/queer, environmental, student and other movements. A revolutionary party can be built only by engaging in all issues affecting the working class. For the working class, revolution is a necessity and a right. The most brutal aspects of capitalism will not go away unless there is a socialist revolution. Only a revolution can do away with the rule of the capitalists once and for all.

Socialism and communism

The aim of the PSL is to abolish the corrupt, rotten and anti-people capitalist economy, state and governmental system, and replace it with one dedicated to meeting the needs of the people — a socialist system. Solving the multiple crises of the present system is impossible without a revolution that ends the rule of the capitalist class and replaces it with a new state power that acts in the interest of the working class. Marx wrote, "The working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery and wield it for its own purposes." In other words, the government that has worked so well for the capitalists cannot serve the interests of the working class. The dictatorship of the rich must be dismantled and replaced with the working class in power. A state and government "of, by and for" the workers must replace the capitalist state. The foundation of any state power is repressive force—the military, police, prisons, courts and so on. The standing army and police must be disbanded and replaced by the armed people, organized in workers' defense councils. A critical task of the new socialist order will be defending itself from the displaced capitalist class that would like to return to the days of exploitation. A workers' government would create an entirely different type of court system, with its basic institutions determined by the democratic organs of workers' power. Judges would not be required to be lawyers. All public officials, without exception, would be elected and subject to recall at any time by those who elected them. The salaries of all elected officials will be no higher than the average wage of workers. The same would be true for all those hired to carry out government and state business. Holding public office would be based on a real desire to serve, not on self-enrichment. Corporate lobbying would be eliminated — along with the corporations themselves. A workers' government would begin to build socialism by expropriating the privatized wealth of the banks, industry, agribusiness, mines and other wealth-generating properties, eliminating the vast control the capitalists have over production. This would be done without compensation to the capitalist owners who have stolen so much for so long from the workers and oppressed peoples of the world. Under capitalism, each corporation plans how much goods and services to produce and sell in order to maximize profits. There is no overall plan how to allocate society's finite resources, what should be produced, or what should be cut back or eliminated.

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The result is an enormous waste of resources, while the basic needs of billions go unmet. Converting the private property of society to socially owned property is a necessary first step in building socialism, which would utilize the productive capacity of society and the natural resources of the planet for the benefit of humanity. Whereas the goal of capitalist production is to make as much profit as quickly as possible, the goal of a socialist economy is to meet the needs of the people in a long-term and sustainable fashion. A socialist economy would enable workers to have access to more of what society produces. Planning is a critical component of a socialist economy. Socialism is the necessary stage between capitalism and communism. The full achievement of socialism will require the development of the economy to meet the fundamental needs of the working class and the population as a whole. It will also be marked by the fading away of classes and class antagonisms. This cannot happen overnight. Socialists use the term "private property" to refer to the system of capitalism—that is, the private ownership of the means of production: the factories, the land, the natural resources, such as oil and water, and the machinery to produce privately owned wealth. Under socialism, a home is regarded as personal property, not as a commodity for investment. Under socialism, housing would be a guaranteed right, and no individual would be able to own another person's home. Ironically, under capitalism, the system that claims to uphold the sacred right of private property, homelessness has become a permanent feature and millions of people are losing their homes through foreclosures. Under socialism, in Cuba for example, despite being blockaded by the United States, there is no homelessness because a home is considered a human right. This was only possible through the elimination of "private property," including landlordism. Achieving fully developed socialism, a goal that has not yet been achieved anywhere, will open the way to communism and the end of class society. Communism will also mean the "withering away" of the repressive state, which only came into being with the rise of class society. Socialism can only be achieved by a mass movement of millions of people organized to fight for what is rightfully theirs. In working to build the movement that will usher in the next revolution—a socialist revolution—the PSL puts forward the following struggle-based program. This program outlines what a genuine workers' government would do.

Part 2: A Revolutionary Socialist Government

In order to guarantee the interests of working and poor people who make up the vast majority of the United States, a new revolutionary government run by and for the workers and poor will be established. The present capitalist government—the role of which has been to defend the big-business system of exploitation by a web of hundreds of measures, legal and illegal, and has been accessible only to the super-rich elite—will be abolished.

- A primary function of the socialist government will be planning and administering the economy in the interests of working and poor people, as set forth below, and implementing the measures to fulfill those interests.
- Participation and representation in the new government will be guaranteed through democratically organized workplace, neighborhood and school committees. The "professional politicians" and big-business political parties will be replaced with the political organization of the working class.

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- There will be no distinction between the legislative and executive functions of government. Those who enact measures will be responsible for carrying them out. All elected representatives will be subject to recall at any time by the bodies that elect them.
- Elected officials of the new workers' government will be paid an average worker's salary and will receive no special privileges.
- There will be primary government institutions created guaranteeing representation of all nationalities inside the United States. In recognition of centuries of national oppression and systematic exclusion, and to protect the interests of all, the socialist government structures would be constructed to assure equal representation from all nationalities in the United States.
- The current legal and criminal justice system is infested with racism and class privilege, and will be replaced by a new justice system based on the democratic organization of the working class and its right to defend its class interests on the basis of solidarity and unity.
- The rights of freedom of speech and political involvement will be extended to all. These rights will only be abridged in the efforts to eliminate racism, xenophobia and all forms of bigotry, or to prevent the re-establishment of the capitalist system of exploitation and oppression.
- There will be a complete separation of church and state, with no one religion favored over another and no favoring of religion over the absence of religion.
- No law will be enacted that discriminates against people based on nationality, gender, sexual orientation or gender expression. The new government will take it as the highest priority to remedy the legacy of institutionalized divisions and inequalities perpetuated against wide sectors of the working class that had continued without respite for hundreds of years, by measures of affirmative action and other measures listed below.
- Older and retired people will be able to live a dignified and fulfilling life with the constitutionally guaranteed rights to housing, health care, food and cultural activities, among other rights. The socialist government will allocate resources to ensure the maximum participation in society of older and retired people. The socialist government will initiate an educational campaign to promote respect for older people and to value their contributions to society.
- People with disabilities will be guaranteed full access to, and participation in, society, with the government allocating resources to eliminate barriers in housing, education, employment and public facilities. The new government will initiate an educational campaign to promote respect for and programs in the interests of people with disabilities, promoting their contributions to society.
- The socialist government will place great importance on the social development of children. The socialist government will allocate resources to develop programs for the intellectual, physical, psychological and social development of young people.
- The defense of the revolutionary government will be organized on the basis of the armed, organized working class. All foreign military bases will be closed immediately.
- The socialist government will approach the peoples of the world on the principles of international working-class solidarity. All occupations, military interventions and military proxy wars, agreements and alliances carried out by the previous imperialist government will be ended immediately.
- A national assembly will craft a new Constitution that enshrines and protects the interests of workers and oppressed peoples, to address, at minimum, the issues outlined below.

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Socialism: Addressing the interests of working and poor people

The socialist government will be directed to address the interests of working and poor people. This means that no laws, regulations or measures will negatively impact the rights of working and poor people in society. The following issues will be addressed by the new government as initial steps in developing socialism, to be further deepened and expanded upon as the process for socialist construction unfolds.

- The exploitation of labor for private profit will be prohibited.
- It will be a right of every person in the United States to have a job with guaranteed union representation and full social benefits provided by the socialist government, including a pension, health care, workers' compensation, paid parental and family leave for up to two years, paid sick and disability leave, a minimum of one month's paid vacation, and at least 12 paid holidays.
- Poverty will be eradicated by providing a guaranteed living income for any worker who is not able to find or hold a job. Priority in addressing the legacy of capitalism will be granted to communities that have suffered disproportionately in the past.
- Citizenship rights will be granted to every person living in the United States. No person will be discriminated against in any way due to past citizenship status.
- Working conditions will aim to enhance the humanity and dignity of all workers. The working week will be 30 hours. Child care for workers will be provided by the socialist government at no cost to the parents. There will be cultural and athletic opportunities for all workers during and after working hours.
- The socialist government will provide free, high-quality health care to every person living in the United States, regardless of citizenship. For-profit health care and private insurance companies will be outlawed.
- The socialist government will provide decent housing for every person in the United States. No person will pay more than 10 percent of their income on housing costs. It will be illegal to generate private profit by renting or selling land. No person may suffer foreclosure or eviction.
- The socialist government will provide free, high-quality education to every person in the United States from pre-school through college, as well as post-college educational opportunities for life-long learning to advance the technical and cultural level of society, as well as the promotion of working-class unity and international solidarity. The historic disparities in educational quality and opportunities in Black, Latino, Asian and Native communities, and other working-class communities, will be addressed as a first order of business. The intellectual products of colleges and universities will be the property of society, with no patents, trademarks, copyrights or private profit from social knowledge and materials.
- The socialist government will approach agriculture by implementing sustainable methods. This means environmental protection — including moving the agricultural system away from harmful industrial practices to more regenerative methods; water and soil conservation; and improving the quality of life of agricultural laborers and rural communities by providing adequate wages, safe working conditions, year-round employment opportunities, housing, health care,

education, social and recreational services, the elimination of "guest worker" programs and all laws discriminating against workers on the basis of citizenship, and humane treatment of animals.

- Meeting the food and nutritional needs of the population will be the responsibility of the government. All schools and workplaces will provide healthy meals to those who study or work there. Food and water will be produced according to a democratic and rational plan, with opportunities for the input of all people into what foods are produced and the manner in which they are produced and distributed.
- The socialist government will recognize that environmental sustainability is essential for the future development of the economy and society. Environmental considerations will be made in every area of economic and social planning, and there will be special efforts to remedy and end environmental degradation, including but not limited to: Ending all fossil fuel and nuclear energy use, creating a distributed energy infrastructure based on renewable sources, retrofitting existing buildings and build new buildings to a net zero energy standard, linking urban centers and rural communities with zero-emission mass transit systems.
- Penal institutions will be organized on the principle of social education and rehabilitation. Those convicted of unlawful acts will maintain political rights while participating in their rehabilitation.

Liberation: Overcoming racism, exploitation, national oppression and all forms of bigotry

The new government will seek to codify the goals of eradicating racism, national oppression and all forms of exploitation and bigotry. The following issues will be addressed by the new government. With the goal of the unity of the multinational U.S. working class on the basis of class solidarity, the new government will work to eliminate white supremacy, racism and privilege as an immediate task, recognizing that this goal will not be achieved automatically or by decree. It will be prohibited to advocate any form of racism, xenophobia, national hatred or discrimination based on ability.

- The socialist government will recognize the inviolable right of all oppressed nations to self-determination with regard to their means of gaining and maintaining their liberation. In the United States, this includes the right of self-determination for African American, Native, Puerto Rican and other Latino national minorities, the Hawai'ian nation, Asian, Pacific Islander, Arab and other oppressed peoples that have experienced oppression as a whole people under capitalism.
- The socialist government will institute a program of reparations for the African American community to address the centuries of unpaid slave labor and super-exploitation.
- The existing colonial relationships of the United States will be dissolved. The independence of Puerto Rico will be immediately recognized, with full reparations for colonial exploitation, and the right of free travel between the U.S. and Puerto Rico. Samoa, Guam, the Virgin Islands and Mariana Islands will be free to exercise their right to self-determination, up to and including independence, with reparations and the right to free travel between the former colonies and the U.S. mainland. Restitution, including the return of land stolen, will be provided for Native Nations. Further, the socialist government will reaffirm the right of Native Nations to self-determination, up to and including

independence. It will honor more than 300 currently-existing treaties with Native nations that have been violated or ignored by the capitalist state — an important starting point for undoing the legacies of settler colonialism.

- The socialist government will institute programs on the basis of proletarian internationalism to help overcome the ravages of U.S. imperialism that have exploited the people, resources and economies of other countries with an emphasis on sovereignty, solidarity, revolutionary assistance and reparations.
- All U.S. workers will have the right to speak the language of their choosing. All government services and education will be provided with multilingual provisions.
- Sexism and other forms of male chauvinism and oppression of women will be eliminated as an immediate task, recognizing that this goal will not be achieved automatically or by decree. It will be prohibited to advocate any form of sexism or male chauvinism.
- The socialist government will guarantee the right of women workers to receive the same pay, benefits and treatment as their male counterparts.
- The right to contraception, birth control and abortion services will not be restricted in any way, nor will there be any restriction on a woman's right to decide to have children or not. Abortion services will be available free and on demand.
- It will be the responsibility of the socialist government to provide women with the right to choose to have children by providing free, high-quality pre- and post-natal health care and child care. Any caregiver will be given access to free child care.
- All forms of bigotry, discrimination or the promotion of hatred against lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgender and queer people, or against anyone on the basis of their sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression, will be eliminated, including in marriage rights, employment, housing, adoption and health care. It will be prohibited to advocate any form of bigotry, discrimination or hatred against LGBTQ people.
- No law or measure will give preference in word or in deed that favors heterosexual relationships, or the nuclear family form, over other relationships.
- There will be a sustained public education campaign promoting the goals of multinational working-class unity and international solidarity, the advancement of women's rights, the promotion of respect of sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression, as well as exposing the evils of racism, sexism, anti-LGBTQ bigotry, xenophobia, and bigotry based on ability or national chauvinism. Affirmative action measures will be instituted wherever needed to eliminate the effects of historical discrimination in education, employment, promotion, housing and other areas.

Conclusion

There are only two choices for humanity today: an increasingly destructive capitalism, or socialism. The PSL believes that the only solution to the evils of capitalism is the socialist transformation of society. The program outlined above is just the beginning of what can be achieved when workers and oppressed people organize and take power. The people of the United States desperately need and deserve a new government and a new system run by the multinational working class in their interests. The struggle to defeat capitalism and begin building a socialist society is the most pressing issue faced by humanity today.