Inequality, Poverty and Hype in the "New Economy"

THE DOWN SIDE OF THE BOOM

Life in Occupied New York: The People Take the Streets
Elia Kazan: Snitch with an Oscar
Chicago: Showdown at Brigade House

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Three Main Points
by Bob Avakian
Chairman of the RCP, USA

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

1) The whole system we now live under is based on exploitation—here and all over the world. It is completely worthless and no basic change is revealed in this newspaper. Mainly, three things:

2) Many different groups will protest and rebel against this system. Those who protest and rebel have a burning desire to see a drastic change for the better come about until this system is overthrown.

3) Such a revolutionary struggle is possible. There is a political party (the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA) that speaks and acts for those with nothing to lose but their chains and to act to bring about a completely new and different world with the leadership, and the organizational principles to unite those who must be united and enable them to do what must be done. There is a challenge for those who look to see such an evolution, those with a burning desire to see a drastic change for the better, all those who dare to dream and act to bring about a completely new and better world. Support this Party, join this movement, spread its message and organize strength and prepare the ground for a revolutionary rising that has a world voice and a real chance of winning.

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

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As of March 14, 1999 Chairman Gonzalo (Eulalio González) has been held in isolation for

6 Years, 151 Days
In October 1992, Chairman Gonzalo—leader of the Maoist Communist Party of Peru—was sentenced to life imprisonment by a U.S.-backed military tribunal in the U.S.-backed regime in Peru. The fascist regime in Peru is holding this revolutionary leader of the Peruvian people under brutal conditions in an underground concrete dungeon at a naval base. He is being denied visits by lawyers, doctors and relatives and deprived of proper medical care and reading materials. Peru's President Fujimori has publicly threatened to execute Chairman Gonzalo and boasted of applying psychological torture on him. Fujimori changed Peru's constitution to legalize the death penalty, which could be used against Chairman Gonzalo and other revolutionary prisoners. The Peruvian government is determined to kill Chairman Gonzalo through the death penalty or by other means.

Fujimori has repeatedly claimed that Chairman Gonzalo has made a call for international support for violent acts against Peruvian police and soldiers. The Peruvian government is determined to kill Chairman Gonzalo through the death penalty or by other means. It is vital important for people in Peru and around the world to hear what Chairman Gonzalo's views are from Chairman Gonzalo himself—directly and unmeddled. This heightens the urgency of the fight to create an international political climate which compels the Peruvian government to grant access to Comrade Gonzalo by his legal representatives and other friends who can meet and talk directly with him.

Support the People's War in Peru
Support the Communist Party of Peru
Defend the Life of Chairman Gonzalo, Peru
Fight to Break the Isolation!
Life in Occupied New York:
The People Take the Streets

by Debbie Lang

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

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

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

Young people took the stage first. Sister Aamna, a Black woman in her early 20s, read a poem she wrote for Amadou Diallo. In one emotional part she counted the number of bullets fired by the cops—up to 41—and the crowd joined in. A paper banner with the names of dozens of people murdered by the NYPD was unfurled, and the names were read call-and-response style. Then the names of political prisoners were called out, among them Leonard Peltier and Mumia Abu-Jamal. Shaka Shakur spoke from the Black Panther Collective. And Andre English represented the October 22 Coalition Against Police Brutality, Repression and the Criminalization of a Generation.

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

Women came on stage with pictures of their children who had been murdered by the police, and many of them spoke. Margarita Rosario—whose son Anthony and nephew Hilvigto Vega were shot in the back—said, "There's many children whose mothers are not here today because they're not able to sustain the pain. They're not strong enough. We will be their strength. We will fight for them!" Iris Baez, whose son Anthony was choked to death: "When they murdered my son I didn't know what I was going to do. But I knew one thing, that he did not go in vain. I knew that I was going to be in for the long haul in the struggle. I knew that we had to bring his name up and every other victim that came before him and after him." Adrienne Caldonio pointed to a picture she held: "This was my son, Anibal Canequillo, Jr., who was shot January 22 in 95, shot in the back by Police Officer Marco Calderon. My son was just 21 years old when they shot him...My son had a future and they just took it away. They ripped it away like nothing."

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

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

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

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

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

Continued on page 4
...embracing the "police brutality" epidemic, not even just here in New York City but in Los Angeles, Chicago, Miami and everywhere in between and there with the badges and the guns. You got to show any respect. They see themselves as mean 41 shots, that's a lot of shots. And I don't think he saw him as a person. That's most disturbing about it." Mike wasn't physically assaulted by a cop, but he told a story of what happened when he went to the Yankees parade last year: "I went up to the cops to ask them a question. And the cop, I thought he was gonna pull a gun on me. He started yelling at me for no apparent reason. He told me to get the 't' away from him... They don't respect any race, they see themselves as higher, a lot of them." Leona Smith came with a group of her friends. Her 14-year-old brother Justin, who was beaten to death by the police in Tulsa, Oklahoma last year. She told the rally, "They have people pulling over on the side of a dirt road and getting beat to death, and that's really frightening. Just because a cop gets a shield and a gun, they think they have all the power in the world." She described her reaction to the murder of Amadou Diallo: "That blew me away because he was unarmed. How can you shoot an unarmed man?" They haven't even had their badges taken away. They gave the cops new grips. That's ridiculous... Police brutality it really has gotten out of hand, I mean it's always been out of hand—like down south, all over. We've got plans for that. But we haven't got any, we have got organized, because they only criminalize people when there is some sort of public response. Everybody be strong and the future is ours!"
by Michael Slate

On January 7, the board of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences announced that it was going to present Elia Kazan, director of On the Waterfront, Who's That Lady?, and dozens of other film and stage plays, with an honorary Oscar for his lifetime achievements. Kazan is infamous as the most prominent Hollywood figure to cooperate with the 1950's witch hunts led by Senator Joseph McCarthy and the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC). When Kazan was called to testify in 1952 he promised the government with the names of people he knew to be associated with the Communist Party USA but he was working with them in The Group Theater during the 1940s.

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

But as I began to talk with the new generation of artists resistors about the situation, I knew the only way to begin to bring home the significance of this award happening today. Sometimes you got to work hard to make things happen, sometimes the system—just working the way it does—leaves it all out for you. In mid-January, Rage Against the Machine was viciously attacked in the media and by the authorities for organizing a protest against their recent concert. It was just what the U.S. power structure needed. Kazan's performance during the HUAC hearings and afterwards helped unleash a number of other friendly witnesses and artists. That made it easier for us to bring pressure to bear and make a public effort to create a favorable atmosphere for the system's witch hunt.

Elia Kazan chose to throw himself behind a vicious campaign of political persecutions. He chose to stand with the oppressors against the people of the world. When I heard about the award to Kazan, I knew I had to find a way to bring this out in the open. In 1960, when he worked with them in The Group Theater, Kazan laid it all out for you. In mid-January, Rage Against the Machine was viciously attacked in the media and by the authorities for organizing a protest against their recent concert. It was just what the U.S. power structure needed. Kazan's performance during the HUAC hearings and afterwards helped unleash a number of other hostile witnesses and artists. That made it easier for us to bring pressure to bear and make a public effort to create a favorable atmosphere for the system's witch hunt.

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Sacramento: February 20—Hundreds of youth of all nationalities gathered on the steps of the California State Capitol at the culmination of three days of activities called "Hip Hop for Mumia Abu-Jamal," "Shouts of "Free Mumia!" mingled with hip hop rhythms and intense spoken word performances. The rally was sponsored by the "Sacramento City North Star" Chapter of the Universal Zulu Nation. There were performances by Sniktale Studio, Super Natural Turntable Artists, Kermek III, Salt N Pepe, DJ Badroc, DJ Shaktikeyz, Softful and others. The other events during "Hip Hop for Mumia" included break dancing, DJs and rap groups. These events also drew hundreds of youth and community members. There were presentations on Mumia's case.

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

A young organizer with the Universal Zulu Nation said, "We want to promote political and social awareness—most importantly hip hop culture but among all the youth. It's not about time—it's been time for the youth to get organized and start making some changes. That's what we're about." The Zulu Nation is a hip hop centered activist group that was first started in New York in 1973. The organizer first heard about Mumia through hip hop performers like X-Raided, Public Enemy and the Coup. "The injustice-making judicial system created political prisoners like Assata, Leonard, Mumia, and, back in the day, the Panthers and the MOVE organization—I could go on and on... We got to give it to the young people. We hear it in the lyrics, we read about him, but we have to make action for him. We have to do everything we can to further the struggle and hopefully take over."

An article on the Capitol rally in the Sacramento Bee newspaper suggested that "it has become fashionable to support the Abu-Jamal cause." The article also mentioned the recent major concert in New Jersey by Rage Against the Machine; a recent show in San Francisco where the hip group Black Star had the audience chanting "Free Mumia!"; and an episode of the TV drama "Homicide" in which a socialist hosts a benefit dinner at his home for Mumia. A T-shirt made for the rally featured a quote from Mumia from the essay, "The Lost Generation," in his book _Live from Death Row_.

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

Sacramento: February 20, 1999

_Hip Hop for Mumia, Sacramento, February 20._

Photo: Jay

**Hip Hop for Mumia**

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invited guests" included lots Cabrini youth for Drey's "redevelopment" scheme for charges came from a dramatic Febmaiy 22, convicted th^ could face a year in jail. These prompted the unveiling of Chicago Mttyor 1997 protest. Three hundred people dis- and fight for the House—and sec it all the way through, because we're all under fire."

They heard a broad range of speakers link projects. Some of the k^ battles going on in the stead of Cabrini Green. To the east of this projects.

"I this letter is a reminder that your clients' lease... expires March 31, 1999. On that date, the premises must be vacated... Plea- from a leaflet by the Revolutionary Communist Party (Chicago Branch)

Letter from the Chicago City authorities to the residents of 1142 N. Orleans March 31.

The Revolutionary Communist Youth Brigade (who live at 1142 N Orleans) and the RCYB 2 Defense Committee responded to this City Hall threat by calling on people to help. "Draw the line against urban cleansing." Political activists are organizing to "Rally around 1142 N. Orleans" at 3:30 p.m. on March 31.

1142 N. Orleans stands on the eastern edge of Cabrini Green. To the east of this Brigade House lies the Gold Coast, one of the city's "redevelopment" projects. To the west is Cabrini Green, one of the poorest neighborhoods in the United States. Cabrini Green has staked in the way of the bulldozers that are supposed to remove most of Cabrini Green so that the Gold Coast can expand. Many people from Cabrini, the RCYB, and supporters throughout Chicago have united over the last year to stop the demol- ition of the house, which has developed as a center of struggle against urban cleansing and police brutality. Official lies, threats and bribes have been used to try to win over the remaining residents. The authorities have been exposed as this struggle has gotten increased coverage in the local and national media. The RCYB has stepped forward to explain that Madison Square Garden civil rights leader murdered by the White Citizen's Council in 1963—lived at 1142 N Orleans while he was investigating the Mississippi lynchings of Chicago youth Emmett Till. Community activists and educators are making plans to use parts of this historic site as a combina- tion school and museum. The routine brutalizalion and repeated murders of Black youth by the police are deliberately used by the authorities to drive the people off of this coveted real estate. But the recent murder of Breean King gave new life to civil rights leaders fighting for the rights of Cabrini residents—and the Brigade House has been deeply involved in that resistance. On March 7, 60 people gathered at 1142 N Orleans for International Women's Day. They heard a broad range of speakers link the experience of Black Panther leaders. The political use of "gang contact cards" is an important sign that the police are actively targeting resistance forces among the people. Leaders from the Cabrini Green community are set to testify at the RCYB 2 trial. The RCYB has called for a press con- ference and rally at the courthouse building—1125 S. Michigan, 8:30 a.m., March 22. These two dedicated revolutionary or- ganizers we needed on the streets of the community!" The forcible action on February 22, 1997 was an example of the mass, militant, unified resistance that has a chance of defeating the system's plans. That protest made it much harder for City Hall to pretext they had "community support" and to deny that building demolitions mean intense hardships for the people. That is why the city has been determined to punish AK and Shawn for their role in that protest—and that is why it is so impor- tant to defend the RCYB 2.

The battle for 1142 N. Orleans and to free the RCYB 2 comes at a crucial time. The authorities are determined to push ahead—to destroy 1142, to attack the RCYB activists, and to carry out their plans for the destruction of public housing. This last winter revealed the hard fact that the authorities have nowhere to send the people they intend to evict. Until the year-end blizzard and cold snap, people throughout the housing projects froze and burst—creating frozen sculptures of water- falls in staircases and covering walls and landings with thick sheets of ice. Thou- sands of families suffered without heat or water. Three-month-old Terence Walker died under these harsh conditions.

The response of the authorities was to evict people and step up their plans for demolitions. 985 families were forced to evacuate. The city authorities announced that 10 more highrises will be shut down in the fall of 1999—saying that the high level of vacancy contributed to the breakdown of pipes and other facilities. Yet there are thousands of people on waiting lists for public housing, and those vacancies could be filled overnight. It suddenly became clear that the authorities are determined to drive people out of public housing—and have no per- sonal low-income housing for the people to move to.

In this winter crisis, they had to put people up in hotels and motels. They asked churches to open up their facilities—and asked residents to find space with relatives. And yet these authorities went to move 42,000 more people out of public housing! According to the Coalition to Protest Public Housing there are two families looking for every unit of low-income housing right now. For years, the Coalition has asked, "Where are all the people supposed to go?" It's clear the authorities don't have a clue—imagine the suffering the people will experience if militant resistance is not or- ganized—right now—against the official demolition plans. Help "Draw the Line" at 1142 N Orleans. The RCYB 2 must stay free. out on the street.

March 21, 1999—Revolutionary Worker—Page 7—

CHICAGO: SHOWDOWN AT BRIGADE HOUSE

"Sisters and Brothers, as we begin the new millennium we must cast away illusions and prepare to fight. The Chicago Housing Authority/Department of Housing and Ur- ban Development, the City of Chicago and their friends in land speculators and in real estate will stop at nothing to drive residents of public housing from their homes. They don't have the interests of the peo- ple of public housing at heart. They never have and never will."

A recent meeting about people getting displaced from CHA projects and other residents, tenant leaders, Coalition to Protect Public Housing activists and the Maoist revolutionaries of the RCYB. The battle for 1142 N. Orleans and to free the RCYB 2 comes at a crucial time. The authorities are determined to push ahead—to destroy 1142, to attack the RCYB activists, and to carry out their plans for the destruction of public housing.

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

 Join with and mobilize for the protest to save 1142 N Orleans, 3:30 p.m., March 31, 1999.

 Send money to help pay the many legal expenses. For more information, call Re- volution Books (773) 528-3535.

 Fax State's Attorney Dick Devine at (773) 479-5000 to demand that charges against the RCYB 2 be dropped. Fax co- pies to Revolution Books (773) 528- 3533.

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What can people do to stand with CHA residents and activists who are fighting to preserve public housing?"
Inequality, Poverty and Hype in the “New Economy”

by Raymond Lotta

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

A few days after Clinton's State of the Union address, when he reminded us of "how good things have been," he spoke of second Harvevs and the largest supplier to the country's emergency food centers. "You know," he said, "on paper, a lot of the economic numbers look good, but we're seeing a substantial rise in the demand for emergency food.

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

My inquiries took me to an economist at the Congressional Budget Office. He also shared some numbers with me. In 1994, a year after Clinton took office, those households that made out of the top 1 percent of the population and the lower 20 percent was at its highest in 1979. In 1997 this elite group increased its share of total household income to 20 percent—an astonishingly rapid rise in concentration of wealth at the very top. Some people do have reason to celebrate.

Boom Times for Them

The U.S. economy is indeed growing faster than it did in the early 1990s. America's growth is outstripping that of the other imperialist economies. Official unemployment has come down from 7.3 percent in 1993 to 4.5 percent in 1998. The federal budget balance has gone from a $300 billion deficit to a $70 billion surplus. Median family income is at its highest level since the early 1980s. The bottom 20 percent of the population in income and the bottom 10 percent of the labor force have been hit hard. In 1997 and 1998, real wages rose for low-paid workers. But the hurtful effects of cuts in welfare, food stamps, and other social programs are beginning to be felt more by those at the bottom. In 1997 and 1998, real wages rose for low-paid workers. But the hurtful effects of cuts in welfare, food stamps, and other social programs are beginning to be felt more by those at the bottom.

The best of all times? Well, as always, the real question is...for whom, and according to what criteria? The top 20 percent are doing quite well; for the top 5 percent and especially for the top 1 percent, these truly are bountiful times. But most Americans "don't have it so good." The 1990s have been years of "running to keep from falling behind" for most people.

The State of Working America, 1999-99 documents the trends. Between 1989 and 1997, wages and benefits fell 4.2 percent for all workers. At the end of 1996, and this was after five years of economic recovery, median family income was still below where it stood in 1989. (Median means that half of families had higher incomes and half of families had lower incomes.) It was not until 1997 that median family income got back to and slightly exceeded its 1989 level. But this slow recovery in income didn't happen because of wage and salary improvements. The main reason is that the average married-couple family with children was able to hold its ground has been the longer hours worked by family members—six more full-time weeks per year. (As long as we keep working longer and longer we won't be able to call it a "family economy.")

Young families, those headed by someone under the age of 25, have been especially hard-pressed. In 1997, these young families had $5000 less income to spend (in real purchasing power) than such families had in 1989 when they were starting out.

The economy is expanding and more workers are being hired. But jobs are less secure in the 1990s than they were in the 1980s and earlier. Corporate downsizing and layoffs are still the order of the day, even in a brisk economy. And almost 70 percent of workers in the U.S. economy are employed in situations that were not regular full-time jobs (Mannpower Inc. has replaced General Motors as the largest private employer in the United States). These conditions have put downward pressures on wages.

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

New jobs are less likely to offer health and pension benefits—so fewer of us are seeing doctors today than in 1989. The percentage of the labor force in unions fell rapidly in the 1980s and continued to decline in the 1990s. In 1997, these young families had $5000 less income to spend (in real purchasing power) than such families had in 1989 when they were starting out. New jobs are less likely to offer health and pension benefits—so fewer of us are seeing doctors today than in 1989. The percentage of the labor force in unions fell rapidly in the 1980s and continued to decline in the 1990s.

The bottom 20 percent of the population in income and the bottom 10 percent of the labor force have been hit hard. In 1997 and 1999, real wages rose for low-paid workers. But the hurtful effects of cuts in welfare, food stamps, and other social programs are beginning to be felt more by those at the bottom. In 1997 and 1998, real wages rose for low-paid workers. But the hurtful effects of cuts in welfare, food stamps, and other social programs are beginning to be felt more by those at the bottom.

Poverty Amidst Growth

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

The story of the past seven years of economic expansion and Clinton social policy, income inequality has continued to widen. By 1997, the gap between the income of the richest 5 percent of the population and the lower 20 percent was at its highest level since 1947.

Inequality, poverty, and hype. This is the story told in the statistics and commentary that follows. This is capitalism in its turbulence and cruelty.
The number of people locked up in federal, state, and local prisons is close to 1.8 million—an increase of 500,000 since Clinton came to office. (See Chart #3.) The United States has the largest penal system in the world. Nearly 1 of every 150 people in the United States is in prison or jail—a rate of incarceration that ranks close to the top of the world. The lock-up frenzy continues even though crime rates are falling. The prison population is mostly young and poorly educated. While Black people make up 12 percent of the U.S. population, starting in the 1990s Black people accounted for more than 50 percent of the people being sent to state and federal prisons. The United States has 1.5 to 2 percent of its potential workforce in jail.

Unemployment—Looking Behind the Official Numbers

Over the last year the government has been trumpeting the "low rate" of unemployment: 4.5 percent in 1998, down from 7.5 percent in 1993. But this statistic gives only a partial picture of joblessness and misses the problem of underemployment.

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

More generally, the official unemployment rate doesn’t reveal longer-term unemployment and “underemployment.” Not included in the unemployment statistic are those people working part-time but who want to work full-time, people who want to work but who have been discouraged from looking because they fail to find jobs. If you put these categories together, you get an “underemployment rate” of 8.9 percent in 1997—which is considerably higher than the official unemployment rate of 4.9.
High-Tech Hype: Virtual Jobs, Real Layoffs And Low Wages

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

There's a lot of hype about the employment prospects opened up by new "information technology." But jobs in computer-related fields accounted for only 4 percent of the job growth between 1992 and 1996. Look at Chart #4. It compares the numbers of people laid off from major industries between 1993-98 with the number of people employed in 1995 by the 20 "new titans" of the computer chip and software industry, like Microsoft and Intel. The total employment of those firms was close to 130,000. That compares with 721,000 working for General Motors in the same year. People losing jobs in other industries will not be able to simply upgrade to the high-tech sector. The well-paying high-tech firms are not big employers.

Manufacturing jobs that once paid middle-class wages are increasingly being replaced by retail and service jobs which pay low wages. Together, these low-wage industries accounted for 79 percent of all new jobs in 1993-97. In 1997, the Bureau of Labor Statistics forecast the fastest-growing profession with the most growth: cashier! The well-paying high-tech sector. The well-paying high-tech jobs don't pay enough to put food on the table or a roof over people's heads.

In 1997, the poverty rate (the percent of the population living in poverty) stood at 13.1 percent. To be "in poverty" means not having enough money to meet basic needs. It means living below the so-called "poverty line." Over 35 million people were poor in 1996 and 1997.

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

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

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

The robust economy of the 1990s has not been bringing about a significant reduction in poverty. Why? Low-wage workers have a very hard time finding comparable jobs.

Hunger and Homelessness

In the midst of economic growth, hunger and homelessness remain serious problems. Some of the people who suffer from hunger and homelessness have been poor for a long time. But homeless shelters and soup kitchens are also serving working poor whose jobs don't pay enough to put food on the table or a roof over people's heads.
in 4 million households are experiencing "moderate or severe hunger"—this means, for example, that adults are regularly forced to seriously cut back on what they eat so their children don't starve. An additional 24 million people live in 8 million households where people regularly skip meals or leave the table hungry because of lack of money.

In all, about 35 million people in the United States experience varying degrees of hunger.

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

"Welfare reform" is creating new problems. A study released in Wisconsin, a state "pioneering" welfare reform, found that people who moved off the welfare rolls into jobs were 25 percent more likely to say they did not have enough money for food than people still on welfare.

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

This is a major reason that emergency food providers in major cities report continued long lines and requests for food, particularly among working families and households with children. About 600,000 people in New York City now rely on emergency food. According to Second Harvest, one in 10 Americans, or an estimated 26 million people, get all or part of their food from charitable food agencies.

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

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

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

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

Deepening Inequality of Income and Wealth

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

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

What this has meant in terms of the distribution of income is this: In 1979, the lowest fifth of families received 3.4 percent of all family income, but in 1997, their share declined to 2.2 percent. In 1979, the top fifth of families received 47.2 percent of all family income. The wealthiest fifth now averages 14 times more income per family than the poorest fifth. The middle 40 percent saw their share of income fall from 33.2 percent in 1979 to 40.6 percent in 1997. In the 1990s, the income gains were greatest for the very rich: the top 1 percent of families saw their incomes grow by 10 percent.

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

But this pattern of income inequality doesn't tell the whole story. It doesn't include bank accounts, holdings of stocks, bonds, and other forms of wealth. The distribution of wealth in America is much more unequal than the distribution of income.

In 1995, the wealthiest 10 percent of households controlled 72 percent of total wealth. The top 1 percent alone controlled nearly 40 percent of total wealth. The bottom 40 percent of households had only two-tenths of a percent of wealth.

What we have been looking at here has been unequal distribution of income. This inequality stems from unequal ownership of the productive resources of society. A tiny minority of the population, the capitalist-imperialist class, controls the means of production and exploits an international class of laborers. The economy and society are structured to serve the interests of the capitalist class. Inequality and poverty are built into capitalism.

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

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

Selected References


National Coalition for the Homeless, How Many People Experience Homelessness?


Chart #6: The Rich Get Richer

The share of total household income going to the richest 5% of households, compared to the income share going to the poorest 20% of households.
Jose Solís: Independentista Railroaded in Federal Trial

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

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

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

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

This railroading of José Solís is closely tied to a larger FBI campaign to target pro-independence Puerto Rican activists in Chicago organized around the Puerto Rican Cultural Center and Clemente High School. After his arrest over a year ago, the FBI demanded that Solís become an informant and help them imprison José Lopez, executive director of Chicago’s Puerto Rican Cultural Center. When Solís refused, he was himself accused of participating in a 1992 attempted bombing—and put on trial.

Supporters of Solís and Puerto Rican independence repeatedly packed the courtroom during this trial—even though the federal authorities repeatedly harassed and threatened them. At one point a woman was ordered out of the courtroom and was roughed up by cops in the hallway. Hearing her scream, people raced to confront the U.S. marshals and were threatened with pepper spray.

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

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

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

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

Viva Puerto Rico libre! Articles available on the RW Online website www.mcs.net/~rwor
During the first half of the 20th century, the people of China waged an epic struggle to throw off oppression. It was Mao Tsetung who pointed out that three mountains weighed on the Chinese people. They were feudalism, bureaucratic-capitalism, and imperialism. Each of these mountains produced loads of sorrow and suffering. But in 1949, after more than 20 years of armed struggle led by the Chinese Communist Party and Mao Tsetung, the Chinese people overthrew these mountains. From 1949 until 1976, there was great struggle against women’s oppression and the life of women improved dramatically. Today, these three mountains of feudalism, bureaucratic-capitalism, and imperialism have returned, and so too the most horrendous oppression of women. Once again, these mountains will have to be destroyed.

When we first started work, our ideological level was not very high. Most of us were working just to get more money. Then we came to understand that our jobs were an important part of building socialism. But we didn’t really have a thorough understanding of this. During the Cultural Revolution we all studied together. We read works by Mao, especially “Serve the People.” We learned that all socialism needed was the people, and that socialism would be established only when the people had a thorough understanding of socialism. But today, the dog-eat-dog laws of capitalism are making it hard for millions of people to find jobs.

Many factories are also reluctant to hire older women, since they usually bear full responsibility for taking care of their children as well as other family members. Standing in line at an unemployment center, Su Jingqi, a 45-year-old former textile worker, told the New York Times, “At our factory everyone who was laid off was a woman. Look around you, everyone here is female. Now what can we do? We’re not young enough. We don’t have experience.” Official laws promote, in words, equal job opportunity for women. But in real life, companies openly favor men over women for many types of work. One law school graduate looking for a job said many companies thought jobs were too strenuous for women if they involved travel or work in rural towns. “It’s harder for women to find work,” she said. “When they are willing to hire a woman, they want someone who’s beautiful and capable, too.”

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

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

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

Before the revolution, women were stuck in the home and kept very isolated from the broader life and struggle that went on in the city. In the countryside there was tremendous struggle against traditional feudal traditions which made women totally subordinate to fathers, husbands and mothers-in-law.

In the cities, small “street factories” were set up to allow women to work part-time and bring their children to work where they were needed. Many of these small factories grew into larger collectively owned and run factories employing hundreds of workers and producing all kinds of goods. In Beijing, 180,000 women were involved in setting up more than 400 street factories and 7,000 street production units.

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

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

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

Mumia Abu-Jamal

On January 14, 1999, dozens of classrooms in Oakland and elsewhere devoted the day to discussing the case of Mumia Abu-Jamal. The next day, Mumia talked on several radio shows and spoke to several classes at two high schools in Oakland. The activities made national news, and articles and letters appeared daily over the Bay Area media news for weeks.

Before, during, and after the day of Mumia's activities, teachers and students of all ages who came under fire for daring to discuss the case of Mumia called for more planned school-wide assemblies and teach-ins, forcing resourceful teachers to organize courses, presentations, and teach-ins. The case came up that has to do with a lot of us, it's more as somebodoy who is sympathetic to what happened. So I'm going to take summer when it's our decision, I mean, if something proper class. That happened to me last year.

Leonard Weinglass spoke in front of the Oakland Police Department demanding the discus- sion be banned because they coincided with an annual event honoring Mumia. If we changed the names of the students and teachers, it helps protect them from reprisals from the authorities.

Not Appropriate for Oakland Schools?

One of the ways the authorities went after Mumia's classes was by saying that it was inappropriate to teach kids about Mumia when their test scores are low. Karl said he was a media studies teacher, was outraged by this. He told me that Oakland Governing Board passed a resolution that said, "One of the most exciting lessons I've had in a long time. The students got very engaged.

In Karl's media-studies class, students learned about the significance of the police shooting and search on the web just for the Bay Area's major papers—the Chronicle—top story and the San Francisco Chronicle—top story. They're trigger happy, billy-club out there who will plant drugs their own... They Just think that all the cops that are there's a lot of innocent men and women on the officer's memorial on the same day as the Mumia discussions. He said, "I believe police officer being killed than to people in the Oakland Police Department demanded the discussion be banned because they coincided with an annual event honoring Mumia. If we changed the names of the students and teachers, it helps protect them from reprisals from the authorities.

Dierspectful?

Shortly before the scheduled Oakland teach-in, an Oakland cop called Karl's class. Karl had been notified that a story in the San Francisco Chronicle said, "Of course" there should be no Mumia discussions, because the police officer was killed.

The official spokesman of the Oakland Police Department demanded that the teach-ins be cancelled. Janelle thought about how students in her class felt about the police, and wanted to try to make the students understand that there was no one who had stopped this educational process they were already engaged in whether the truth is killed and nobody gives them the same kind of confidence. It's really madcap and very, very, very cruel. I think, the content is supposed to give greater importance to this police officer... We can't kill him to that effect in their own lives...

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

Janelle said, "We weren't gonna just because they said so. We talked about Mumia. What about Mumia's kids and his wife? He can't touch nobody, he can't do nothing. An Oakland parent, who's children had discussed Mumia in an elementary school class yesterday, had heard through Oakland for the officer's memorial on the same day as the Mumia discussions. He said, "There's a lot of innocent men and women on death row, for something they didn't do. The cops are on drug charges, the teacher is out there who will plant drugs their own... They're trigger happy, billy-club happy.

Higher Learning

Karl's students compared the ABC 20/20 piece as being very biased. Karl said that after the class he also found how 20/20 had cut the interview with Leonard Weinglass to change the meaning. "20/20 said, "Well, your own forensic analyst said that it was a .38. And they have Leonard Weinglass saying, 'he did.' And then Tam Donaldson says, 'Yes, so why do you have any doubt?' And when Leonard Weinglass spoke in front of the school building, he said that in the case of that particular quote, what happened was, 'it was, in fact, only that cop who had there was another fragment that could have been a larger caliber.' And he said not that that was an excellent example, a very blatant example, of slanting by network TV."

"You're trying to make it seem like it's not a big deal, but it is. And when they talked about the connection between speaking at Bishop O'Dowd, and the controversy in the Oakland Public Schools: "Our goal in going to O'Dowd was to cover all the bases. When we heard about the Oakland Public School teach-in, we were happy. To me, it was totally unexpected. I didn't expect that big of a thing to go on in public schools at this point in the movement. We just thought how we could contribute to that, and we were in pretty good with a teacher at our old school so we did that."

Andrew said that when he and Ed spoke in classes, "One of the most frequently asked questions, one of the most basic questions, was how could this travesty of justice possibly occur? I guess a lot of people at Bishop O'Dowd have sheltered lives, so they're not really aware of a lot of the things that are going on. They're not really aware that there is a huge amount of police brutality against people of color, against lower class people in economic status. They're not aware of the way the death penalty is applied unfairly along lines of class and race and gender. So, it just came as a shock to a lot of people. It was really eye opening. And some of them want to get involved, and some of them will go back to their everyday world."
have an opinion, they at least know that it's a big deal. In some classes, a lot of people did take more information, and to me that was a good sign of interest. And one guy said he wanted our phone number to get more information, because he was planning on writing an honors paper on Mumia.

The Impact of Mumia on Youth

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

Janelle and Monica both had been thinking about how Mumia's case fits into the future for youth. Monica said that "Just looking people up, just giving people the death penalty. It don't look like it's helping anything to me, it looks like it's just getting worse. Why aren't they saying, 'Maybe our punishment is not doing a very good job,' you think about a different thing we can do? Don't they see things are just getting worse? You know you can go crazy in that jail. I already thought about what if I was in his position." Janelle added, "We've seen a whole bunch of new evidence come into light. I think they should use it, instead of just throwing it away, saying this is not good evidence like the judge was saying. If any new evidence comes to light, you should use it, and try to make a new trial. They're talking about a man's life, they've got to realize that."

Standing up for Mumia

The teachers and students who participated in Mumia activities had to deal with the risks involved, given that authorities had banned teach-ins, and tried to intimidate teachers from even discussing Mumia in class. At Karl's school, the principal forced teachers to sign statements that they would not discuss Mumia in their classrooms, and banned Leonard Weinglass from speaking. The fact that the Oakland Education Association had called for the teach-ins gave the teachers some backing, and gave Leonard Weinglass some pressure from his colleagues to defend Mumia—"He's been in jail from about the time we were born. And we never heard anything about him until now, when we're 16 years old and just now hearing about this man."

As one of the teachers who had been on the news publicly saying he would discuss Mumia in his class, Minett said how important it was to him that he and other teachers took. "It was broadcast internationally, that the Oakland teachers and students took up Mumia's case. It made a big impact. It also gave other people some backbone to think maybe they can do something like this. Then they had a big concert with 16,000 people in New Jersey for Mumia, and they tried to have that. What's happening is that this kind of thing that we did in Oakland is part of changing the atmosphere, it has made it possible for more people to say we should do something too. It's a good question, what can we do about this? But one thing is to step out ourselves and step up. Mumia was just the age of those students when he joined the Black Panther Party, and we need people stepping forward like that now."

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

"I really want to do a lot," added Monica. "I have many ideas to do some-thing about this, because I'm really upset about this. I've got a big mouth, and I will tell it."

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

The battlefield of Afghanistan offers its own unique opportunities for revolutionary struggle—and the Maoists of the young Communist Party of Afghanistan are determined to seize on the turbulent conflicts ripping apart their country to forge a force capable of offering genuine hope for an alternative to both medieval practices of the Islamic fundamentalists and the modern exploitation of the imperialists.

Persevering in People's War in Nepal

As the People's War in Nepal faces the biggest military operation in the country's history, General Secretary Prachanda of the Communist Party of Nepa (Maoist) presents an overview of the results and prospects of two years of revolutionary war. Also featured is a document from the RIM Committee explaining why a participant in the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement, the Nepal Communist Party (Mashal), has been expelled.

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