

# BH01: Black History and the Class Struggle

Black History and the Class Struggle No. 1

Spartacist League (U.S.)

1983

## Introduction

The fight for black freedom in the United States is inextricably linked to the fight for socialist revolution against the racist, imperialist capitalist system. This pamphlet, intended as a brief introduction to the Marxist views of the Spartacist League on the history of and program for the black freedom struggle, presents two major recent articles from *Workers Vanguard*.

“Heroes of the Anti-Slavery Struggle” (*WV* No. 319, 10 December 1982) examines the American Civil War from the standpoint of the working class and salutes two of the towering figures of the abolitionist movement, the ex-slave Frederick Douglass, probably the greatest American political figure of his time, and the revolutionary insurrectionist John Brown.

“Finish the Civil War!” (reprinted from the same issue) reviews the civil rights movement of the post-World War II decades, which under the leadership of the liberals and preachers betrayed the hopes of millions and deflected a massive movement of the black population which should have challenged the class rule of the exploiters. The article considers the rise and decline of radical black nationalism as a militant but despairing response to this betrayal and argues for the anti-capitalist perspective of revolutionary integrationism.

We include also a short article, “Fight or Starve!” (*WV* No. 320, 31 December 1982) which sketches out the transitional program linking the defense of all the specially oppressed to the fight for a class-struggle union leadership and a workers party.

Finally, we include the November 1982 leaflet “Stop the KKK!” issued by the Spartacist League. Hundreds of thousands of copies of this leaflet were distributed in the Washington, D.C. area to build the massive show of militant labor/black power which stopped the race-terrorist Klan from parading in the nation’s capital last November 27.

The last time the KKK marched in Washington was in 1925. That horrifying event, when 40,000 Klansmen paraded from the Capitol to the White House,

was the Klan's celebration of the consummation of post-World War I reaction. In 1919, when the American communist movement was founded, soldiers were returning restless; blacks had gone into industry; the Russian Revolution had just happened; the working class had high expectations. Then came the right-wing reaction, symbolized by Henry Ford, with his anti-union policies and personal anti-Semitism, and Calvin Coolidge. By 1925, union membership was down to perhaps a fifth of its 1919 level; the communists were perhaps a tenth of their 1919 size. The sharp deterioration of the situation of the black population went hand in hand with the decline of the (overwhelmingly white) union and socialist organizations. All this the Klan celebrated with its 1925 parade for racist reaction.

In 1982, the Klan tried it again. With the working class reeling and union leaders retreating in the face of ruling class attacks on living standards and basic services, and the drive toward war to "roll back Communism" abroad, the Klan announced a march against "illegal" immigrants, the desperate people fleeing starvation and repression in countries like Mexico and Haiti. Under this pretext, the KKK hoped to send a message to all their enemies—blacks especially, as well as unionists and leftists—that 1925-style reaction was back in Reagan's America. But they were stopped cold by the Spartacist-initiated mobilization of a section of the black working class and other anti-racist militants, mainly black youth from D.C. The more than 5,000 people who participated in the Labor/Black Mobilization to Stop the KKK on November 27 are also now a part of black history. Their victory in the streets of Washington points the way forward for all the future heroes of the black freedom struggle, the black leaders who as a crucial component of the revolutionary party will lead the multiracial American working class in the final victory over capitalist oppression.

—21 January 1983

## Heroes of the Anti-Slavery Struggle

**John Brown and Frederick Douglass**

—reprinted from *Workers Vanguard* No. 319, 10 December 1982

In an old stone quarry outside Chambersberg, Pennsylvania, two men held a secret meeting on August 20, 1859—nearly 20 months before the firing on Fort Sumter which marks the official start of the Civil War. Disguised as a fisherman in a storm-beaten hat, the white man was old and worn, with glaring blue eyes and long silver beard. The black man was younger, larger, with a shock of hair and majestic features. These were two giants of the struggle against slavery: the revolutionary insurrectionist John Brown and the brilliant abolitionist Frederick Douglass, himself an ex-slave.

They were old friends, comrades for more than a decade in the militant wing of the anti-slavery movement. This would be their last meeting. At Chambersberg,

Brown declared to Douglass, for the first time, his immediate intention to attack the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry, Virginia; to hold hostages there while others in his revolutionary band liberated slaves from nearby plantations; to arm the slaves, set up mountain strongholds and begin a guerrilla war against the slavocracy.

The impassioned Brown threw his arms around Douglass and told him: “Come with me Douglass: I will defend you with my life. . . . When I strike, the bees will swarm and I shall want you to help hive them” (*The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*). Douglass had supported an earlier plan of Brown’s to run slaves to freedom through the Alleghenies, but he refused to join the Harpers Ferry raid mainly on tactical grounds. They sat on the stones of Chambersberg and argued for a day and a half. With Brown was his secretary, John Henry Kagi; Douglass had brought his friend Shields Green, another former slave.

Brown did most of the talking. When Douglass argued that the attack on the federal government “would array the whole country against us,” Brown welcomed the possibility. Shields Green decided to go with Brown. But Douglass was convinced that Brown “was going into a perfect steel trap, and that once in he would never get out alive.”

Whether or not John Brown also knew Harpers Ferry was a “perfect steel trap” remains a matter of conjecture. But on the wet moonless night of October 16, 1859 the man who called himself the Lord’s avenging angel against slavery gathered his small army of revolutionary heroes—16 whites including his sons, and five blacks including some slaves—read aloud from the Bible, piled the guns and pikes in the wagon and led the way to the Ferry to bring “justice to this slave-cursed land” (Stephen B. Oates, *To Purge This Land with Blood*).

At first it went like clockwork. They cut the telegraph wires on both sides of town. The raiders took their primary military targets including millions of dollars in federal arms, and took as hostages some “leading citizen” planters. A handful of slaves were liberated in the countryside while the armory complex itself, largely unguarded, offered no trouble.

Brown waited for the slaves to swarm like “bees” to his liberated fortress. But it was the militiamen who came from as far away as Baltimore, while a drunken racist mob gathered in the town screaming for the blood of the “slave insurrection.” President Buchanan ordered in three artillery companies and the marines under Colonel Robert E. Lee. The marines stormed the engine house where Brown’s men were trapped.

Brown and his raiders fought bravely and coolly against impossible odds. But 36 hours after it started, the Harpers Ferry attack was over. Ten of Brown’s men were killed including two of his sons. Five were captured, tried and executed, including Brown. Lying bleeding from a serious wound, Brown was interrogated at Harpers Ferry by Virginia’s governor. Said Brown: “You may dispose of me very easily—I am nearly disposed of now; but this question is still to be settled—this negro question I mean; the end of that is not yet. . . .”

Militarily defeated at Harpers Ferry, Brown's political mission to destroy slavery by force of arms continued spectacularly. As W.E.B. DuBois, the black scholar and founder of the Niagara Movement, noted in his 1909 biography of Brown: "From the day John Brown was captured to the day he died, and after, it was the South and slavery that was on trial—not John Brown."

Brown's trial and hanging was an indictment of the system of slavery. From the dock Brown made powerful statements against slavery, and as 3,000 troops marched around the scaffold he declared, "In my death I may do more than in my life." "Let them hang me," he said. His last words written in the shadow of the gallows bear the spirit and sword of John Brown's righteous wrath, and his prophetic understanding of the inevitability of the great class war at hand to crush slavery in America: "I, John Brown, am quite certain that the crimes of this land will never be purged away but with blood."

Today's bourgeois historians like to portray John Brown as a madman obsessed with blood-lust. But Brown was quite correct that slavery would be ended in America only by bloody social cataclysm—civil war, the second American Revolution. Harpers Ferry and Brown's death galvanized both sides for war. For the anti-slavery forces Brown was and remains a great hero. For the pro-slavery forces he was the symbol of everything they feared. As he hung by the neck in Virginia, they were firing a hundred-gun salute to his martyrdom in Albany, New York; church bells rang from Kansas to Boston. Abolitionists who the day before were pacifists took the pulpit to proclaim the necessity of a violent end to the slave system. But Abraham Lincoln, the day after Brown's hanging, proclaimed him guilty of "treason." And the Southern planters used Harpers Ferry to claim the Republican Party was plotting an invasion and slave insurrection. They quickly organized a witchhunt in Congress against the financial and political backers of Brown in the "Harpers Ferry conspiracy."

Frederick Douglass was one of those charged in Virginia with "murder, robbery, inciting to servile insurrection." Douglass fled temporarily to Canada knowing that otherwise he would surely hang. He hailed Brown and his mission and deprecated himself: when "tried by the Harpers Ferry insurrection test, I am most miserably deficient in courage" (Philip Foner, editor, *The Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass*).

Douglass and Brown shared the conviction that the coming Civil War must crush the slave system and break the chains of black oppression. But for Lincoln and the majority of the Northern ruling class, the point of the Civil War was not to end slavery but to put down the secession of the South and establish their own class rule continent-wide. They had to be dragged kicking and screaming into the war; they ended slavery only when it became clear they could not win the war any other way. John Brown's heroic raid on Harpers Ferry was one powerful instrument in beginning the war. Only a few years later, soldiers would again march on Harpers Ferry, but this time they were Union soldiers marching to the song, "John Brown's Body."

When Frederick Douglass returned to Harpers Ferry in 1881 to commemorate John Brown, he spoke for all of us for whom the Civil War was a class war against the system of slavery:

“If John Brown did not end the war that ended slavery, he did, at least, begin the war that ended slavery. If we look over the dates, places, and men for which this honor is claimed, we shall find that not Carolina, but Virginia, not Fort Sumter, but Harpers Ferry and the arsenal, not Major Anderson, but John Brown began the war that ended American slavery.”

—*Selections from the Writings of Frederick Douglass* (Philip Foner, editor)

## Our Heroes of the Second American Revolution

Revolutionary democrats like Douglass and Brown who fought for black liberation are among our heroes of the second American Revolution, called the Civil War. But their aspirations for black America were crushed in the terror and moral cowardice of the political counterrevolution which gutted and then destroyed Reconstruction. The success of the counterrevolution, which robbed blacks of the victory they had fought for on the battlefield, also produced wide acceptance for the white supremacists’ view of the revolutionary wing of the abolitionist movement. This is expressed most clearly in the regular and continuing vilification of John Brown. Children today are taught that “Abraham Lincoln freed the slaves” while John Brown is presented as an insane mass murderer. Many books and movies portray Brown as a primitive religious nut thirsty for “white blood” to appease his personal god of violence.

John Brown was certainly fiercely religious. Born in 1800 and raised in strict Calvinist piety, the young Brown was taught that slavery was an abomination in the sight of god. As an Ohio teenager he saw a landlord beat a slave about his own age with an iron fire shovel. It was then that he swore “eternal” war on slavery. And he understood that war would be violent and social. On his bookshelf next to his Bible he kept the biography of the great English revolutionary Puritan, Oliver Cromwell.

Not only John Brown the legend but John Brown the man exerted a powerful force in the abolition movement. His name, Douglass relates, was mentioned “in whispers” of respect. A non-conformist by principle as well as personality, Brown didn’t join his local anti-slavery society, but was engaged in running escaping slaves North and to Canada. Unlike John Brown the figure of fanatic irrationality portrayed in reactionary bourgeois myth, the real John Brown fought for armed slave rebellion, and organized armed struggle against the slave system in “Bleeding Kansas” in the 1850s. That his overall strategy made sense and influenced the left wing of the abolition movement is evidenced by his relationship to Douglass, the towering figure among the black abolitionists and perhaps the greatest political American of his time.

Brown and Douglass met for the first time in 1847 at Brown's "plaine style" home in Springfield, Massachusetts. These two exceptional men were of such different temperaments and backgrounds that it is hard to imagine that their lives would have crossed had they not been pulled together by the power of the issue of slavery.

Douglass was born a slave on the eastern shore of Maryland, probably in 1817, although no records for slaves were kept. He never knew his white father and had little knowledge of his mother as he grew up on Colonel Edward Lloyd's slave plantation. There he competed with the dog for table scraps and passed through what he later described as "the blood-stained gate, the entrance to the hell of slavery." As a child he watched the repeated, brutal whipping of "an old aunt," recalling being "awakened at the dawn of day" by her shrieks. The overseer would tie her up and whip her "till she was literally covered with blood":

"The louder she screamed, the harder he whipped; and where the blood ran fastest, there he whipped the longest. He would whip her to make her scream, and whip her to make her hush; and not until overcome by fatigue, would he cease to swing the blood-clotted cowskin."

—*Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*

The whipping of the old lady was the first in a long series of outrages in which Douglass was witness and victim. At age ten he became a household slave for the Auld family. When Mrs. Auld introduced Douglass to the ABCs, her husband became furious, exclaiming, "If you teach that nigger how to read there would be no keeping him." "From that moment," Douglass wrote, "I understood the path from slavery to freedom."

With determination and ingenuity, Douglass turned his playmates into teachers, the letters on ships into primers, the fence boards into notebooks. When he was lent out to a professional "Negro-breaker," Douglass fought back. "This battle with Mr. Covey," said Douglass, "was the turning point in my career as a slave." He let it be known "that the white man who expected to succeed in whipping, must also succeed in killing me." After being moved to Baltimore where he learned to be a caulker in the shipyards, Douglass escaped to the North in 1838.

Douglass went to New Bedford, Massachusetts, where he discovered a copy of *The Liberator*, William Lloyd Garrison's abolitionist paper. In 1830, when most anti-slavery forces sought merely an amelioration of the slaves' conditions or looked to a plan to "colonize" the blacks in the Caribbean or elsewhere, Garrison had declared that he would "not equivocate," calling for the immediate abolition of slavery, and began the radical abolition movement.

Douglass became one of the best-known of the abolitionists, and certainly its most electrifying speaker. Enduring the persecution of white racist mobs, he lectured brilliantly across America and a tour of Europe won him international recognition. But Douglass was not just a great orator as many historians are

now willing to recognize. What is most important about Douglass is not so much that he fought his way out of slavery but that he became a political leader, splitting with the policies of the Garrison wing.

Garrison's abolitionism was more grounded in a tradition of Christian benevolence than the radical bourgeois Enlightenment. While radical and agitational on slavery, women's rights and capital punishment, the Garrison wing was part of liberal Protestant revivalism. Individualistic in religious interpretation, they also saw slavery as fundamentally an evil of the individual rather than a social matter for political action. They were explicitly anti-labor and had little use for the fight for black rights in the free states. They were for disunion with the slave South and against the "pro-slave Constitution." They accepted the inequality inherent in the economic relations of developing capitalism. In its first issue the *Liberator* railed against those who would "inflamm[e] the minds of our working classes against the more opulent."

With a strong pacifist bias, the Garrisonians declared themselves "non-resistants," therefore relying on "moral suasion" and the force of their ideas to convince the slave system away. They opposed David Walker's 1829 "Appeal" for slave rebellions as well as Nat Turner's revolt of 1831.

As a Garrisonian, Douglass argued against the ex-slave Henry Highland Garnet's stirring call at the 1843 National Convention of Colored Men that slaves should rise up. But Douglass was changing his views on "moral suasion" as he became more involved in the practical politics of opposing the slave system. In 1844 he established his own newspaper, *The North Star* (later changed to Douglass' Paper), over the strong objection of Garrison. An editor and speaker for the more political wing of the abolition movement, Douglass was also a "station master" and "conductor" for the Underground Railroad.

Douglass' 1847 meeting with John Brown was a turning point in his political evolution. Brown and those around him represented the only current in the abolition movement which argued that the slaveowners could be defeated only by force of arms, largely by the slaves themselves. Douglass had learned of Brown through Henry Garnet and took time out from a speaking tour to visit him. Brown explained to Douglass his plan to create a "subterranean Pass Way" through the Allegheny mountains for slaves escaping North, and where a sustained guerrilla war could begin. "These mountains," said Brown, pointing to the map he had placed before Douglass, "were placed here for the emancipation of the negro race." Brown argued that such a plan to periodically liberate slaves would attack the system itself by rendering slave "property" insecure and less valuable. The two men argued, not so much over the tactics of the plan but over the underlying politics. "When I suggested that we might convert the slaveholders," recalled Douglass in *Life and Times*, "he became much excited." Brown told Douglass that "that could never be, he knew their proud hearts and that they would never be induced to give up their slaves, until they felt a big stick about their heads." Brown's Calvinism, and Oliver Cromwell, had taught him that a big stick was best to "convert" evil men.

Douglass thought the plan for guerrilla war extremely hazardous, but recognized it had “much to commend it.” Douglass was becoming convinced that “moral suasion” was hopeless and the fight must be a political one against the whole system of slavery, by armed force including armed black slaves. Douglass had been developing in this direction for some time, but “From this night spent with John Brown in Springfield, Mass., 1847, while I continued to write and speak against slavery, I became all the same less hopeful of its peaceful abolition.”

Douglass shocked Garrisonian “non-resistants” when he announced that slavery could only be ended with bloodshed. He supported every kind of slave resistance. And in Boston in 1849 he declared to a packed hall of Garrisonians that “I would welcome the intelligence... that the slaves had risen in the South... [and] were engaged in spreading death and destruction.” In 1852 he wrote to the *New York Herald* that “the only way to make the Fugitive Slave Law a dead letter is to make a half-a-dozen or more dead kidnappers.” Upon leaving Brown at Springfield, Douglass wrote to the *North Star* that Brown, “although a white gentleman, is in sympathy, a black man, and as deeply interested in our cause, as though his own soul had been pierced with the iron of slavery.”

Douglass’ political evolution was not merely from “non-resistance” to self-defense. Contained in the “moral suasion” line was a refusal to fight slavery politically and to the wall, by all methods. That is the importance of the Douglass-Brown relationship: together they were planning the Civil War. It is a logical line from Brown’s house in Springfield to Douglass’ active recruitment of black soldiers for the Civil War.

The political fight against slavery focused in the 1850s on the question of Western expansion and “free soil.” It was over the issue of whether the Western states would be slave or free that abolitionism gained a mass political base. When the pro-slave Democrats engineered the repeal of the Missouri Compromise, Kansas was to decide by plebiscite if it was to be a slave state. The pro-slave “border ruffians” (terror murderers would be a better term) of Missouri swarmed into Kansas for violence and massive intimidation. Four of Brown’s sons decided to “go west” to meet the military challenge, observing that the fate of Kansas would be decided “at the cartridge box, not the ballot box.” Their father followed.

Brown and his sons, nearly always badly outnumbered, fought bravely in Kansas. It was a military rehearsal for the Civil War. The government was still trying to avoid the question of slavery in the South. Although willing to fight to make Kansas “free soil,” the Northerners would not allow blacks to come into Kansas. Douglass observed that “opposing slavery and hating its victims has come to be a very common form of abolitionism.” Nonetheless the issue was brought before the North and there was John Brown at the center of it.

Douglass told of how Brown “met persecution with persecution, war with war, strategy with strategy, assassination and house-burning with signal and terrible retaliation till even the blood-thirsty propagandists of slavery were compelled to cry for quarter.” Douglass met Brown often during this struggle and noted



that even in the intensity of the border war, Brown “never lost sight of what he called his greater work—the liberation of all the slaves in the United States.”

## **Finish the Civil War!**

The Republican Party was born out of the issue of the expansion of slavery. Douglass joined its radical left wing and tried to drive the reluctant Republicans toward an open fight against the slavocracy. Other militant black spokesmen drew different conclusions from the Fugitive Slave Law, the ban on allowing blacks into Kansas, the denial of political rights to free blacks. Pessimistic about the possibilities of black liberation in America, Martin Delaney, a vigorous black nationalist, proclaimed, “We are slaves in the midst of freedom.” And he advocated emigration because “I must admit, that I have no hopes in this country—no confidence in the American people.”

Douglass led the fight against the emigrationists, realizing that their plan dovetailed with the revival of the racist American Colonization Society (just as years later, after World War I, Marcus Garvey’s “back to Africa” movement would get a welcome reception from the Ku Klux Klan). In 1853 at the National Black Convention, Douglass drew up an “address to the people of the United States” demanding that “the doors of the schoolhouse, the work-shop, the church, the college shall be thrown open” to blacks. Douglass stood for the revolutionary integrationism of his time.

With the Civil War, Douglass took up the call to allow black soldiers to fight. He waged a tireless struggle against Lincoln and the Northern majority who refused to arm the blacks just as they refused to issue an emancipation proclamation. The Republican Party was split on these issues, but battle losses in the field gave the revolutionary wing of the party political advantage: “With every reverse to the national arms,” declared Douglass in 1863, “with every exulting shout of victory raised by the slaveholding rebels, I have implored the imperiled nation to unchain against her foes, her powerful black hand.”

Douglass understood that putting black soldiers in the field was a central task to turn the Civil War from a battle against Southern secession to the class war described by Karl Marx as a “conflict between the system of slavery and the system of free labor.” When in 1863 Lincoln was pushed into the Emancipation Proclamation and black enlistment, 200,000 black soldiers entered the fight under white abolitionist officers.

The second American Revolution and Reconstruction following it broke the class power of the slave South. Douglass was active in the Reconstruction governments which saw the most democratic period for blacks in American history. As a radical Republican, Douglass pushed for land distribution to the freedmen and full political rights for blacks. He fought for Negro suffrage and split with the suffragette movement, with which he had worked for many years, because of its refusal to support the Fifteenth Amendment giving blacks the right to vote.

In 1871 Douglass was elected president of the National Colored Labor Union, a sign that black labor recognized its stake in the political process of Reconstruction. But the hopes of radical Republicans like Douglass and Charles Sumner were beaten back by the Party majority which was interested in the economic advantages of their victory over the Confederacy, not in black rights. After years of Ku Klux Klan terror against Reconstruction, the Northern and Southern capitalists made “peace” over the hard-won gains of blacks. By 1877 the federal government pulled out the last of its troops from the South and Reconstruction was over. Addressing the 1883 Convention of Colored Men Douglass said: “. . . the Government by whom we were emancipated left us completely in the power of our former owners. . . it fully explains our present poverty and wretchedness. . . . The marvel is not that we are poor in such circumstances, but rather that we were not exterminated.”

Douglass and Brown had gone as far as they could within the confines of capitalism. (Perhaps Brown went a little farther than he could go.) In a sense they started the Civil War to make black people free. And Douglass tried to complete the war for fundamental economic and political freedom. But that fight is still to come. The Civil War and the subsequent waves of black migration to the cities changed the character of black oppression in the U.S. Black people are now a part of “free labor,” and the key to their liberation is in the integrated fight of labor for the smashing of capitalism, its state and its institutions, and the establishing of a workers government.

Like the counterposition in our century between the “non-violence” of Martin Luther King and the more militant wing of the civil rights movement epitomized by the martyred Malcolm X, the counterposition between the Garrisonians and Douglass was an important split. It represented not so much a fight about “violence” as a fight over the roots of black oppression and the necessity of massive and political means, rather than “moral” means, to deal with it. King (who was not a bourgeois radical like Garrison, but a reformist) saw Jim Crow as an immoral aberration; his line was for the oppressed to shame our oppressors by showing them how much we can suffer. We stand in the revolutionary tradition of Frederick Douglass and John Brown. To complete the unfinished democratic tasks of the Civil War, we look to the multi-racial American working class. In this period of imperialist decay, there is no longer a radical or “progressive” wing of the capitalist ruling class; the whole system stands squarely counter-posed to black freedom. Forward to the third American Revolution, a proletarian revolution led by a Trotskyist vanguard party with a strong black leadership component. Finish the Civil War—For black liberation in a workers’ America!

## Labor, Blacks Stopped KKK in Washington, D.C.

**Forward to a Workers State!  
Finish the Civil War!**

—reprinted from *Workers Vanguard* No. 319, 10 December 1982

As contingents from the Mid-Atlantic, Northeast and Midwest rolled into the Labor/Black Mobilization to Stop the KKK in Washington, D.C. November 27, the bus from Norfolk had a sign in the front window reading “Nat Turner Brigade.” A trade unionist who organized the contingent commented enthusiastically, “This is history being made. . . . Something just like Nat Turner’s insurrection. I think this is just like when old John Brown marched in 1859 and ignited the Civil War. This Klan evolved after the Civil War, and we’re here to stop them.” And we did. Later, as 5,000 anti-KKK demonstrators marched down Constitution and up Pennsylvania Avenues behind Spartacist League (SL) and Labor/Black Mobilization banners, an SL chant caught the spirit of the day: “1, 2, 3, 4, Time to Finish the Civil War—5, 6, 7, 8, Forward to a Workers State!”

Blacks, workers, all opponents of racist terror scored a victory as we stopped the Klan in its tracks. Coming after a decade of racist rollback of black gains—from the defeat of busing under the Democrats to Reagan’s attack on voting rights—and vicious union-busting, while minorities are suffering from unprecedented Depression-level unemployment, it was a sharp break in the cycle of defeats and sellouts. And this time, thousands were mobilized behind a class-struggle strategy that can lead to victory: no reliance on the capitalist state and Democratic Party phony “friends” of labor and blacks; militant workers’ action to bring down Reagan; build a multi-racial workers party to fight for a workers government.

Many black militants in Washington were veterans of the civil rights struggles of the 1960s. Today, school integration is a dead letter, even the limited JFK/LBJ equal rights legislation is under the gun and KKK terror is spreading throughout the country. While some formal political rights have been established, they are buried under the weight of enormous social and economic oppression. Blacks are an oppressed race-color caste forcibly segregated at the bottom of American society. They can sit at integrated lunch counters, but can they afford to eat? The liberal-led civil rights movement held out the promise of black equality, but what it produced was a handful of black mayors who are now busy breaking the strikes of black workers.

During the late 1950s/early 1960s the black masses rallied to the civil rights movement in which they saw at long last the hope for a better life in America. The failure of the “Movement” to change the hellish conditions of ghetto life and the sellouts of black establishment leaders like Martin Luther King turned a generation of young black militants to nationalism and separatism. Yet neither the liberal pacifism of King nor the black nationalism of Stokely Carmichael and the Panthers was able to counter the growing white backlash. For each in

their own way, the Kings and Carmichaels rejected the program of mobilizing an integrated working class, the one force powerful enough to defeat racist reaction.

The civil rights movement was defeated when it moved north, coming up against the economic root causes of black oppression under American capitalism. The main demands of the Southern struggle—access to public facilities and voting rights—had existed north of the Mason-Dixon line for years. But the desperate poverty and mass unemployment of the ghettos—along with widespread police brutality and racist intimidation of the black population—these could not be solved with a new “civil rights” bill. It would take a class struggle, together with the white workers and mobilizing the power of organized labor, to do away with capitalist exploitation (in which minorities are invariably “last hired, first fired”) and institute a socialist planned economy to achieve genuine emancipation.

### **From the Civil Rights Movement...**

The Jim Crow system of the Old South could no longer continue as before in post-World War II America. Young black men trained in the use of arms, returning from a war they were told was “against fascism,” would not be cowed by KKK terror. At the same time, legal segregation in the South was an embarrassment to American imperialism as it presented itself as the leader of the “free world” against Communism. In this changed political climate the NAACP won a series of legal victories, notably the 1954 Brown vs. Board of Education decision, which ordered school desegregation “with all deliberate speed.” But the Southern black populace had a different speed in mind.

When Rosa Parks was arrested in Montgomery, Alabama in 1955 for refusing to give up her seat on a bus to a white man, the mass civil rights movement was born. The year-long Montgomery bus boycott thrust Rev. Martin Luther King to center stage as a national spokesman for pacifist “direct action” for black equality. The resulting Supreme Court decision declaring unconstitutional local laws requiring segregated seating in public transport must have seemed like total victory for King’s Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). But while he was riding high with his sermons on “soul force” and the black people’s “capacity to suffer,” local blacks were left politically and militarily defenseless as race-terrorists went on a rampage of burning black churches and buses. When angry, blacks began to talk about self-defense, King told them to love their enemies.

For the next decade the civil rights struggle shook Southern society and to a large extent dominated the political life of the United States as a whole. Yet this movement demanded nothing more radical than formal, legal equality for blacks, “Northernizing” the South. While it drew on the deep hatred of the black masses for Jim Crow, its main beneficiaries were the relatively narrow black middle class, the so-called “talented tenth.” Their political strategy was to seek the support of, and above all to avoid antagonizing, the Northern white liberal establishment. Federal troops, federal courts, federal laws—these were

to be the weapons against Southern “states’ righters.” The tactics were mainly non-violence and moral confrontation.

Increasingly the liberal leadership of the movement around King and his SCLC came into conflict with the aspirations of the black masses to go beyond tokenistic legal reforms and their rejection of turn-the-other-cheek pacifism. This clash threw up a left wing of the civil rights movement, located mainly in the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). When Birmingham police chief Bull Connor set loose his storm troopers, police dogs and fire hoses against defenseless civil rights demonstrators, the black population junked King’s philosophy of non-violence and responded with sticks, rocks, knives and bottles against attacks by racists in the streets. It was at this moment when blacks started organizing self-defense, and not before, that President John Kennedy sent troops into Alabama and took steps to federalize the National Guard.

With the mass of the black population and many young militants visibly rebelling against King’s disastrous liberal pacifism, even a relatively small revolutionary party could have gained significant influence in this movement and thus radically changed the course of American history over the next 20 years. Recognition of this historic but fleeting opportunity was a major factor leading to the formation in the early 1960s of a left opposition, forerunner of the present Spartacist League, in the once-Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party (SWP). Defining itself as a “white party,” the SWP **refused** to involve itself in the civil rights movement while tailing King from the outside. The Revolutionary Tendency demanded that any socialist party worthy of the name must intervene in the Southern civil rights struggle and seek to win the leadership of radicalized young blacks.

When our tendency was expelled from the SWP in 1964, we threw our small forces heavily into Southern black struggles. In particular we sought to link the fight for black equality with the working-class struggle against capitalist exploitation through the call for a South-wide Freedom/Labor Party. Such a party, breaking with the Democrats of Johnson and Wallace, would have given tremendous impetus to similar action among Northern workers. This would have required the organization of the union ranks to oust the pro-capitalist bureaucracy, its liberal Reuther wing as well as the openly reactionary and racist Meanyites. However the Spartacist tendency’s forces at that time were too small and the decisive moment had passed to win masses of young black activists to Trotskyism.

The civil rights movement was killed in the lily-white Chicago suburb of Cicero in 1966. It was here the white backlash won its first major victory. When King announced a march for integrated housing in Cicero, American Nazis led by George Lincoln Rockwell organized “white power” hoodlums to meet the civil rights marchers with a bloody attack. Two days before the scheduled march King signed the Palmer House agreement, backing off the march in exchange for an empty promise on housing. However, 200 young militants led by SNCC’s Stokely Carmichael, who had just raised the slogan of “black power,” decided to march anyway. They were surrounded by hundreds of Chicago police and

thousands of National Guardsmen. They were courageous, but they had lost as the racists out mobilized them in the streets.

Nearly a decade later, busing was defeated in Boston for much the same reason: the labor movement was not brought into the struggle on the side of integration. The same liberal politicians and union bureaucrats who were prepared to support laws against Jim Crow in the South were not willing to support the struggle in the North for black economic equality and social integration. The struggle for black emancipation therefore had to become a fight to break the working masses, black and white, from the Democratic Party and to oust its labor lieutenants—the Meanys, Reuthers and A. Philip Randolphs—from the leadership of the trade unions. But the leadership of the civil rights movement was wedded to the Democrats.

### **...to Black Nationalism**

The frustration especially of the northern black poor, who had been led to believe that the civil rights legislation would really change their lives for the better, exploded in a series of ghetto upheavals in the mid-1960s: Harlem 64, Watts '65, Newark and Detroit '67. These explosions, usually provoked by the police, were elemental, spontaneous outpourings of black anger. And they were a rejection of the civil rights preachers and their empty promises of black freedom while conditions for ghetto blacks were worsening in crucial aspects (jobs, wages, housing, education). In response to the '60s explosions, the black liberals showed whose side they were really on. King was a pacifist only for the black oppressed, not for the police. For the black youth of Watts, King demanded that "as powerful a police force as possible be brought in to check them."

In anger and disgust, a generation of young black militants turned away from MLK pacifism and his white liberal patrons. The new mood surfaced in 1966 when SNCC under Carmichael adopted the slogan of "black power." On the one hand, this slogan was directed against the alliance with the liberal establishment, which especially in the North (but also in the South) was rightly viewed as an alliance with the cops against the black masses. At the same time, these black militants falsely identified multiracial organizations and integrationism with subservience to liberal power brokers like Hubert Humphrey and Reuther. SNCC activists keenly remembered how the UAW chief had intervened to censor John Lewis' speech to the 1963 March on Washington. Looking at the reactionary job-trusting AFL-CIO bureaucracy, many "black power" radicals viewed organized labor as nothing more than a means of preserving white privileges.

"Black power" was at that moment a contradictory slogan. It could be filled with a class-struggle content (as the SL tried to do at the time), or it could lead to utopian despair and, as it turned out, a reintegration of these black radicals back into the mainstream of bourgeois politics. As we wrote in our 1966 document "Black and Red":

"In short, the black power' movement is raising questions whose

answers lie outside the framework set up by the capitalist class.

“However, as yet the movement has not become consciously anti-capitalist. It has rejected what it knows as liberalism but is unsure of how to go further. Lacking a conscious orientation towards the working class and constantly surrounded by bourgeois propaganda, the movement may yet fall prey to bourgeois politicians with radical phrases or else become hopelessly isolated and demoralized.”

—“Black and Red—Class Struggle Road to Negro Freedom,” Marxist Bulletin No. 9, “Basic Documents of the Spartacist League”

Due in large measure to the abstentionism and tailism of the reformists like the SWP and the Communist Party, the “black power” left wing of the civil rights movement never found the bridge to the program of workers power. Instead many black militants embraced the slogan of “community control,” the route through Lyndon Johnson’s “Great Society” poverty programs back into Democratic Party ethnic machine politics. In the aftermath of the mid-’60s ghetto explosions, black management of the “inner city” became a profitable career for energetic black hustlers, “Black power” became the rhetoric of aspiring ghetto councilmen, police chief welfare administrators and school principals. This was dramatized by the 1968 NYC teachers strike where almost the entire left lined up behind the Ford Foundation-financed attempt to bust the teachers union.

During the heyday of black nationalism the one black organization which struggled, in a contradictory fashion, to remain independent of the bourgeoisie was the Black Panther Party, which in the late ’60s acquired something of a mass base in the northern ghettos. The Panthers were scathing in their attacks on the “pork chop” cultural nationalists, and groped toward a rudimentary class opposition to racist, capitalist America. Identifying with Third World Maoist currents, the Panthers spoke of social revolution. They looked to the best black militants as if they really intended to bring the system down. Yet while calling themselves “Marxist-Leninists,” the Panthers rejected the central premise of Marxism: that the organized working class is the gravedigger of capitalism. Instead they saw in the volatile lumpenized ghetto poor the “vanguard” of the American revolution.

Based in the decaying inner cities, the Panthers took as their main immediate enemy the “occupying army,” the cops. However, they did not organize the ghetto masses but rather **substituted** their own militants in a lopsided struggle against police brutality. Seeing themselves as a band of warrior-heroes avenging the historic injustices visited upon the downtrodden black people, the Panthers talked of “revolutionary suicide.” The Black Panther Party was effectively destroyed by a massive campaign of state terror directed by the FBI in league with local police. Practically the entire leading cadre of the Panthers were either murdered (Fred Hampton and Mark Clark in Chicago, George Jackson in California) or imprisoned on capital charges (Huey Newton, Pratt).

The Panthers had no program of their own to counter the onslaught of state terror against them, and their defense work soon came under the influence

of the reformist Communist Party which directed it toward liberal “popular front” politics. This right shift provoked a violent split in 1970-71 between a reformist wing around Newton and Seale and an adventurist wing around the unsavory Eldridge Cleaver. A few years later Seale ran for mayor of Oakland on the Democratic ticket, while the remnants of the adventurist wing fought their last battles against the cops as the Black Liberation Army. (Cleaver ended up as a front man for the Korean CIA-connected fascist Moonie cult.) Thus the Panthers traveled the same path as their one-time opponents, the “pork chop” cultural nationalists, demonstrating that black nationalism leads back to bourgeois sectoral politics, or “revolutionary suicide.”

In Detroit in the late 1960s/early 70s there developed a more proletarian expression of black nationalism, the League of Revolutionary Black Workers, concentrated in the auto plants (such as DRUM in Dodge Main). However, since the League wrote off the white working class and existing unions as hopelessly racist, these black nationalists could develop no realistic revolutionary perspective. The League soon fell apart, some of its former activists ending up in the UAW bureaucracy, others (such as lawyer Ken Cockrel) in Coleman Young’s Democratic Party machine.

## **American Workers Revolution Needs Black Leadership**

The civil rights movement tried to confront the unfinished business of the Civil War. Black chattel slaves had been emancipated only to be stripped of political rights and economically subjugated. The road to black freedom, to finishing the Civil War, requires the establishment of working-class rule. Today, unlike the period of Reconstruction, the material conditions for posing the question of political power in class terms have fully matured. Blacks are still segregated at the bottom of American society, but are integrated into its economy, especially in the strategic sectors of the industrial proletariat. The key to social revolution in this country is the united struggle of black and white workers led by a multi-racial vanguard party. And there is no road to eliminating the special oppression of black people other than through the working-class conquest of power.

The civil rights movement reconquered the black franchise in the South only to have its liberal misleaders sell the black vote to the Democrats. Thus, today George Wallace, once the number one enemy of civil rights, is sold as a “friend” of Alabama’s black people. Martin Luther King may have been a traitor to the cause of black emancipation, not least for selling out this struggle to the party of Wallace. But King was assassinated while defending a black sanitation workers strike in Memphis. And the explosion of black anger which rocked Washington and other cities on King’s death in 1968 was clearly on the minds of the D.C. authorities on November 27. But today it is black Democratic mayors like Atlanta’s Andrew Young and Detroit’s Coleman Young who break black sanitation workers strikes.

Among the thousands of Washington blacks who turned out for the Labor/ Black



Mobilization at the Capitol on November 27, many no doubt vote Democratic as the “lesser evil.” (Though the numbers voting are dropping year by year as more and more find nothing to vote for in the twin capitalist parties.) The Democrats not only paved the way for Reagan racism with “ethnic purity” Carter. They are also full partners with the Republicans in the anti-Soviet war drive aimed at rolling back the gains of the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution and restoring capitalist exploitation to the world’s second largest industrial and military power. There is a bipartisan consensus that working people, elderly, youth and especially blacks will pay with their hides for this nuclear anti-Soviet crusade whose domestic shock troops are the KKK and Nazis.

The Labor/Black Mobilization on November 27 pointed in the direction of an independent working-class struggle for power. An indication of tremendous power of the American labor movement was seen a year earlier, at the huge AFL-CIO Solidarity Day rally in Washington on September 19. Half a million workers poured into the capital to demonstrate their anger at Reagan, who at that very moment was destroying the PATCO air controllers union. It was the largest, most racially integrated demonstration in American history, showing the capacity of the working class to take over the seat of power—if it had a leadership that sought that goal. Instead the pro-capitalist union bureaucracy channeled the ranks’ hatred for the racist union-buster into a “vote Democratic in 82” campaign while criminally letting PATCO go down the tubes.

The key to achieving the victory over the KKK in D.C. on November 27 was the intervention and leadership of the Marxist vanguard party. In the tradition of the Bolsheviks of Lenin and Trotsky, the Spartacist League fights for workers power on all fronts, saying “picket lines mean don’t cross,” demanding full citizenship rights for immigrant workers, organizing labor/black mobilizations against racist terror, defending the gains of the October Revolution against imperialist attack. For black people in America caught in the vicious circle of liberal integrationism and black separatism, there is a road out—revolutionary integrationism, the emancipation of blacks in the framework of an egalitarian socialist society. That road of class struggle requires the fusion of the fight for black liberation with proletarian revolution. The Trotskyists of the SL are dedicated to the construction of the multi-racial vanguard party of the working class.

Break with the Democrats, black and white—Build a workers party to fight for a workers government! For black liberation through socialist revolution!

## **Fight or Starve!**

### **Sit-Downs Not Soup Lines!**

—reprinted from *Workers Vanguard* No. 320, 31 December 1982

Soup lines are back. Tent cities have sprung up around the country as the over

one million homeless crisscross the nation in search of work until their cars and their hopes break down. Three hundred thousand will have their heat cut off in the dead of winter. The number of unemployed is the highest in American history. Half the 13 million official jobless are no longer eligible for unemployment benefits. The "American Way of Life" has become a nightmare for millions—especially blacks—as the country begins to look like the depression-ravaged land of Herbert Hoover and Franklin Roosevelt.

**Detroit**—Mayor Young declares a "state of emergency" in this heavily black city of 25 percent unemployment, while his appointed budget director announces that city workers will face massive layoffs when their contracts expire in 1983. Now tens of thousands of laid-off auto workers' families have lost their medical benefits, the city's infant mortality rate is as high as any Central American country, and thousands of families literally face freezing to death this winter because of heat shutoffs. "Liberal" Republican Michigan governor Milliken—who has slashed \$16 million in state aid to the city—chimes in that there is indeed a "human emergency" in Detroit.

**Phoenix**—The unemployed and homeless are told to "keep moving" in no uncertain terms. A new law makes lying down in public a crime. (No "equal right" for the poor to sleep under bridges here.) Garbage is declared city property, and garbage picking is now a crime as well (some upstanding citizens have suggested spraying the refuse with poison).

**Miami**—The cops' answer to jobless black youth is to shoot them down in cold blood. But when they shot 21-year-old Nevelle Johnson in a video game room on the night of December 28, the ghetto community of Overtown exploded in justified and desperate fury.

**Buffalo**—Bethlehem Steel announces the closure of its Lackawanna, New York works—a giant complex that employed 22,000 in the 1960s. Seven thousand steel workers will lose their jobs in an area already ravaged by over 13.6 percent unemployment. But a sit-in in the plant could break the union bureaucrats' class truce and begin to turn things around for working people.

**Washington, D.C.**—Reagan proposes to tax jobless benefits to make unemployment "less attractive." And a special holiday treat for black youth: reduction of the minimum wage. Congress, eager to adjourn for Christmas, hurriedly debates a jobs bill that won't create any jobs. A court victory won by a bunch of liberals forces the Giant Food supermarket chain to donate its garbage to the poor. However, there's been one genuine victory for the working people of this Southern black city: five thousand demonstrators respond to the call of the Spartacist League-initiated Labor/Black Mobilization and run the KKK out of town on November 27.

## Class Struggle vs. “Let ’em Eat Soup”

What is to be done? Everybody’s against unemployment. The question is how to fight it. The union bureaucrats, like Fraser, say “concessions” is the answer. He sold out the Chrysler workers for a song. The bureaucrats work hand-in-glove with the Democrats like Mondale, who scream for anti-Japanese protectionism. They try to force Reagan’s racist anti-labor austerity down workers’ throats: wage freezes, billions in “concessions” to shore up company profits, mass layoffs. Concessions were supposed to save jobs. But the layoffs and plant closures continue. Now Ford’s threatening to dismantle the giant River Rouge complex near Detroit.

For the working class there is really only one choice: fight or starve. And every worker who’s been laid off knows the time to fight is while you’ve still got a job. One sitdown strike in Detroit is worth more than all the soup kitchens and relief programs you can imagine. What is needed are strike actions and factory occupations that can enlist the support of the multitude of unemployed. not only for immediate demands for relief, but for jobs for all. And that means a fight against the boom-bust capitalist system.

The question of unity of the employed and unemployed in this country is the race question. Deep rooted and vicious racial oppression ensures that blacks suffer twice the unemployment of whites. Black youth unemployment has gone over 50 percent. A whole generation has no future. Racist terror groups like the Klan and Nazis target blacks and foreigners in their scapegoat solution. A fighting labor movement must oppose the deadly growth of the KKK/Nazi terrorism with labor/black defense mobilizations and by showing that there is a class-struggle answer to the depression conditions that these race-haters feed off.

Take Detroit. Here, labor—powerful and integrated—can lead all the oppressed to fight for survival. When the teachers and Chrysler workers hit the bricks this September, critical sectors of the proletariat were out on the street with massive public support. The point was to link them up and shut down Detroit in a citywide general strike. Hundreds of auto workers should have walked the teachers picket lines. Picketline solidarity, elected strike committees could have broken the back of Mayor Young’s rollback drive. But the bureaucrats sold out the walkouts. Now thousands face death by starvation and freezing in this hellhole city. Now a sit-in at the Rouge to keep the plant open could win the heart of the ghetto masses and enlist the support of all black Detroit.

When it comes to unemployment the Democrats say “soup” and the left says “more soup.” They want less guns and more soup. But it’s not a question of reshuffling the priorities of the capitalist government. Capitalism itself is the problem. The anti-Soviet military budget represents imperialism’s inevitable drive toward war. The popular-frontist left of today pressures the Democrats to pressure Reagan for more relief programs. They’re simply using the issue of unemployment to support liberals against Reaganites.

## A Trotskyist Party, A Fighting Program

What is needed is a revolutionary party of black and white workers whose aim is a workers government that will rip the productive wealth of this country, including all the idle factories, out of the hands of the capitalist class and establish a planned economy. This is key to the liberation of all oppressed minorities. The struggle must begin now to forge such a class-struggle leadership in the working class.

**Jobs for all**—30 hours work for 40 hours pay! Sit-ins against mass layoffs and plant shutdowns! For a massive public works program with union rights and union-scale wages! Union control of hiring—special recruitment of minorities!

**Mass organization of the unemployed** under the leadership of the unions! Unlimited unconditional unemployment compensation for all jobless workers! Unlimited recall rights and union membership for laid-off workers!

**Finish the Civil War!** Fight racial and sexual discrimination! Labor/black defense against racist attacks—Stop the Klan! For the right of black armed self-defense—no to gun control! For a labor campaign throughout the South to organize the unorganized!

**International working-class solidarity!** No deportations—full citizenship rights for foreign-born workers! No to trade protectionism!

**Not a man, not a penny to the imperialist war machine!** Defend the USSR/Cuba/Poland from capitalist counterrevolution! Political revolution to oust the Stalinist bureaucrats and install workers democracy!

**Oust the labor bureaucrats—break with the Democrats, for a workers party** to fight for a workers government! Expropriate industry without compensation! For a socialist planned economy!

## Stop the KKK—Washington, D.C., November 27

### For Labor/Black Mobilization Against Racist Terror!

—Spartacist League leaflet: 25 November 1982

The Ku Klux Klan is getting out its robes and crosses and threatening to ride into Washington on November 27. What the KKK wants for blacks in Reagan's America is the lynch rope! We say: stop these hooded fascists in white sheets before it's too late!

The Klan has obtained government permits to stage their race-hate provocation in black Washington. If they make good their threat to march in D.C., it will be the first time since 1925, when the Klan held the biggest display of racist "white power" in U.S. history. A massive mobilization of labor, blacks, minorities had better be there to stop them now, and drive these racist vermin back into their holes.

The Klan say they're going to assemble near the Capitol building. They say they're going to march to a park across from the White House. They threatened to march earlier this month and they didn't show. They're afraid of the outrage of the decent people of this black city and are using a "heads they win, tails we lose" strategy. If militants mobilize against the Klan, they generally don't show up, or go off to hide in lily-white suburbs. But, brothers and sisters, if we don't mobilize against them, the Klan surely will march in Washington. If we don't stop them here and now, decent 'people will continue to pay with their lives. We want a massive counter demonstration against these terrorists **right where they say they're going to start their march.**

When the Klan endorsed Ronald Reagan, they knew what they were doing. Their racist program is being pushed from the White House: repeal voting rights, tax breaks for segregated schools, roll back busing and smash "communism" everywhere. The KKK is the naked expression of what the racists in the White House, the Congress, and city halls think and feel. The Klan carries it out in ugly word and bloody deed. Overt racism is more and more the accepted practice. Unions, the elderly, all of us are under the gun. So you don't have to be black to be miserable in Reagan's America, but it sure helps.

But the KKK better know that Washington is not Klantown. This city is filled with black residents who know exactly what the Klan is. Many families here have experienced firsthand the terror of the Southern nightriders. The memory of the lash and the noose is not forgotten. Within reach of Washington are powerful integrated unions whose members—hit hard with givebacks, union-busting, mass unemployment—know that the hooded labor-hating racists want to finish them off. But the unions can't let that happen without a fight. That is why many elected union officials are building this anti-Klan demonstration and mobilizing to stop the race-terrorists.

We don't need an impotent protest that amounts to a hat-in-hand appeal to Democratic politicians to fight Reagan reaction. We need to mobilize above all the power of labor and blacks, independently and fighting in their own interests. After all the "New Deals" and "Fair Deals" and "New Frontiers," what does it all come down to? The see-saw two-party system sometimes promises we can go up, but in this desperation economy, 'we keep going down no matter which party is in power. . .and our sons are to go off to war again, Smash this endless capitalist racket—build a workers party!

## **Klan is the Violent Arm of Reaction**

America must complete the Civil War. The Union victory became betrayal of the workers and farmers, black **and** white. The Klan arose to eliminate black political rights and bury Reconstruction, It was the violent arm of the reaction which robbed newly freed blacks and a young working class of most of their gains. Now the U.S. has grown into the imperialist world power opposing social revolution from El Salvador to Southern Africa. The KKK wants to nail America

to a cross with the nails driven through black flesh! The KKK's protectors in the White House want to extend this crucifixion throughout the world and above all to Russia, for its original sin of revolution.

The Klan is the symbol and cutting edge of racist reaction in America. If they can't get away with it here in Washington, it will whet their appetite for more racist violence. It is not a matter of free speech. Don't underestimate them! Where the KKK thinks they've got the edge, **they're killers**. Remember Greensboro, where they murdered leftists, union organizers and blacks in broad daylight, and then the government let them off scot-free. Remember Birmingham, Alabama where a Klan bomb left four black Sunday School children dead in the ruins of their church. Calling on their government to "ban the Klan" is suicidal. They didn't need a permit in Greensboro. We don't need to see blue uniforms underneath the white sheets to know that the cops, and the courts, are on the side of the Klan.

It's labor's job to lead the fight to smash Klan/Nazi race-terror. Labor and blacks have the power! Successful labor/black mobilizations have prevented the Klan and Nazis from parading in northern cities, from Detroit in November 1979 to San Francisco, April 1980; Ann Arbor, Michigan, March 1982; Chicago, June 1982. In Boston, 1,500 angry demonstrators ran the Klan out of town last month.

What we need in Washington on November 27 is a massive display of defiant power by all the enemies and would-be victims of the KKK—shipyard and dock workers from Norfolk and Newport News, Virginia; steel workers from Pittsburgh and Baltimore; government and transit workers from Washington, D.C.; blacks, Latins, Jews, Catholics, socialists, the minority youth of Washington who have been sentenced to a life of desperation.

Turn out against the Klan! Get your union moving, build contingents from your schools; organize car pools and buses to come to Washington, November 27, to stop the Klan. It's us or them.

---

The Spartacist League initiated the call for Labor/Black Mobilization to Stop the Klan in Washington, D.C., November 27 because we for one believe:

**IN D.C. NOW AND EVERYWHERE, FIGHT KLAN TERROR!**

Mobilize the power of organized labor and minorities against KKK/Nazi killers!

Sit-down strikes against mass layoffs!

Jobs for all—30 hours work for 40 hours pay!

Labor/black defense of school busing—extend it to the suburbs; free public higher education for all!

Break America from Carter's Democrats and Reagan's Republicans—for a workers party with a strong black leadership component to:

- Smash the war drive, support revolutionary struggles of working people abroad!
- Institute a massive social security program—health, pensions, full unemployment compensation at union wages!
- Take American industry away from its incompetent, corrupt owners—nationalize it under a workers government! Rebuild America on a socialist planned economy!