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In Defense of Communism Against Critical Pedagogy, Capitalism, and Trump

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Abstract

In this essay I challenge the anticommunism that has dominated critical pedagogy since its emergence in 1980, which coincided with imperialism's somewhat successful counter-offensive against the global communist movement. It is within the context of the absence of communism and the communist movement that paved the way for the rise of Trump and the far right more generally. The anticommunism central to progressive forms of education, from a non-capitalist perspective, represents nothing less than the crossing of class lines. After outlining the major premises this work is grounded in, situated within a common debate between Marxism and Native studies, I review key responses to anticommunist propaganda. I then provide a brief history of the Soviet Union offering concrete responses to the anticommunism that has infected those of us on the educational left, especially in North America. I then offer a short discussion of the Black Panther Party as another example of the current relevance of the communist legacy in the United States and how this legacy has been systematically under attack. The text concludes with a brief summary of some of the core principles of the Party for Socialism and Liberation (PSL) as an example of a contemporary U.S.-based Marxist-Leninist communist party endowed with the necessary analysis and organizational structure to challenge capitalism and imperialism under a Trump presidency.



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In this essay I challenge the anticommunism that has dominated critical pedagogy since its emergence in 1980, which coincided with imperialism's counter-offensive against the global communist movement. It is the absence of communism and the communist movement that paved the way for the rise of Trump and the far right more generally. The anticommunism central to progressive forms of education, from a non-capitalist perspective, represents nothing less than the crossing of class lines. After outlining the major premises this work is grounded in, situated within a common debate between Marxism and Native studies, I review key responses to anticommunist propaganda. I then provide a brief history of the Soviet Union, offering concrete responses to the anticommunism that has infected those of us on the educational left, especially in North America. I then offer a short discussion of the Black Panther Party as another example of the current relevance of the communist legacy in the United States and how this legacy has been systematically under attack. The text concludes with a brief summary of some of the core principles of the Party for Socialism and Liberation (PSL) as an example of a contemporary U.S.-based communist party endowed with the necessary analysis and organizational structure to challenge capitalism and imperialism under a Trump presidency.

Premises

The first premise of this essay is that the struggle for global communism must take as one of its primary commitments the sovereignty of all oppressed nations, including America's First Nations. Following Coulthard (2014), this struggle for sovereignty must transcend current liberal, bourgeois conceptions of mutual *recognition* that occlude the position of *refusal*—the refusal to accept settler-state hegemony/the perpetual existence of the colonial present, and the redundancy of indigeneity—embedded within the historical, indigenous demands for *recognition*.

The second premise of this piece is that the agent of communist revolution is not a fixed, homogenous subject representing a predetermined type of labor, but is the embodiment of the ongoing process of proletarianization that is a consequence of the perpetual movement and expansion of capitalist accumulation.

Coulthard (2014) argues that since Native American nations, through an on-going process of primitive accumulation, have been dispossessed of their territories (the basis of the means of production) and so most Native Americans, like all other non-capitalists, must sell their capacity to labor for a wage to survive. In this capacity, Native American workers face the same enemy as white, Black, and all other workers. However, where non-Native workers in the settler state only have their own settler state from which to build communism, Native Americans have their own indigenous national territory to recover. The potential conflict over land here (i.e. between settler state communists and indigenous nations) can only be resolved through the elimination of the common capitalist class enemy, and the necessary insurances and time to remove, through education, white chauvinism and all manner of bigotry and structurally determined inequalities between white workers and the Black, Latina/o, Asian, Arab, and Native American workers in the U.S. and beyond. As a result of the all-encompassing domination of capital, Coulthard (2014) recognizes that Marx's labor theory of value is relevant for all workers, including Native Americans. This is a major advance from Ward Churchill's (1983) position that Marxism is a foreign construct and thus out of place in any capacity in Native North America, which is explained, in part, by Coulthard's deeper engagement with Marx's (1867/1967) first volume of *Capital*.

The third premise is that there is an unmistakable division between the capitalist class and the working class that is fundamentally inherent within the internal logic of capital itself. This division cannot be reformed out of existence, it can only be maintained or transformed through militant collective action (through the party form) into qualitatively different social and economic relations. The framework offered by Lenin (1917/2015) in *The State and Revolution* is invaluable here and therefore the basis of communist parties that follow an ever-developing global class war analysis, such as the Party for Socialism and Liberation. The truce between imperialist powers forged after WWII through NATO to defeat the Soviet Union and the socialist bloc is currently unraveling as Russia is still targeted by NATO but is now capitalist. The struggle between competing US capitalist-class positions on Russia (i.e. alliance vs. provocation) is a weakness the anti-capitalist movement can exploit through the organization of the party form (PSL, 2017).

The fourth premise is that while there is a sharp line of division between labor and capital, there are important differences within the working class that serve key functions in perpetuating the existence of bourgeois society and maintaining a high rate of exploitation, suppressing the relatively higher wages of white workers. Smashing the bourgeois state and defeating the capitalist counterrevolutionaries therefore requires both a direct frontal assault on existing inequalities within the working class—which is part of an assault against imperialism—and a robust historical analysis. For example, it must be clear that after the fall of the Soviet Union and the socialist bloc, led by an anti-communist campaign and military interventions, capitalists, no longer hindered by a socialist counterweight, unleashed a more aggressive capitalism called neoliberalism. After nearly five decades of neoliberal deregulation, wealth redistribution, and the general disciplining of the working class, right wing demagoguery has risen, particularly in Europe, as some white segments of the working class are desperate for economic relief and are increasingly susceptible to racist ideology. It is within this context, coupled with an out-of-touch and corrupt Democratic party, this essay contends, that Trump rose to power.

The question this essay picks up is from Churchill (1983): how do *the rest of us* defeat our common enemy without the most privileged of *us* subverting the sovereignty and self-determination of the least privileged of *us*? The communist horizon does not nullify the sovereignty of Indigenous and other oppressed nations, but rather, is grounded within their already existing potential *to be* without the interference of an external coercive force that has to exploit human labor power to exist as such. The Marxism informing this text is therefore a Marxism informed by Marx's later developments wherein he looked to Native American nations for what they offer as an alternative to capitalism. This approach is crucial because it rejects the Eurocentrism that falsely assumes that non-European nations must pass through a universal, although specifically European, capitalist phase in order to reach the most advanced, stage of communism. Marx's ethnographic notebooks point to the tip of an evidence iceberg that some non-European nations may have worked out certain social problems long before Europeans (Malott, 2008).

Challenging Anticommunism

Jodi Dean (2012), in *The Communist Horizon*, offers important insights to further our understanding of the idea of communism not as a lost dream, but as capitalism's theoretical opposite and thus as its ever-present ontological potentiality. As the movement of the acorn is driven by its potential to negate itself by becoming an oak tree so too is capitalism driven by its simultaneously self-expansive and self-destructive, and thus contradictory, nature. However, in

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nature the gap between *what is and what can be* is far more deterministic than the gap between social formations. That is, the gap between a seed and the plant or tree it transforms into develops internally according to predetermined biological codes or genetics given sufficient external conditions including nutrients, water and light. Even though the gap between capitalism and what its internal contradictions develop into is much more opaque and open compared to a seed, for example, its internal logic, like the seed, orients its development in a definite direction. Like the tree developing out of the seed, socialism cannot emerge separate from capitalism, but only out of it dialectically (Engels, 1987).

That is, as capital is driven by the limitless quest for compounding growth, and maximizing the rate of return, the social substance of capital's expansion, human labor power, leads capital to forever seek new ways to increase the rate of exploitation of this commodity, and because it is the actual laborer who embodies this commodity, the drive of capital is to forever exploit the laborer. Without some rate of exploitation, there can be no new capital produced for the capitalist. That is, the value created by the laborer through the labor act must be higher than the amount of money laid out by the capitalist in wages.

Capitalism's many contradictions, such as the fact that it produces the appearance of freedom, but is actually dependent on enslavement, compels its development in a definite direction, but does not determine or guarantee that it will develop into its sovereign, self-determined, communist opposite. Regardless of the historical path it follows, capitalism nevertheless embodies its own communist opposite realized through a concrete, material process of self-negation (Malott & Ford, 2015). By self-negation I am referring to the negation of the self that is limited by the restrictions of national oppression, settler-state colonialism and imperialism, and the labor/capital relationship. The negation of a colonized self is therefore the affirmation of self-determination. What is suppressed is not the culture and sovereignty of traditional peoples, but the right to profit off of the labor of others, and the right of individuals to own the means of production.

Communism is the result of the manifestation of a collective desire to negate capital through the negation of the self as alienated, exploited or otherwise repressed labor, thereby ending its negative relationship with personified capital. Communism, because it already exists within the global logics of capitalism as an unrealized potential, cannot emerge separate from the system of nature that already exists, and therefore must emerge as a result of transforming the capitalist relations of production into socialist ones. Because capitalism is an all-encompassing, integrated global system, all peoples and nations will be impacted by the transformation of capitalist production, focused on exchange value, into communist relations focused on the useful effect of meeting the self-determined, sovereign needs of all oppressed nations, and of all of those who rely on a wage to survive. Following the internationally renowned Black communist Harry Haywood (1958), the potential and actual central gravitational force of revolution resides within the most oppressed and exploited segments of the globe. The explosive uprisings that have gone through waves of emergence in African American communities and within Native American nations speak to this insight in the context of the U.S. The communist-led fight back against Trump and the racist capitalist system he is a product of must place this insight at the center of tactical considerations.

The communist desire is for the world's system of nature to be governed under the logic of need and ability, rather than limitless exchange value. It is a desire for all Indigenous nations to not be obstructed in rebuilding the elements of nationhood, such as economy, land, culture, language, and the self-determination of the political apparatus. Humans must be in a position to

collectively engage the system of nature according to their own notions of need and ability. The demonization of the former Soviet Union, which critical pedagogy took as its place of departure,, represents a vulgar distortion of what this collective access has looked like in practice. In making the case for the ongoing relevance of communism I revisit the history of the Soviet Union. Because this vision is grounded in the concrete world, the potential it embodies is similarly concrete and *not* fantastic or utopian. While challenging the demonization of other workers' states from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) to Hungary is also relevant, it is beyond the scope of this essay (see Ford, 2016, 2017; Malott 2016).

Dean (2012) argues that since the fall of the Soviet Union and the socialist Bloc, much of the Left has made the mistake of turning away from communism and its seemingly paradoxical open concreteness. Rather than advancing an anti-capitalist politics that points toward the communist horizon and the sharp division it suggests, a common trend in the Left is focused on the notion of post-capitalism, which privileges the role of discourse and ideology in social reproduction. Dean, however, argues that poverty, suffering, and immiseration continue to serve as powerful levers of mobilization around the world, including here in the U.S.

The election of Trump in 2016 is certainly evidence of this as he ran on false, rhetorical promises of revitalizing the US manufacturing base (PSL, 2016). Even if Trump were to succeed in transferring manufacturing jobs to the US, the average US wage, far higher than in current centers of manufacturing (i.e. China), would be transferred to consumers, thereby leading to a huge spike in the cost of commodities and a deepening crisis of realization. If US corporations, unable to sell in their home markets, focused on exporting their products to markets in Europe, South America and Africa, for example, then they would have to compete with sellers of China's low wage produced commodities. Either way, Trump's version of *making America great again* would be devastating to the working class, the global economy, and would likely plunge the US into a war with China (Wolfe, 2016). Another factor Trump failed to address in understanding the redundancy of the US working class is the role of laborsaving technology (i.e. automation). While labor saving technology leads to the further enslavement and immiseration of workers under capitalism, in socialism it can reduce the length of the workday. Again, if communism represents humanity's ultimate liberation, challenging anti-communism and the demonization of workers' states such as the former Soviet Union is indispensable.

As alluded above, one of the more striking aspects of today's global context, for Dean, is the effect of communism's *absence*, as opposed to its *presence*. Commenting on what this absence has done to Left intellectuals in the U.S. Michael Parenti (2001) argues that they are "busy fighting the ghost of Stalin, dwelling on the tabloid reports of the 'horrors' of communism, doing fearless battle against imaginary hordes of 'doctrinaire' Marxists at home and abroad, or in some other way flashing their anti-Communist credentials and shoring up their credibility" (p. 158). Similarly, the history of what is known as critical pedagogy began in the 1980s as a conscious break from Marxist educational theory and capitalism's communist horizon, whose exact shape and logics will depend on the agency and level of class consciousness of those workers and oppressed who carry its flag forward, and expand its existence deep into the system of nature which humanity's sustenance is irreducibly connected. In other words, the success of the communist movement and the liberation of humanity from capitalism is dependent upon the existence of a party of communists armed with an accurate analysis and organizational structure.

Critical pedagogy's North American founders established their credibility in the anti-Soviet fashion described by Parenti (2001). For example, Stanley Aronowitz (1989), an early

collaborator with Henry Giroux, made his case against communism and for critical pedagogy's focus on what he considered to be the best aspects of American democracy, stating that, "...the Soviet Union is far from an egalitarian society; privilege and nepotism are rampant" (p. 23). Some years later Donaldo Macedo (1994), in his book, *Literacies of Power: What Americans are not allowed to know*, established his credentials with a surprising nod toward China's bourgeois, counter-revolutionary movement for so-called *democracy*, arguing that, "we continually violate international laws to undermine Cuba because of its communist regime while we readily go to bed with China, which is far more oppressive than Cuba, as could be seen in the Tiananmen Square mass killings." (p. 51) Continuing this anti-communist agenda nearly three decades after his initial statements Henry Giroux (2004), in his book, *The Terror of Neoliberalism*, suggests, with stunning conviction, that Soviet communism is on par with the cruelties of neoliberal capitalism and the outright genocidal fanaticism of Nazi capitalism. For example, Giroux (2004) argues that, "newer forms of authoritarianism" are "emerging under the banner of democracy" but are "taking different forms from those twentieth-century regimes of terror that marked the former Soviet Union, Nazi Germany, and fascist Italy" (p. 147). These descriptions of communism tend to mirror Dean's (2012) observation that in the United States, "...the multiplicity of historical and theoretical communisms condense into one—the USSR" (p.23). It is not that the anti-communist propaganda only acknowledged the Soviet Union, but that it stood, and stands, as the authoritarian model from which all workers' states are inevitably molded.

The purpose of the following summary of the history of the Soviet Union is not just to develop a more accurate understanding of contemporary world affairs, but is to contribute to the laying of a more solid foundation from which to build communist pedagogy (Malott & Ford, 2015). A communist pedagogy in the context of the U.S., for example, includes the subject matter required to develop a complex understanding of the creation of the current settler state in the seventeenth century after the dawn of the capitalist era had already cast its shadow over the fall of British feudalism. As capitalism's center of gravity began to shift westward from England to America, the center of proletarian revolution simultaneously shifted from the Western European revolutions of 1848 Eastward toward Russia (Marcy, 1953).

While the first workers' state did not emerge until 1917, the idea of communism predates even the work and activism of Marx and Engels. It was therefore not only the shifting global material conditions that paved the way for communism in Russia, but it was both the work of Marx and Engels, who argued that the abolition of private property should be the primary goal of communism, and the failed revolutionary movements of the nineteenth century, such as the Paris Commune of 1871, that inspired and informed Lenin and the whole of the Bolshevik Party and the mass movement for socialism. The Soviet Union similarly served as a beacon of inspiration and guidance to oppressed people the world over. As a result, the Soviet Union would also come to be an object of obsession for the world's capitalist classes, although rather than a source of admiration, it would engender an unparalleled fear and insecurity, unleashing a similarly unparalleled counter-revolutionary offensive.

The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

The metamorphosis of the USSR—the most striking social phenomenon in man's entire evolution—presents a living social panorama that is truly staggering. This is scarcely to be wondered at. It contains within its broad bosom such an abundance of contradictions, contrasts, and nuances—is so rich and variegated in content—

combining horse-drawn vehicles with jet-propelled planes—harnessing the energy of the peasant who still draws his water direct from the well, while exploring the possibilities of the mountain-moving atom—a whole country moving at break-neck speed, and yet at a snail's pace—holding out the greatest hopes for the masses, and yet dashing them to the ground every day, every hour—connected and interconnected with a thousand threads to the most distant and most barbarous past, and yet serving as a beacon light for man's future—a vast labyrinthine social complex whose every sinew and muscle is twined and intertwined with the most suffocating and stifling overgrowth of parasitic fat. Such are some of the more obvious aspects of a once isolated and struggling infant state that has now arisen to the stature of a veritable giant. (Marcy, 1950, pp. 42-43)

What Marcy offers is a window into the past, an overture into a dialectical analysis of the historical development of the Soviet Union, which offers a vibrant example of how socialism can only develop *out of*, and not *apart from*, existing conditions. Consequently, the history of the Soviet Union is a complex matter that the West has thoroughly exploited to boost its own capitalistic interests. Even Leon Trotsky (1937/1972), despite his bitter feud with Stalin, was “firmly” in support of the Soviet Union's survival noting that if it did collapse, “there would remain as an earnest of the future this indestructible fact, that thanks solely to a proletarian revolution a backward country has achieved in less than ten years successes unexampled in history” (p. 8). The successes Trotsky alludes to are mentioned below as part of the response to anti-communism.

As the center of imperialist power and finance capital had shifted from Europe to the U.S., and the center of revolutionary gravity had shifted to the East, the process of transforming a backwards, conservative, capitalist feudalism into the world's most progressive, communist workers' state cannot be disconnected from this larger context. The Soviet Union emerged from not only its own past, but from a definite position within the world stage. As Marcy and Trotsky make clear in the above passages, this monumental shift could not possibly have been easy or one-sided. Again, because new relations can only ever develop out of existing conditions, the path forged by the Russian people was riddled with complexities and contradictions. Just as the present is always pregnant with the potential to become its opposite, it also carries the DNA of the past.

This describes, in the most accurate theoretical terms, the world we confront today. It challenges the revolutionary to avoid unrealistic expectations and romantic, utopian visions of a pure, perfectly worked out social harmony gracefully arising as the sun dawns on a new day, free from all the contradictions of the capitalist past and present. Rather, the tension within the co-existence of the past, present, and future represents an unavoidable, dialectical reality that carries with it the contested curriculum of struggle. It is this complex existence that the imperialist powers exploit to feed the pages of their anti-communist propaganda campaign. It is this purpose of education that has been so consistent in its messaging and pervasive throughout the U.S. that even the Left has been unable to purge itself from, and not contribute to, anti-communist propaganda and indoctrination.

Having been educated in critical pedagogy, it has only been relatively recently that I have come to understand the errors in dismissing the Soviet Union based upon vague, decontextualized claims of *authoritarianism*. The anti-Soviet position in critical pedagogy is so taken-for-granted, so presupposed, that those of us in the field reproduce it effortlessly like a daily, ritualized routine. I wish my past work were an exception to this betrayal of the most basic norms of the scientific community, but it is not. It was not until I was invited to embark on the process of joining the Party

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for Socialism and Liberation that I began the long journey of self-reflection and de-indoctrination. *Marx, Capital, and Education: Towards a Marxist Critical Pedagogy of Becoming* (2015), co-written with Derek Ford, is the first major work I co-wrote that breaks from imperialism's anti-communist propaganda. Of course, critical pedagogues think they have advanced beyond the assumed oppressive hierarchy and dogmatism of actually existing communism, but this is a dramatic miscalculation and an example of the *crossing of class lines*.

For nearly a century, since the success of the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917, this anti-communist propaganda in the U.S. has been so intense and over-the-top that William Blum (2008), in his book on U.S. military intervention since WWII, argues that it has become America's national religion. Underscoring the severity of bourgeois opposition to communism, and the Soviet Union in particular, mounted by the global imperialist class camp, Brian Becker (2014), of the Party for Socialism and Liberation, situates it in an historical context:

Karl Marx and Frederick Engels wrote in 1848, "A specter is haunting Europe—the specter of communism." However haunting the specter of communism may have appeared to the European bourgeoisie in the mid-1800s, it would seem mild compared to the undiluted hysteria directed by all the imperialist powers and old ruling classes against the actually-existing Soviet Union throughout the 20th century.

The emergence of an actually existing socialist state, however imperfect, whose ultimate purpose was to serve the interests of the working class and vast peasantry, was extremely important to the world communist movement. From the outset, the imperialists put all the resources and military might into stamping out the spread of the infectious idea that workers and peasants could in fact defeat their oppressors and begin creating socialism. Especially within the vast areas of colonization, from China to Vietnam to South Africa, Soviet inspired youth were becoming politically engaged and were militantly building a serious international communist movement. Within such colonized regions the call for communism became synonymous with national independence from the imperialist occupiers. The working classes and oppressed of the world, through communism, experienced many important victories in China, Korea, Vietnam, Eastern Europe, Cuba, and in some African nations, achieving governments that comprised what would become known as the Socialist Bloc. Of course, being the first, the Soviet Union, from the imperialist point of view, was the center of global socialist power and therefore held it all together. While pointing out the advantages for the world's communist movement of the existence of the socialist bloc, Becker as well as Dean, note that the imperialists lumped them all together, and any shortcoming or mistake committed by any one of the socialist countries and its leadership was used as an indictment against communism in general. The most obvious example is Stalin, who came to represent the evils of communism during the so-called Cold War era. This representation of Stalin here is not *Stalin the man*, who embodied complex contradictions, but Stalin the caricature, fixed and rigid essentialized as the archetype enemy of freedom and democracy.

While the opportunism of the imperialist powers is readily apparent, the anti-communism of the Left is a more complex affair. For example, there continues to be strong debate within the communist movement regarding the legacy of Trotsky. For some socialists Trotsky represents a justified stand against the police state that emerged within the Soviet Union as a response to the external and internal bourgeois counterrevolutionary forces. In other words, there remains strong opposition to the Stalin faction of the leadership for handling the siege by imposing tight discipline on every sector of society, viewing all difference as potentially treasonous (and not just those

associated with Trotsky's Left Opposition). Another commonly cited example is the 1917 Bolshevik central committee members, the commanders of arguably the greatest achievement in the history of the working class, and almost half of them were executed under Stalin's leadership. For many communists it seems unlikely that they were all part of a vast fascist fifth column, and therefore were correctly dealt with.

However, there is a larger context here that Szymanski (1979) points to. Specifically, in the context of extreme hardship and external threat Szymanski (1979) is confident that foreign covert counter-intelligence operations worked to subvert the unity of the CPSU leading to what were most likely a number of unjustified executions, but far less than what bourgeois commentators have claimed, as discussed below. Let us consider Szymanski's (1979) own words on the matter of counter-intelligence:

It is almost certain that the intelligence services of Japan and Germany were present in the Soviet Union in the 1930s and acting very much as the C.I.A. did in Eastern Europe in the late 1940s, and how other branches of the U.S. intelligence operate (e.g. the F.B.I.'s COINTELPRO to infiltrate and subvert the American left). In the late 1940s in Eastern Europe the C.I.A. did all it could to get the Soviets and local communist parties to believe that some of their best leaders and cadres' were working with the C.I.A. This was designed to encourage divisiveness and demoralization and to eliminate some of the most effective communist leaders. (p. 207-208)

Given the extreme paranoia that existed as a result of the threat of invasion, Szymanski argues that it is not far fetched to assume that Japanese and German agents working within the Soviet Union were successful at turning the Communist Party against thousands of loyal comrades who were subsequently either executed, exiled or demoted. As if this were not bad enough, imperialist propagandists have further exploited these injustices to turn their own working classes against not only Stalin, but tragically, the communist movement itself (Churchill & Vander, 1990; Malott, 2016). Citing further evidence of foreign infiltration and divisiveness Szymanski (1979) observes that, "the purges and trials of Communists for treason which swept the Soviet Union in 1937 and 1938 were ended by 1939, never to be repeated" (p. 208).

The threat that divisiveness poses to internal stability is so great that it is not uncommon for communists to this day to oppose Trotsky for his divisive tactics. Szymanski recalls the fact that nearly the entire Communist Party leadership advocated for removing Trotsky from a position of leadership due to his factional battles with Lenin and their sense that he did not have a realistic sense of what had to be done to get through their most difficult period. For example, Trotsky believed that socialism could not be carried out in the Soviet Union until socialism had been established in more developed capitalist nations, especially Germany. However, since socialist revolution in Germany had been subverted, Trotsky's line was viewed as defeatist and unable to inspire the necessary unity between the working class and the peasantry needed to prevent the restoration of capitalism and the old ruling class.

Offering a similar analysis Harry Haywood (1978), in his text, *Black Bolshevik: Autobiography of an Afro-American Communist*, makes a point to mention the importance of the unity between the working class and the peasantry as instrumental in the Soviet Union's ability to survive the tumultuous decades after the Revolution:

The Soviet working class, under the leadership of Lenin and the Bolsheviks, had vanquished capitalism over one-sixth of the globe; shattered its economic power; expropriated the capitalists and landlords; converted the factories, railroads and

banks into public property; and was beginning to build a state-owned socialist industry. The Soviet government had begun to apply Lenin's cooperative plans in agriculture and begun to fully develop a socialist economic system. This colossal task had to be undertaken by workers in alliance with the masses of working peasantry. (Haywood, 1978)

After the October Revolution until 1921 when the Civil War had ended and the imperialist counter-revolutionists, including the U.S. military, had been expelled, the Central Committee temporarily shifted the economic policy from complete war-time Economic nationalization to relaxing the socialist economic form allowing free trade between small manufacturers and the peasantry to restore the exchange between rural and urban centers, which had been degraded during the period of crisis (between 1917 and 1921). Lenin's position was that this one-year period would allow the economic base to become restored and expanded in preparation for another socialist leap forward. Making this point, Haywood notes that, "it was a temporary retreat from the attack on all remnants of capitalism, a time for the socialist state to stabilize its base area, to gather strength for another advance."

Some communists challenge Trotsky for not supporting this position because he did not believe the rural peasantry to be sufficiently sophisticated or progressive enough to be trusted to advance the communist revolution. Haywood (1978) therefore argues that Trotsky's position against Lenin was defeatist and corrosive to the solidarity the Bolshevik program fostered between the urban proletariat and the rural peasantry, which was literally the foundation of the Soviet Union. Trotsky argued that it could only be the global industrialized proletariat that would bring forth the communist era. However, since the working class communist movements in Germany, Bulgaria, Italy, and Poland had been severely crushed by 1923, signaling a communist recession in Europe, the Soviet Union had little choice but to build socialism in the USSR until other emerging communist states could be supported.

With Lenin incapacitated in 1923 from a series of strokes, and dead by 1924, Stalin was already in a position to take over having been elected General Secretary in 1922. This was the context from which Stalin announced the dialectical strategy of Socialism in One Country—dialectical, in part, because it was informed by the world as it existed concretely in the nineteenth century, not the world confronted by Marx in the eighteenth century. However, the path Stalin chose was not the only option in terms of responding to a tireless, imperialist aggressor. For example, Cuba has usually pursued the other policy path, greater openness in communication between the masses and the Party and more robust control over the state by the grassroots in the face of extreme difficulty. There was a failed effort to massively increase sugar cane production in the early 70s, which not only didn't reach its goals but caused serious economic problems because it diverted resources from other sectors. In response the government apologized and held a series of mass consultations that resulted in the neighborhood assembly-based "People's Power" electoral system the country uses today (before that there were no elections for high public office in Cuba). That wasn't nearly as serious a crisis as the Soviet Union faced, but during the Special Period which really did lead to extreme suffering (and a consensus in world bourgeois opinion that the revolution would be imminently overthrown) they actually amended the constitution to deepen the role of local people's assemblies and increase the number of delegates they elect to the National Assembly. While this example is not provided as evidence to condemn the former Soviet Union, it is offered to remember that critique is central for advancing proletarian camp of the global class war.

While critique is important, some communists maintain that Trotsky took it too far, arguing that Stalin's position represents a departure from Marx's global conception of communism. To this day, this Trotskyist line has been one of the primary sources of Western Marxists' charges that the Soviet Union was not actually Marxist, especially after the death of Lenin. But Marx's approach was not dogmatic. Marx's dialectical method charged the revolutionary communist Party to confront the world as it actually is, and not make decisions based upon an imagined or bygone reality. One might therefore argue that one of the unfortunate legacies of Trotsky is a tendency toward utopianism. Far from advocating for Soviet isolationism the position of Lenin, Stalin, and the Central Committee understood quite well the threat of imperialism as long as it existed. Advancing this insight with a precise clarity Haywood is instructive:

Stalin's position did not mean the isolation of the Soviet Union. The danger of capitalist restoration still existed and would exist until the advent of a classless society. The Soviet people understood that they could not destroy this external danger by their own efforts, that it could only be finally destroyed as a result of a victorious revolution in at least several of the countries of the West. The triumph of socialism in the Soviet Union could not be final as long as the external danger existed. Therefore, the success of the revolutionary forces in the capitalist West was a vital concern of the Soviet people.

Haywood goes on to report that during his time in the Soviet Union when Trotsky was challenging the Central Committee and Stalin's position, Trotsky's writings were widely distributed and read by workers and peasants throughout the country. Rather than being exiled by Stalin without sufficient debate or pretense, Haywood argues it was the Soviet people themselves who had rejected Trotsky's ideas as class collaborationist and ultimately counter-revolutionary because he argued that until socialism was established in the most advanced Western centers of capitalist power, socialism could not be built in the Soviet Union. After five years of raging debate, in 1926 Trotsky unsuccessfully defended his position at the Seventh Plenum of the Executive Committee of the Communist International in the Kremlin.

While the Trotsky line tends to be a critique picked up more often by the international Left, including Marxists, and socialist Parties such as the International Socialist Organization (ISO), the caricature of Stalin as a monster and mass murderer is closely associated with capitalist propaganda. In *Blackshirts & Reds: Rational Fascism and the Overthrow of Communism* Michael Parenti (1997) investigates the evidence concerning the so-called crimes against humanity Joseph Stalin was directly responsible for. Introducing the topic Parenti reflects on how, "we have heard much about the ruthless Reds, beginning with the reign of terror and repression perpetuated during the dictatorship of Joseph Stalin (1929-1953). Estimates of those who perished under Stalin's rule—based principally on speculations by writers who never reveal how they arrive at such figures—vary wildly" (p. 77). Parenti cites six different writers whose estimates range from five million to one hundred million. If such estimates had any relation to reality, Parenti notes, the gulag system would have been the Soviet Unions' "largest enterprise" (p. 78). Having gained access to previously secret Soviet police and prison records Parenti notes that the total number of people executed between 1921 and 1953 in Soviet Union prisons was around seven hundred thousand, many of which for punishable crimes, including Nazi collaborators and traitors who facilitated imperialist invaders until their final expulsion in 1921. Offering a summary of what actually seems to have taken place Parenti notes that:

What we do know of Stalin's purges is that many victims were Communist party officials, managers, military officers, and other strategically situated individuals whom the dictator saw fit to incarcerate or liquidate. In addition, whole categories of people whom Stalin considered of unreliable loyalty—Cossacks, Crimean Tartars, and ethnic Germans—were selected for internal deportation. Though they never saw the inside of a prison or labor camp, they were subjected to noncustodial resettlement in Central Asia and Siberia. To be sure, crimes of state were committed in communist countries and many political prisoners were unjustly interned and even murdered. But the inflated numbers offered by cold-war scholars serve neither historical truth nor the cause of justice but merely help to reinforce a knee-jerk fear and loathing of those terrible Reds. (pp. 78-79)

While Parenti is not denying that mistakes were made and crimes committed, he is absolutely clear that the labor camps in the Soviet Union were not death camps with mass exterminations and gas chambers, such as in Nazi Germany. Parenti does not deny that conditions were harsh, but the vast majority of inmates, he proves, eventually returned to society after serving their terms. What is more, between twelve and thirty percent of gulag inmates had been convicted of counter-revolutionary crimes while many more were serving time for murder, rape, robbery, assault, smuggling, and other crimes punishable in any society. In any given year twenty to forty percent of inmates were released. During WWII nearly one million inmates were released to serve the Red Army's successful defeat of the Nazi war machine, which cost the Russian people twenty seven million lives. Parenti notes that more than half of all deaths that occurred in the labor camps were the result of malnutrition due to the same wartime privations that had the same effect on the Soviet people in general.

Parenti does not end his discussion here without failing to mention that, "we hear a great deal about the crimes of communism but almost nothing about its achievements" (p. 84). It is therefore important to note that:

During the years of Stalin's reign, the Soviet nation made dramatic gains in literacy, industrial wages, health care, and women's rights. These accomplishments usually go unmentioned when the Stalinist era is discussed. To say that "socialism doesn't work" is to overlook the fact that it did. (Parenti, 1997, p. 85)

Similarly, Sam Marcy (1976), noting that the class character of the Soviet Union has been a hotly debated topic since its inception, and that despite conservative turns taken by the leadership of its later years (discussed below), it always retained its workers' state class character. As such, the now former Soviet Union achieved a great deal of progress for its people. Writing before the unfortunate fall of the Soviet Union, Sam Marcy (1976) comments on its superiority compared to capitalism:

...The underlying social system of the USSR is infinitely superior to that of the most developed, the most "glorious," and the most "democratic" of the imperialist states. Whatever the drawbacks of the Soviet Union, whatever its trials and tribulations, whatever false policies have been imposed on the USSR by its leaders, it has nevertheless been able to achieve tremendous social, cultural, and material progress for the masses which no capitalist state could possibly have accomplished in the circumstances under which the USSR was originally founded and developed. (Marcy, 1976)

The success of communism and the brilliant self-determination that emerges from worker's independence is precisely why it is such a threat to the capitalist class and it explains why the imperialist powers have done and will do everything in their power, using every political, diplomatic, military, and economic means, to crush every remaining and emerging workers' state and communist movement. Further elaborating on what he identifies as the four parameters of a workers' state as developed by the Soviet Union Brian Becker (2008), founding member of the PSL, offers a concise and instructive Leninist-inspired summary:

First, the state and government were created following the smashing of the old state power of the bourgeoisie by a revolution of the workers and peasants. Second, there was public ownership of the means of production. Third, there was centralizing economic planning rather than the commodity market as the engine driving economic production—production for needs instead of private profit. Fourth, the government administered a monopoly of foreign trade, preventing world imperialism from linking up with local Russian capitalists to create a “fifth column” within Soviet society. (p. 10)

While these advances represented a major leap forward for the lives of Russian peasants and workers, in the Soviet Union's seventy four years of existence it was never able to develop past the initial stage of creating communism due to the strangulation of internal bureaucratic developments driven by the external threats of imperialists and counter-revolutionaries. Despite its own limitations and the perpetual external war waged upon it, the Soviet Union still represented a model for achieving equality and happiness capitalism could never compete with. It is precisely because communism is a superior system to capitalism that the imperialists have had to crush it violently and with extreme ideological manipulation. Again, Marcy (1976) is worth quoting here:

Indeed, the USSR is rooted in a social system superior to the capitalist system. It is our fundamental political position that, regardless of the Soviet bureaucracy, the USSR contains a new social formation, based on a historically superior mode of production, and is progressive in relation to monopoly capitalism in the same way that capitalism was a superior system in relation to feudalism, as indeed feudalism was a higher social system than slavery.

While I think Marcy (1976) is correct in his insistence that communism represents a qualitative advance from capitalism, his ontological framework in this document does not account for the existence of indigenous societies. The fact that many communist Parties have based their position on Marx's early writings that suggested that tribal societies are backward and conservative, and thus must move through a bourgeois capitalist phase before advancing to the higher communist society, have led many American Indian activists to view communism as no better than imperialism in respect to their hostility toward indigeneity (Churchill, 1983). Despite any mistakes communist states have made, from capital's perspective, the objection is not necessarily the content of the alternative, but its independence from imperialism.

What is more, imperialists also used the fact that socialist revolutions tended to occur in the poorest of countries, rather than in the imperialist countries themselves such as the United States, as evidence for why socialism will only ever offer poverty and suffering. That is, the propagandists of imperialism distorted the fact that capitalist imperialism was the cause of the poverty that led to socialist revolutions in the first place. Socialism, rather than keeping workers in poverty perpetually, offers a way for the working class to begin transcending capitalism and

abolishing the perpetual poverty and immiseration associated with capitalist exploitation. Again, communism does not mean the end of indigenous sovereignty, but rather, the affirmation of it, its re-emergence and coming to be situated in the concrete context of the world as it now exists. Of course the U.S. (and other imperialist countries), in hiding or falsifying the actual social gains made under workers' socialist states, argued that it was the wealth and abundance created by the capitalist states that allowed their workers access to resources and services unavailable in the so-called backward communist countries. What is ignored is that in the global capitalist economy the extension of opulence in the direction of the capitalist class is always accompanied by poverty and degradation in the other direction, the side of the working class and peasantry.

The collapse of the Soviet Union and other proletarian class camp's workers' states therefore was not caused by the inherent defectiveness or *authoritarianism* of communism but by the imperialist counter-revolutionary offensive. Weakened by a U.S.-Chinese alliance, the Soviet Union began to collapse, but, contrary to imperialist propaganda, its fall was orchestrated *not* by the Russian people themselves, seventy seven percent of whom supported their communist state at the time of its fall, but by the U.S. and its imperialist allies' anticommunist war they had been waging since the end of WWII. The global anticommunist repressive state apparatus has been so corrosive and all encompassing that it wound up influencing high-level members of the USSR's Communist Party to become opportunistic and counter-revolutionary.

Of course the counter-revolutionaries from within the Soviet Union (and the Eastern bloc more generally), adopting the rhetoric of *democracy* from U.S. capitalists, presented their expulsions and purges of communists from the government, media, universities, the courts and so on as "democratic reforms" (Parenti, 1997, p. 88). True to the allusions of freedom and equality within capitalism, truly democratic measures would not be able to restore capitalism in the Soviet Union due to the widespread support for communism amongst the people throughout Russia and the former republics. Repressive measures and "presidential decrees" were required to implement "market reforms" (p. 88). In classic capitalist fashion the Communist Party officials who resisted the subversion of the peoples' Soviet workers' state were labeled "hardliners" and "holdovers" dogmatically impeding progress.

Parenti notes that the suppression of communists was not just something that happened after the fall of the Soviet Union, but was part of the process leading up to it. For example, a few years after Stalin's death in 1953 Khrushchev delivered a speech where he adopted the imperialist position that Stalin was a criminal. This move has proven devastating to the legacy of the Soviet Union in the eyes of much of the global Left. Negatively impacting the Black radical tradition in the U.S., W.E.B. DuBois' support for Stalin has been dismissed since it occurred before Khrushchev's expose.

It is therefore not surprising that the end was near for the world's first dictatorship of the proletariat, the first workers' state. Consequently, according to Parenti (1997), months before the official dissolution of the Soviet Union Gorbachev announced that the "Communist Party of the USSR no longer had legal status. The Party's membership funds and buildings were confiscated. Workers were prohibited from engaging in any kind of political activities in the workplace. Six leftist newspapers were suppressed..." (p. 88). In the U.S. these moves were praised as advancing democratic reforms. Gorbachev then demanded that the Soviet Congress disband itself, claiming it was a barrier to democracy even though democratic elections and debates were already in practice. The problem with the Soviet Congress, from a counter-revolutionary perspective, was that through democratic measures, it was firmly positioned against free market reforms. What gave

Gorbachev justification for the repression of communism was what Parenti (1997) characterized as a poorly planned coup against him that fell apart before it really even materialized. The emerging Russian capitalist class was the primary opponent of the workers' state who repeatedly expressed their bewilderment at why so few Soviet workers embraced so-called democratic reforms.

It is argued that the real coup came when Boris Yeltsin "used the incident to exceed his constitutional powers and dismantle the Soviet Union itself, absorbing all its powers into his own Russian Republic." In 1993 the resistance of the Soviet people, outraged at the subversion of their workers' state, led Yeltsin to take further anticommunist steps as he, "forcibly disbanded the Russian parliament and every other elected representative body...and launched an armed attack upon the parliamentary building, killing an estimated two thousands resistors and demonstrators." For these and many other crimes Yeltsin was highly praised among the U.S. bourgeois media and politicians for defending democracy and never wavering in his support for the privatization of the former Soviet Union. Yeltsin, Parenti reports, had political rivals assassinated and what remained of the people's Communist Party suppressed. With the aid of International Monetary Fund and World Bank money and the most sophisticated U.S. electoral advisors, and a heavy-handed monopoly control over Russian television, Yeltsin was able to secure the re-election of his presidency. While Yeltsin was prepared to declare election results null if the Communist Party won, he was advised such a move would cause too much outrage and threaten the free market reforms with outright rebellion. Part of the Yeltsin campaign's rhetorical strategy was the use of fear bombarding the public with the message that a communist victory would cause civil war. The subtext here was the threat of violence that Yeltsin was clearly not afraid to employ to ensure capitalism triumphed over the peoples' desire for communism.

Perhaps one of the greatest arguments for communism can be found within what emerged in its absence. With the fall of the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc, the communist ethic that sought to "provide a better life for all citizens" vanished and was replaced with the drive "to maximize the opportunities for individuals to accumulate personal fortunes" (p. 106). The capitalist restorationists, cheered on by the Western capitalist press, immediately began re-privatizing ownership of production and dismantling the vast network of social programs that had provided a guaranteed standard of living to its people. The Eastern Bloc was quickly transformed into a series of third world countries providing capitalist investors from within the imperialist centers of capitalist wealth sources of cheap labor and all manner of economic extraction. The once vibrant trade between former communist states ground to a halt as foreign investment worked to ravage and exploit workers of former communist workers' states. With public coffers and programs obliterated and with production thrown into the global economy, production rates plummeted leading to skyrocketing unemployment and poverty (Parenti, 1997). The dramatic austerity measures further degrading Eastern Europe can best be understood within this context of capitalist restoration. With the destruction of the organized progressive left (i.e. communism) extreme right-wing tendencies have risen to power across Europe and now in the US with Trump exploiting the white working class' desperation and vulnerability.

The end of communism also brought with it a return to dramatic gender inequality in the former Soviet Union. Because the reigning caricature of the former Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc more generally portrays them as male-dominated, hyper-Masculine, rigid dictatorships, it is worth quoting Parenti (1997) at length summarizing the lost progress that had been made concerning gender equality:

The new constitution adopted in Russia eliminates provisions that guaranteed women the right to paid maternity leave, job security during pregnancy, prenatal care, and affordable daycare centers. Without the former communist stipulation that women get at least one third of the seats in any legislature, female political representation has dropped to as low as 5 percent in some countries. In all communist countries about 90 percent of women had jobs in what was a full-employment economy. Today, women compose over two-thirds of the unemployed....Instances of sexual harassment and violence against women have increased sharply...The Communist party committees that used to intervene in cases of domestic abuse no longer exist. (pp. 114-115)

The high rates of sexual abuse and gender inequality in capitalist democracies should shed new light on just how progressive the former Soviet Union actually was. For critical pedagogues interested in challenging sexist oppression a new, objective look at communism might just be in order.

While capitalist cheerleaders argued that the period of hardship after the communist fall was only temporary as it would take some time for the redistribution of wealth upwards and outwards to trickle back down and in to the working classes, it should now be clear to anyone who did not believe Marx that capitalism induces immiseration that only communist restoration will improve the lives of the Russian people. Growing inequality is one of the capitalist systems' contradictions it cannot escape, without a qualitative change from capitalist production relations to socialist ones. Shifting from an economy designed to meet peoples' needs, as highlighted in the above quote, to an economy designed to maximize accumulation, has severe implications that can only be resolved through communist restoration.

As opportunistic as they are, it comes as no surprise that when the Soviet Union fell, imperialist propagandists proclaimed the end of communism and even the end of history. This proclamation, of course, is unsubstantiated, but the impact on even the Left within imperialist nations, such as the U.S., has been devastating. As mentioned above, even critical pedagogy, for example, is not based on the most rudimentary insight that communism actually does represent the interests of the worlds' diverse working classes. The position I am taking here in this book therefore remains a controversial position within the critical pedagogy community, especially in the centers of imperialist power, such as the U.S. Whereas communism identifies the peasantry and proletarian labor base as the global subject of historical change, critical pedagogy tends to disregard the global class war in favor of a diversity of subjectivities whose equally diverse desires constitutes a democracy of possibilities the monolithic communist end point subverts and ignores.

Within bourgeois critical pedagogy, unconscious of its own indoctrination, the interests and desires of people of color are incorrectly believed to be subverted by the economism of Western communist ideology and practice. From a Marxist reading of the history of the world's communist Parties and workers' states, on the other hand, the socialist project emerges as the true representative of the expressed interests and desires of millions of the worlds' people of color. It is within a worker-controlled state that the worlds' working classes, peasants and oppressed peoples have come to see the possibility of complete emancipation. This is the dangerous realization bourgeois propagandists have dedicated themselves to preventing.

This negative, anti-communist dogma is so thoroughly saturated within every pore of foreign and domestic U.S. policy, that is, within nearly every avenue of popular media production,

and every piece of official public school curriculum, that when Paulo Freire brought the movement of radical pedagogy to North America in the early 1970s, receptive educators brought their American anti-communism to the field. Even the first real U.S. Marxist education text, *Schooling in Capitalist America*, by Bowles and Gintis (1976), reproduced capitalist imperialism's rejection of not just top-level Soviet leadership, but the workers' state (i.e. the Soviet Union) itself, while advocating for socialism in the abstract. We might understand this to be an anti-socialist socialism. This tendency exists right up to the present moment. The *democratic socialist alternative* advocated for by today's U.S. educational Marxists is based upon an incorrect assessment of actually existing socialism. The purpose of this essay is to offer a communist correction to the aforementioned error. With this spirit of solidarity in mind, lets now turn to the US and the Black Panther Party.

Black Panther Party

As politically engaged African American community college students in Oakland, California during the 1960s when American Blacks were gaining inspiration from African independence movements, Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale, searching for a path toward Black liberation in America (especially after the murder of Malcolm X in 1965), the pair drafted the Black Panther Party (BPP) for Self Defense's Ten Point Program in 1966 and organized and directed its rapid expansion during 1967. Reflecting on the strengths of Newton the revolutionary Mumia Abu-Jamal recounts that, "he was a youth of rare brilliance, who molded mass militancy into a national Black political movement that lit an age into radical incandescence" (p. 137). While it is most common to focus on the cultural influences of African freedom fights on African American radicals, including the BPP, perhaps the most significant influence was communism. However, accepting the communist influence of African freedom fighters was not something that was automatic for either Newton or the thousands of African Americans who joined the BPP and started chapters across the U.S.

For example, in her autobiography, *Assata: An Autobiography*, Assata Shakur (1987) recounts how she was raised to be suspicious of communism because of its image in the Black community as just another European imposition and also due to its demonization in U.S. society in general. In her book Shakur (1987) reflects on how her engagement with the works of African communists transformed her misperceptions. The fact that every anti-colonialist struggle in Africa from the 1950s through the 1970s was fighting for socialism offered her compelling evidence for the relevance of Marxism-Leninism.

In her discussion of the International Section of the Black Panther Party Kathleen Cleaver (1998), echoing Harry Haywood, notes that the Party understood that, "Black self-determination was not feasible under American imperialist domination" (p. 212). Cleaver (1998) notes that while the BPP's membership was exclusively Black, their message and practice was geared more toward the communist ethic of power to the people and the unification of all anti-imperialist movements and workers' states rather than on the more isolationist practice of Black nationalism and Black Power. Regarding the revolution in Algeria, which the CIA was concerned would pave the way for rise to power of communists through the National Liberation Front (NLF) (Blum, 2004), Cleaver (1998) notes that, "the Panthers admired the Algerian revolution and considered its victory a powerful example of the ability of oppressed people to attain power over their destiny" (p. 213). Black Panther Party members would be represented at the Organization of African Unity conferences hosted in Algeria and had visited and established relationships with workers' states

such as Cuba and the DPRK. The BPP therefore struggled to extend the communist movement in the U.S. which was difficult given the limitations of the CP-USA and the SWP as demonstrated by Marcy (1976).

Huey P. Newton was not only the BPP's co-founder, but he was also its revolutionary theoretician, and, as such, was continuously engaged in the process of developing the Party's tendency, the influences of which were wide-ranging, including Marxist-Leninism. Newton (1995) would eventually come to adopt what is obviously Lenin's (1917/2015) framework outlined in *The State and Revolution*. For example, Newton (1995), in a creative twist on Lenin, would argue that U.S. imperialism had negated the conditions for states to exist such as economic and territorial sovereignty. Newton (1995) therefore argued that the world consisted not of states or nations, but of imperialists, on one hand, and dominated or colonized oppressed communities on the other. From this point of view Cuba, China, the Soviet Union, and the DPRK were examples of liberated communities. Oppressed communities within the U.S. such as the Black community, from this perspective, should follow the example of liberated communities adopting their revolutionary goals adapted for the American context. The Panthers therefore argued for a unified struggle of all oppressed communities the world over aimed at destroying imperialism and the capitalist system in general and replacing it with communism. Under communism, in accordance with Lenin's model, Newton was adamant that oppressed communities would retain their right to self-determination, realized under the protection of democratic centralism dedicated to fighting the counterrevolutionaries of the capitalist class. Newton also understood that racism and all manner of bigotry would also have to be eradicated through education in order for the proletarian state to be able to wither away and for communism to be able to flourish freely.

The BPP's first campaign was the establishment of a regularized armed patrol targeting the state's Oakland Police Department due to their history of terrorizing and murdering members of the Black community, the vast majority of which represented some of the highest concentrations of unskilled, super-exploited workers. The BPP understood that the role of the police was to employ deadly force to create an intimidation-based consent to extreme exploitation. Huey Newton, who has been described as a youth of rare brilliance, at the height of his popularity, commanded the respect and commitment of the African American community across the country, leading to the establishment of BPP chapters from coast to coast.

A fundamental component of why Newton was so dangerous in the eyes of the U.S. bourgeoisie was because he understood that the global proletariat was a great chain, and each conglomeration of workers around the world can be thought of as links in the great chain. What happens to workers in England affects workers and the price of their labor in the U.S. Lenin applied this insight to unions and the role of the strike. When one shop strikes and wins victories, they affect the average price of labor within the whole branch of industry, and can also inspire workers in the same region to take similar actions, thereby affecting other branches of industry. Newton, familiar with the work and tradition of Harry Haywood, employed this concept in the U.S. to understand how racism was used to push down the price of labor amongst Black and Brown workers, and in turn, their communities, and because all workers are links in the same chain, the overall price of labor within the whole country is suppressed. From this view it makes little sense to hold on to colonial structures and pressure more privileged white workers to paternalistically support more oppressed and exploited workers as a moral act because it is far more revolutionary for more privileged workers and less privileged workers to dissolve their class differences through

revolutionary struggle as comrades. This requires an engagement with racial differences within the labor market rather than pretending they do not exist.

The anti-communism of the American Left is so deep-seated that it is uncommon in retrospective discussions of the BPP to acknowledge that they were a Party in the communist sense that stood in solidarity with workers' states. For example, as a political prisoner in the U.S., BPP leader George Jackson found inspiration in the political writings of imprisoned Palestinians in Israel (Pierce, 2015). The BPP not only was a descendant of Malcolm X, but they were also following in the communist footsteps of Harry Haywood, adopting much of his analysis and practice. They regularly sent delegations to workers' states, and routinely distributed Maoist literature at their rallies.

Perhaps the internal contradictions of the BPP were too great to overcome, as some commentators suggest. However great their errors were, however, the evidence seems to suggest that the FBI's COINTELPRO (Counter Intelligence Programs) operations played the most decisive role in the destruction and elimination of the BPP. The same can be said of the SWP and the CP-USA who had been subjected to COINTELPRO operations since the 1940s (Churchill & Vander Wall, 1990). The goal of COINTELPRO was to disrupt, discredit, and neutralize communism and the political Left in general. Churchill and Vander Wall (1990) describe this war as secret because it was. The FBI, for example, would employ agent provocateurs who would infiltrate the ranks of the BPP in order to foment internal dissent within the organization as well as provide authorities with critical intelligence that could be used against the radicals. For example, the FBI would employ convicts as undercover agents to infiltrate groups like the BPP.

William O'Neal was such a character who joined the BPP as an undercover FBI agent. O'Neal would eventually work his way up the ranks of the BPP and become Fred Hampton's personal security guard. Hampton was of interest to the FBI because he was the Chairman of the Chicago chapter of the BPP and a dynamic, influential revolutionary leader who had made great strides in fostering working class solidarity across racial lines. O'Neal seems to have drugged Hampton and provided the FBI and Chicago PD with a floor plan of Hampton's apartment making it much easier to execute his assassination, which was carried out in 1969 on December 4th at approximately 4:30 AM (Churchill & Vander Wall, 1990). Among the tactics employed by COINTELPRO operatives to neutralize the BPP nationwide included eavesdropping, sending bogus mail, "black propaganda" operations, disinformation or "gray propaganda," harassment arrests, infiltrators and agent provocateurs, "pseudo gangs," bad-jacketing, fabrication of evidence, and assassinations (Churchill & Vander Wall, 1990). While most of these tactics require explanations and examples to develop a full understanding, suffice it to say that the FBI's efforts to destroy the communist movement within America's Black working class was only limited by the creative deviancy of COINTELPRO agents.

At the first Black Radical Tradition conference at Temple University in early January 2016, Mumia Abu-Jamal, phoning in from prison to deliver a keynote presentation, argued that the FBI's secret war to exterminate and neutralize the BPP was designed to not only obliterate them, but to replace them. That is, the goal was to remove the Black community's organic leadership and replace it with a puppet leadership no different than the way the imperialist U.S. military has instituted regime changes across the globe, such as in Iraq and Afghanistan and as is the current goal for Syria. The Black bourgeois leadership class that has emerged in the U.S. might be understood as serving this purpose.

Globally, the Soviet Union, and the communist movement more generally, have suffered the same fate at the hands of the imperialist counterrevolutionaries. Whether operating within the U.S. through federal and state police agencies or outside the U.S. through the military and the CIA the physical bourgeois assault on the communist horizon has been fundamental. This imperialist thread is also another link in the chain of the global class war.

Becoming Communist

The coalescing of the revolutionary center of gravity with that of the economic center will be the great turning point in...history. The first truly revolutionary outburst on the social soil of the American continent will light the flames of a new revolutionary conflagration which is sure to envelop the entire globe. It will graphically demonstrate how "East meets West" not by the construction of new and more tortuous artificial, boundaries, but by the revolutionary destruction of all of them. It will be the supreme and ultimate alliance of the great truly progressive classes of the East and West in a final effort to accomplish their own dissolution. This in turn will terminate the first great cycle of man's development from sub-man—man—to Communist Man, and set him on the path to new and higher syntheses. (Marcy, 1950, p. 41)

What Marcy describes here began to take place in 1966 with the birth of the Black Panther Party. Rather than realizing its global revolutionary vision, its leaders were murdered, imprisoned and demonized. Despite this and other setbacks, the ultimate unification of the world's proletarian masses, united around a shared vision of communism, remains the unrealized potential of the present, capitalist moment. However, even though it is changing, the communist vision is still stigmatized as incomplete, outdated, or hopelessly Eurocentric. That is, this communist coming-to-be should not be interpreted as the violent imposition of a European conception of being forced onto non-European and indigenous subjectivities. Rather, communism offers a global economic structure where indigenous subjectivities can be reformulated after centuries of physical, biological and cultural genocide.

The communist traditions' conception of Oppressed Nations offers a more complete picture of how the sovereignty of the world's indigenous peoples would be an integral component of a socialist future. Marx's notion of each according to her ability and each according to her need offers a more philosophical approach to understanding the inclusiveness of a communist ethic. Marcy's work is crucial because he is absolutely clear that the threat of US imperialism situated in a world forever at war, makes all states dedicate such a large portion of their national productive capacity on the military to render serious efforts for socialist planning nearly impossible. For this reason, Marcy (1950) argues that the center of global capitalist economic power, which is the U.S., must develop into the center of global revolutionary gravity. Marcy therefore suggests that only through the defeat of U.S. imperialism can the unification of the global proletarian class camp be realized. This, perhaps, remains true today. Each day then, Lenin (1917/2015) grows more relevant and more urgent.

Ironically enough there is a strong tendency within the U.S. Left, and the educational Left in particular, that argues that the actual communists, communists in China, the former Soviet Union, and the DPRK, are not the *real* communists, but state capitalists betraying the spirit and intent of Marx. The arrogance of such positions is absurd, even taking into consideration the

imperfections of real existing communism. Given the anti-communist nature of U.S. society, I believe that other potential communists, people like myself who had been involved in Marxism and/or critical pedagogy for decades, might struggle with the necessary solidarity with the aforementioned communist states. This is important because members of communist parties cannot pick and choose which aspects of the Party's platform to support and defend. Party members, correctly in my view, must support and defend the *entire* platform. To clarify what a communist Party program entails I will briefly turn to the PSL as an example. The purpose here is not to provide a complete overview, but to spark the reader's interest.

A Party for Socialism and Liberation

The first two lines of *Socialism and Liberation in the United States: The Program of the PSL* (2010) provides a succinct summary of the overall purpose and vision of the PSL:

The Party for Socialism and Liberation exists to carry out the struggle for socialism inside the United States, the center of world capitalism and imperialism. The PSL stands in solidarity with our sisters and brothers around the world who are resisting capitalist exploitation and imperialist domination. (p. 3)

Toward these ends the PSL, while agitating for the difficult transition from capitalism to socialism in the U.S. and beyond, stands with all movements fighting for progressive reforms, from LGBTQ rights, the struggle to increase the minimum wage, to the re-emergence of the Black community's historic role as the van guard of the freedom struggle in the U.S., to workers' states, parties, and unions throughout the world. As a communist pedagogue, I can say with confidence that the PSL consistently not only verbalizes their support for the full emancipation of all workers and oppressed communities, but they daily and consistently fight for it through an effective Party system of organization necessary in the struggle against the extremely organized bourgeoisie.

Consequently, the PSL does not treat social class as a separate and unrelated form of oppression from racism, sexism, homophobia, xenophobia, and so on. Rejecting the analysis that treats racism, sexism and classism as separate forms of oppression, the PSL is grounded in a Marxist analysis of capitalism, that is, the process of expanding value through the exploitation of labor power, as the larger context and motivation to understand, for example, the centrality of racism to capitalism. As a result, the PSL is truly the peoples' party, a party for all workers, not just some of the workers. This is crucial since there tends to be an assumption within critical pedagogy that Marxists do not believe that race, for example, is relevant (or as relevant as class for example) for a proletarian revolution. While some Marxists might make this mistake, the PSL does not, and its organizational structure provides a pedagogical model that demands an educated membership.

The competitive drive among capitalists for progressively greater and cheaper sources of labor power, raw materials, and new markets led to a series of stages or eras identified by V.I. Lenin in his globally influential pamphlet, *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism*, and recently updated in a book by the Party for Socialism and Liberation (PSL) (2015), *Imperialism in the Twenty First Century: Updating Lenin's Theory a Century Later*. Summarizing this movement of capital Lenin argued that during Marx's time capitalists competed amongst themselves nationally in leading capitalist nations, the U.S., England, France, and Germany in particular, which led to national monopolies. The General Law of Accumulation identified by Marx (1867/1967) then led capitalist nations to face each other in competition over the dividing up of

Africa and East Asia in particular. The imperialist nations, argued Lenin, underwent significant shifts such as exporting capital rather than products of labor, which was made possible by the merging of bank capital with industrial capital giving way to financial capital, which occurred during capital's earlier monopoly phase of development. Imperialist capital was becoming a more globalized and dominating force (PSL, 2015).

Lenin emphasized how such imperialist tendencies emerged within competing capitalist nations not as the product of particular policy choices, but as a result of the internal laws of capitalist accumulation that Marx (1867/1967) repeatedly pointed out acted upon individual capitalists as an external coercive force (PSL, 2015). In fact, in every stage of the development of capital the laws of accumulation compel capitalists to act in particular kinds of savage ways or be driven out of business by their competitors. This tendency remains true today. In other words, U.S. imperialism is not the product of a group of evil Republicans and corrupted Democrats who have subverted the "democratic" process, but rather reflect the current stage in the historical development of capital, which can only be temporarily slowed down, it cannot be reformed out of capital. Only a worldwide working class revolution can transcend imperialist capitalism, and only the dictatorship of the proletariat will ensure that all remnants of counterrevolutionary capitalist forces will be crushed once and for all time. The PSL stands with China, the DPRK, Cuba, and all nations independent of imperialist control, such as Syria, as the BPP had in an earlier era, is therefore the correct position for the U.S. proletarian camp in the global class war.

However, while the PSL stands with workers' states, for bourgeois nationalist governments like the Ba'ath government in Syria the PSL defends the right to self-determination, which is a project of the whole nation and not just the Ba'athist state. Sometimes their state acts to defend national sovereignty, as in the case of the current civil war, but other times the PSL would have to be critical of it (and not in a comradely way), like when they suffocated the Lebanese revolution in 1975/76. When the left condemned British aggression, they certainly weren't defending the state that was literally waging war on the Argentine communist movement, but rather, were defending the Argentine nation's right to self-determination over the entirety of its territory. We can think about the dilemma of the Iranian communist movement when it comes to this question. They're opposing U.S. hostility towards a regime that came to power by massacring tens of thousands of their comrades – but they're defending the Iranian nation, not the Iranian state.

Once the world was divided up into colonies controlled by the imperialist nations, the only path to the ongoing expansion required by capital's laws of accumulation, beyond revolutions in production, was for nations to encroach on each others colonial territories, which Lenin correctly predicted would lead to the World Wars. After World War II the Soviet Union emerged stronger than ever giving way to a global working class socialist camp with Soviet supported socialist countries all over the world. The so-called Cold War consisted of the U.S. and its supporting countries waging a global class war on the socialist bloc. Once the Soviet Union fell, the U.S. emerged as the world's single capitalist super power targeting independent peripheral capitalist nations that had been able to survive under the protection of the socialist bloc. As argued above, the void created in communism's absence has been filled in, first, by the same savage neoliberal restructuring of the global capitalist economy contributing to its demise, and, second, by a predatory right wing racist fundamentalism preying on the desperation of the working class. Again, this is the soil from which the likes of Trump sprouted, and to which the communist movement must attend.

Today's global communist movement is therefore correctly targeting U.S. imperialism by attacking capitalism and all of its divisive and oppressive mechanisms such as homophobia, sexism, xenophobia and racialization. A communist pedagogy not grounded within this fundamental position has not yet developed political maturity, and thus stands little chance of defeating the rotten fruits (i.e. Trump) of capitalism's current stage of development.

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