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American Communists in the South

PSMLS 7/22/25



What we'll be learning today:

- Communist Party formation in the South to WWII
- Brown V Board of Education of Topeka to Civil Rights Movement
- Southern Solidarity and the Legacy of Communist Organizing in the South



Communist Party formation in the South to WWII



The Central Theme of Southern History - Herbert Aptheker

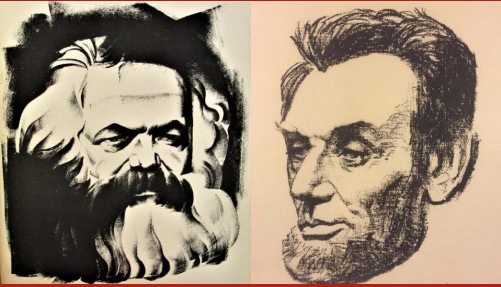
There are certainly other less tangible features of the South which help make it the South. Something of this is suggested in the lines of Stephen Vincent Benet, and poetry does this subject more justice than prose:

*But something so dim that it must be holy,
A voice, a fragrance, a taste of wine . . .
Something beyond you that you must trust.
Something so shrouded it must be great.*





The Central Theme of Southern History - Herbert Aptheker



The Marxist respects the deep reality and profound feeling that produce such lines. The Marxist does not ignore Lincoln's "mystic chords"; he, too, responds to them. The Marxist knows that the South is not all class struggle; not all the special oppression of the Afro-American people; not all a particularly virulent male supremacy; not all the rape of its resources and the intensified exploitation of its labor power by monopoly. Nor is the South the resistance to all of this that has been offered by Southern men and women, black and white.



The Central Theme of Southern History - Herbert Aptheker

The South is memory, too; of food, of country road, of fresh mornings, of night so starlit one thinks it is day. Above all, the South is people, complicated as all people are and long-suffering and courageous.





The Central Theme of Southern History - Herbert Aptheker

Further, in an overall political sense, the South, as presently dominated, is reaction's greatest single bulwark, and this it has been for generations. But it has been this not with the agreement or even the acquiescence of most of its people. Rather, it has been reduced to this by fraud and terror and chauvinism and violence, **contrary to the will of the vast majority of Southern people.**



The Central Theme of Southern History - Herbert Aptheker

The South has several times in the past been on the verge of breaking reaction's grip (and for brief periods did break that grip). It is again on the verge of this breakaway—it is at a turning point. We have in this possibility the greatest single potential of progressive reinforcement in our country. Such a release from reaction and a flowering in the South of democracy, equality, and economic progress will be the logical culmination of its stirring history and will make of this area a region of shimmering beauty, the wonder and pride of the world.



The Central Theme of Southern History - Herbert Aptheker

The movement for the democratization of the South and the liberation of the Afro-American people is a movement for the South. It is in continuation of the finest traditions of Southern history, created by its greatest heroes—from Thomas Jefferson to Gabriel Prosser, from Angelina Grimke to Frederick Douglass, from George Washington Cable to Ella Mae Wiggins, from Ida B. Wells-Barnett to Claude Williams.



Legacy of Marxists in the South- From Black Reconstruction in America W.E.B DuBois

The trade unions were willing to admit that the Negroes ought to be free sometime; but at the present, self-preservation called for their slavery; and after all, whites were a different grade of workers from blacks. Even when the Marxian ideas arrived, there was a split; the earlier representatives of the Marxian philosophy in America agreed with the older Union movement in deprecating any entanglement. with the abolition controversy. After all, abolition represented capital. The whole movement was based on mawkish sentimentality, and not on the demands of the workers, at least of the white workers. And so the early American Marxists simply gave up the idea of intruding the black worker into the socialist commonwealth at that time.



Legacy of Marxists in the South- From Black Reconstruction in America W.E.B DuBois

In all this consideration, we have so far ignored the white workers of the South and we have done this because the labor movement ignored them and the abolitionists ignored them ; and above all, they were ignored by Northern capitalists and Southern planters. They were in many respects almost a forgotten mass of men. Cairnes describes the slave South, the period just before the war:

"It resolves itself into three classes, broadly distinguished from each other, and connected by no common interest-the slaves on whom devolves all the regular industry, the slaveholders who reap all its fruits, and an idle and lawless rabble who live dispersed over vast plains in a condition little removed from absolute barbarism."



Legacy of Marxists in the South- From Black Reconstruction in America W.E.B DuBois

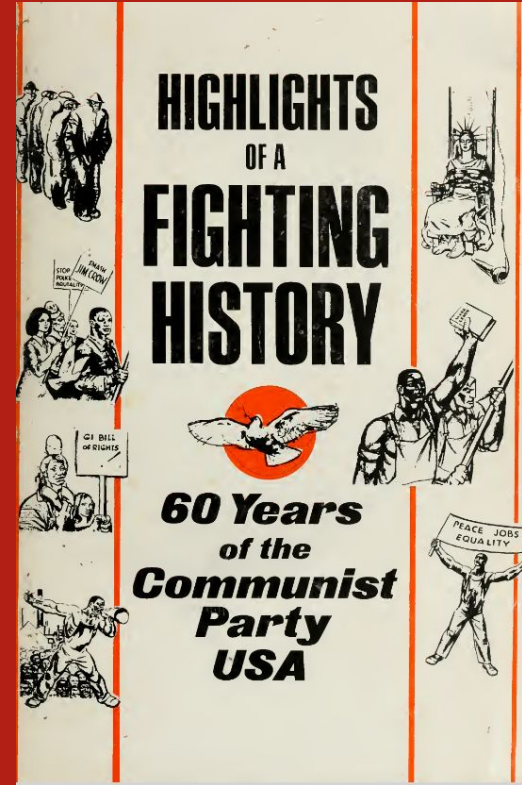
This placed the white and black labor movement in a singularly contradictory position. The alliance of the black labor movement with the Republican Party was simply the political side of an economic fact. The Republican Party had given the black man the right to vote. This right to vote he was going to use to better his economic and social position. To oppose the Republican Party, then, was to oppose his own economic enfranchisement.

Negro leaders, naturally, resented the attack made by white labor organizations on the Republican Party. Nor did they understand how far this new Southern labor government was dependent on Northern industrial reaction and capitalistic oligarchy. Northern labor was equally ignorant and did not dream that in the South the Republican Party was par excellence the party of labors



Scottsboro Boys Case

[The Scottsboro Case] had begun March 25, 1931, when nine Negro lads were dragged by a sheriff and his deputies from a 47-car freight train that was passing through Paint Rock, Alabama, on its way to Memphis. The train was crowded with youths, both white and Black, aimlessly wandering about. They were riding the freights in search of food and employment and they wandered about aimlessly in the train. There was a fight, and some white lads telegraphed ahead that they had been jumped and thrown off the train by "n[redacted]rs." At Paint Rock, a sheriff and his armed posse boarded the train and began their search for the "n[redacted]."





Scottsboro Boys Case

The doctor gave his report to the sheriff and obviously it ruled out rape in the preceding 24 hours. But for the Alabama authorities that made no difference—they came up with a full-blown charge of rape. The nine Black lads stood accused.

The second day after the arrests the sheriff tried to get the girls to say they had been raped by the youths, and both refused. They were sent back to jail, but a southern sheriff can exert a lot of pressure, and on the following day Victoria Price, the older of the two women (who had a police record) caved in. Ruby Bates, the 17-year-old, an almost illiterate mill hand, still refused to corroborate the charge. But on the fourth day she, too, succumbed to the pressure. The Roman holiday could now be staged.



Scottsboro Boys Case

On March 31, 1931, 20 indictments were handed down by a grand jury, emphasizing the charge of rape and assault. The nine boys were immediately arraigned before the court in Scottsboro. All pleaded not guilty.

The first exposure of the infamous frame-up appeared April 2, 1931, in the pages of the *Daily Worker*, which called on the people to initiate mass protests and demonstrations to save nine innocent Black youths from legal lynching. On April 4, the *Southern Worker*, published in Chattanooga, Tenn., carried a first-hand report from Scottsboro by Helen Marcy describing the lynch spirit that had been aroused around the case. The trial began on April 7, with the outcome a foregone conclusion.



Scottsboro Boys Case

And then Moon added: "This propaganda was effective in exposing the hypocrisy of American justice, but it did not gain the freedom of the boys." Nevertheless, when the NAACP left the case, the boys had been condemned to death. It was the fight waged by the ILD that saved their lives by refusing to be bound by the restraints of the narrow, legalistic arena. And it was the ILD that lifted the nine Negro lads from an ignoble grave "to a place among heroic figures." . . .

As Moon himself sums it up: "To the Communists . . . the whole campaign was much more than a defense of nine unfortunate lads. It was an attack on the system which had exploited them, fostered the poverty and ignorance in which they were reared, and finally victimized them by legal proceedings which were a mockery of justice." . . .



Scottsboro Boys Case

Thus, the Scottsboro Case had to be fought in such a manner as to save the lives of those innocent young men and at the same time expose the forces involved so clearly as to make a recurrence of Scottsboro difficult indeed.

It took seventeen years! It took all kinds of court maneuvers, all kinds of struggle outside the courts; it took tremendous sacrifices of time and energy by thousands of good people around the world—many of them Communists, many of them not Communists—to win that great battle. But at the end, not one boy was lynched. All were freed. And the South has not been quite the same ever since.





Loray Mill Strike



Photo shows the 16 workers arrested in raids on tent colony on the night of June 7, 1929, 13 of whom face the electric chair. They are: Amy Schechter, K. Y. Hendrix, F. E. Beal, C. Miller, Sophie Melvin, Wm. McGinnis, J. Harrison, R. Allen, Vera Bush, L. McLaughlin, G. Carter, K. O. Byers, Russell Knight, D. Hampton, J. P. Heffner and N. F. Gibson. The International Labor Defense is in charge of their defense.





Why did the Party decide to organize North Carolina?

- North Carolina was the 1st Southern State to be Organized by the Party.
- North Carolina was the most industrialized state in the South after WWI. In the years leading up to the Loray Mill Strike of 1929 there were several strike actions taken by southern workers.
- 1921 Cannon Mill locations in Charlotte, Concord, and Kannapolis Durham 1926 @ Marvin Carr Silk Mill. 1943 Winston-Salem strike at R.J. Reynolds and the creation of Food, Tobacco, & Agricultural Workers Local 22 (C.I.O.)

Following World War I the need for reform briefly dissipated as North Carolina appeared prosperous. It was the leading industrial center in the South, ranking first in number of factories, capital investment, and industrial production. Carolina workers were 16 percent of the region's labor force, manufactured half the nation's cotton yarn and cigarettes, and produced two-thirds of the chewing tobacco. A dimmer reality, however, lay hidden by these impressive statistics. North Carolina ranked forty-fifth nationwide in per capita income and only ninth in the South. As late as 1930, 75 percent of the state's population remained rural, and no city had more than a hundred thousand inhabitants. More problematic was the existence of a "progressive plutocracy." As described by political scientist Valdimer O. Key in his seminal work *Southern Politics in State and Nation*, an elite, white, Democratic clique dominated and ensured that the economic benefits of the state's progressivism facilitated their control. Paternalistic mill villages, Jim Crow, a restrictive franchise, and limited educational opportunities provided wealth and power for the elite but misery for the working poor.³

The History of the North Carolina
Communist Party by Gregory S. Taylor



The Strike

- The Loray Mill Strike was a 5.5 month long strike beginning on April 1st, 1929
- 1800 textile mill workers walked out of work
- Led by CPUSA member Fred Beal and the Communist Party/ Trade Union Unity League founded National Textile Workers Union (NTWU)
- The strike demanded an end to the speed-up conditions, 40 hour work week, and higher wages





From Gastonia: Citadel of Class Struggle in the South by William F. Dunne

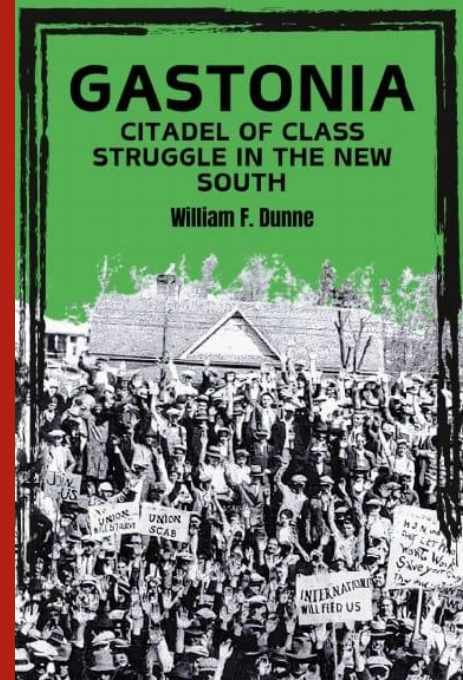
The Manville-Jenckes Co. took the lead in establishing the “efficiency system”—the speed-up or, as it is known in the southern textile mills, the “stretch-out.” A correspondent of the Baltimore Sun, who visited the Gastonia district and conducted an investigation, described the stretch-out process as follows:

“The method was to give a man who had been tending two machines four machines. The man whose work was increased would be given a few cents

an hour extra and dollars would be saved by the discharge of other men. Piecework was also introduced and clock machines for measuring the output of each machine or operative were installed.

“The employees contended that they had no way of telling what they actually had done and had to take what the company chose to give them. They say that at the same time work was doubled the price for piecework was reduced. The company took full advantage of the North Carolina law, which permits 60 hours labor a week, and ran its day shift from 6 in the morning to 6 in the evening, with one hour off at noon, and its night force from 6 p. m. to 5:20 a. m., with the employees getting lunch by relieving one another, or not at all.”

In other words, what was taking place in the Loray mill and other mills in the Gastonia area was the *rationalization process*—more work by less workers—more machines, less men—wage cuts, unemployment. Capitalistic rationalization—placing the burden of ever-sharpening competition for world markets, with its growing threat of a new imperialistic war, upon the backs of the working class.



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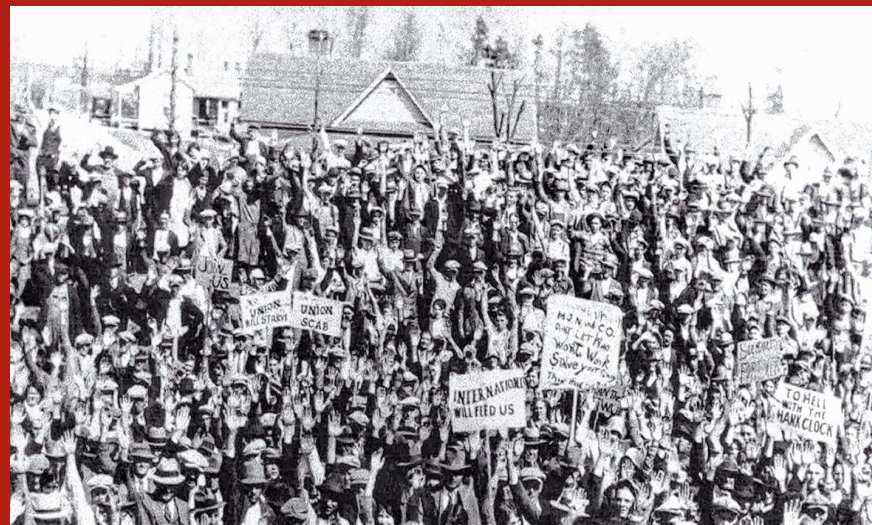


From Gastonia: Citadel of Class Struggle in the South by William F. Dunne

Just as the Haymarket case in Chicago in 1886 symbolized the struggle for the eight-hour day and the emergence of the proletariat in its classic form from the American social structure, so does the Gastonia case symbolize the emergence of the Southern working class as an integral part of the American proletariat.

But the struggle centering around the defense of these 13 workers in the shadow of the electric chair is more than a symbol—it is a dynamic factor molding and shaping the development of the class struggle, not only in the South, but in all America. Around the defense of these workers surge the tides of mighty social forces. The ranks of the Southern proletariat are forming fast and this brings the masses into conflict on issues old as the proletariat itself, but hidden until now in the confusion that has accompanied the development of a modern capitalist system on the base of the old semi-feudal traditions and an agricultural economy.

The right of workers to organize, to strike, to picket, to defend their union, to defend their families and themselves from the armed attacks of the agents of their class enemies—these burning class issues have thrust themselves through the crust of Bourbon prejudices like a giant's fist.





Discussion



Communists and the Civil Rights Struggle in the South Post-WWII



We Charge Genocide: The 1951 Black Lives Matter Campaign

In 1951, the Civil Rights Congress (affiliated with the Communist Party) engaged in a campaign to hold the United States accountable for genocide against African Americans. A massive petition (over 200 pages) was delivered to the United Nations in Paris in December 1951. The petition sought to demonstrate that the government of the United States was in violation of the U.N. Genocide Convention. The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide had been adopted in 1948 in the aftermath of the Holocaust. The petition entitled, *We Charge Genocide: The Historic Petition to the United Nations for Relief from a Crime of The United States against the Negro People*, is as relevant today as it was in its own time. *We Charge Genocide* was produced by William Patterson and the Civil Rights Congress, charged that under the legal rubric laid out by the United Nations, the United States, which failed to enforce its own Constitution, must be punished under international law for its genocidal acts against African Americans.



William L. Patterson, executive director of the Civil Rights Congress



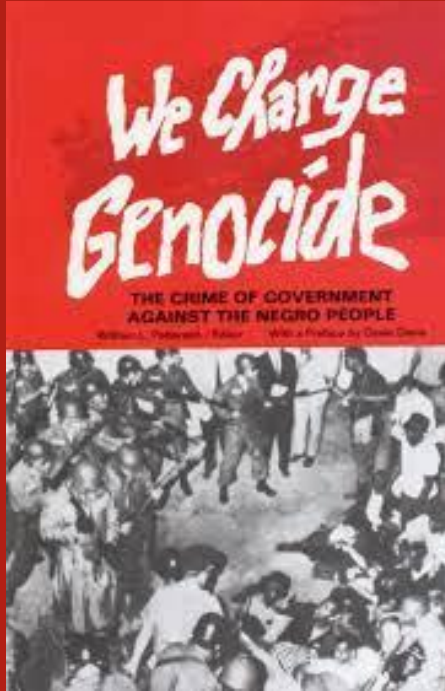
The relationship Between Hitler's crimes and America's Crimes

In his Introduction to the petition, Patterson emphasized the relationship between Hitler's crimes against the Jews and America's crimes against African Americans. "Out of the inhuman Black ghettos of American cities, out of the cotton plantations of the South, comes this record of mass slayings on the basis of race, of lives deliberately warped and distorted by the willful creation of conditions making for premature death, poverty and disease. It is a record that calls aloud for condemnation, for an end to these terrible injustices that constitute a daily and ever-increasing violation of the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide."

"Once the classic method of lynching was the rope. Now it is the policeman's bullet. To many an American the police are the government, certainly its most visible representative. We submit that the evidence suggests that the killing of Negroes has become police policy in the United States..." (pp.8-9)



A “Dangerous” Document



We Charge Genocide can still be purchased widely as a re-print

We Charge Genocide documented 152 recent killings, and 344 other crimes of violence against African Americans and other human rights abuses committed in the United States against its own citizens from 1945-1951. Ninety-four individuals signed the petition. William Patterson flew to Paris in 1951 to personally deliver it to members of the United Nations Committee on Human Rights. The petition received favorable publicity overseas but was denounced in the United States and disavowed by other civil rights groups. When he returned to the U.S., Patterson had his passport revoked by the State Department and was banned from further travel abroad. Patterson was a Communist as were many other signatories to the petition and in the fierce Cold War climate of 1951 We Charge Genocide was considered a dangerous document.



The Beginning of Progress

Brown v. Board of Education (1954) is the case that outlawed school segregation and largely overturned Plessy v. Ferguson's (1896) "separate but equal" precedent. In this case, the Court found that school segregation was unconstitutional under the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment of the Constitution. The decision was the turning point in the country's struggle for equal protection under the law for all of its citizens with particular application to education. It also gave encouragement to the Civil Rights Movement. Brown's impact on segregation, however, was neither immediate in 1954 nor has it ended segregation. The struggle continues today. Brown clearly stated that "in the field of public education, 'separate but equal' has no place," but gave no details about how to implement this. In practice, schools still had de facto segregation, including those in the North that legally desegregated schools long before Brown.



The Beginning of Progress

The decade following the Court's unanimous opinion in *Brown* was filled with resistance. States in the South avoided implementation, and varying degrees of presidential support weakened its impact. Thus, *Brown v. Board of Education* did not immediately mark the end of school desegregation, but rather marked the beginning of progress both at the state and national levels. *Brown* was one of the first federal actions to target racial segregation since the end of Reconstruction, but it would take executive, legislative, and civic action to create the change that the decision sought to achieve.



Segregationist protesters surround Elizabeth Eckford, one of nine Black students to integrate Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas, 1957.



Civil Rights After Brown v. Board

Brown was one of the first federal actions to target racial segregation since the end of Reconstruction, but it would take executive, legislative, and civic action to create the change that the decision sought to achieve. The ineffectiveness of the Brown decisions contributed to the Civil Rights Movement's use of direct action tactics in the 1960s. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. believed that lawsuits were not the right strategy for the movement, stating that “whenever it is possible, we want to avoid court cases in the integration struggle.” Similarly, the major organizations of the Civil Rights Movement all rejected using lawsuits to create social change. Instead, Civil Rights activists used peaceful protest methods, such as marches, sit-ins and Freedom Rides.



Members of the Washington Freedom Riders Committee



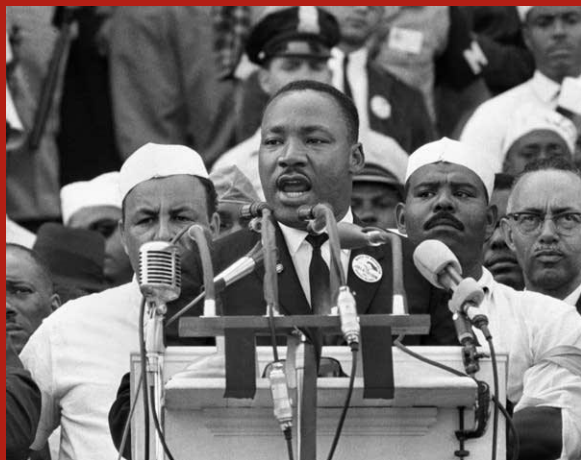
Why the FBI Saw Martin Luther King Jr. as a Communist Threat

In early 1962, Attorney General Robert Kennedy approved a request from FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover to install wiretaps on the home and office of a New York City-based lawyer named Stanley David Levison. According to FBI informants, Levison had been an influential member of the Communist Party of the United States of America (CPUSA) as late as 1956. They believed he was now wielding influence in a different way—as a top adviser to the nation’s most prominent civil rights leader, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Because the CPUSA had supported greater civil rights for Black Americans as far back as the 1930s, Hoover was not alone in viewing the emerging civil rights movement of the 1950s as susceptible to communist influence. The FBI first took notice of King in 1955, when the young minister played a leading role in the Montgomery bus boycott. King and Levison met in 1956 through Bayard Rustin, another civil rights leader. Levinson ultimately became one of King’s closest advisers, helping the movement with fundraising, ghostwriting speeches and more, including editing and securing a publishing deal for King’s first book, *Stride Toward Freedom*.



Production for the Whole of the People

As King biographer David Garrow wrote in his 1981 book, *The FBI and Martin Luther King Jr.*, valued informants provided the FBI with credible reports about Levison's role as a top CPUSA financier from the mid-1940s to 1956. Though Levison reportedly disappeared from party affairs around the time he met King, Hoover remained convinced he was still involved. His arguments were enough to convince Robert Kennedy to authorize wiretapping Levison's home and office within weeks of learning of his connection with King.



(Left) MLK Jr.
Speaking at the
March on
Washington



(Right) Stanley
Levison was
involved with the
CPUSA in the
1940's



Angela Davis: Changing the Things We Cannot Accept

Davis attended Carrie A. Tuggle School, a segregated black elementary school, and later, Parker Annex, a middle-school branch of Parker High School in Birmingham. During this time, Davis's mother, Sallye Bell Davis, was a national officer and leading organizer of the Southern Negro Youth Congress, an organization influenced by the Communist Party aimed at building alliances among African Americans in the South. Davis grew up surrounded by communist organizers and thinkers, who significantly influenced her intellectual development. Davis was involved in her church youth group as a child and attended Sunday school regularly. As a Girl Scout, she marched and picketed to protest racial segregation in Birmingham.

By her junior year of high school, Davis had been accepted by an American Friends Service Committee (Quaker) program that placed black students from the South in integrated schools in the North. She chose Elisabeth Irwin High School in Greenwich Village. There she was recruited by a communist youth group, Advance.



A Communist and A Black Panther



A Photo of Angela Davis

Beginning in 1969, Davis was an acting assistant professor in the philosophy department at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). At that time she was known as a radical feminist and activist, a member of the Communist Party USA, and an affiliate of the Los Angeles chapter of the Black Panther Party. Davis had previously joined the Communist Party in 1968 and had become a member of the Black Panther Party, working with a branch of the Black Panther Party in Los Angeles where she directed political education. When Black Panther Party leadership determined that party members could not also be affiliated with other parties, Davis retained her Communist Party membership although continued to work with the Black Panther Party.



The "Free Angela Davis" campaign

Angela Davis is perhaps most famous for her involvement with the Soledad brothers, who were accused of killing a prison guard. During George Jackson's trial in August 1970, an escape attempt was made at gunpoint and several people were killed. Davis was accused of taking part in the event and was charged with murder. Almost immediately a groundswell of support developed in favor of Davis' and Magee's release. Davis in particular, received widespread national and international support from the black community, liberals and the progressive left. The Communist Party mounted a major political campaign and held rallies in the United States and abroad, published articles, pamphlets and posters, issued petitions, distributed postcards, and requested that the public mail cards and letters on Davis' behalf. The National Council of Black Lawyers offered Davis assistance with her trial and the Presbyterian Church gave the Davis Defense Fund \$10,000. A white farmer from Fresno County who sympathized with Davis gave her the money she needed for bail, and on February 23, 1972, five days before her trial, Davis was released on \$102,000 bail after serving seventeen months in jail.



The NAARPR

In a December 1972 report to the CPUSA's Central Committee, Charlene Mitchell outlined her experience as leader of the international campaign to free Davis. She told her comrades, "The major lesson we learned was that the legal and mass defense of political prisoners is an inseparable entity; that you cannot free a political prisoner in the courtroom alone, and you cannot, without a good, political legal defense in the courtroom, make a mass defense," or create a mass movement. Importantly, she added, "we must discuss the role our Party can play" in forming a national defense organization, the genesis of which would come from the roughly 200 local Free Angela Davis Committees. Mitchell outlined a proposal for building a national defense organization, arguing "that it is very possible for us to be the leadership" of such an organization "and for that leadership to be completely accepted."



A Photo of Charlene Mitchell



A National Apparatus to Organize Resistance

The call for the founding conference of what became the NAARPR proclaimed: “[F]orces of racism and repression can be defeated. We know that victory can be won. We can free political prisoners. We can free victims of racist and political repression. We can stop the increase of police aggression and the unbridled terrorism which pervades the prisons. We can only succeed in turning the tide of repression through a united, nationally coordinated effort...The repression of this period is calculated, organized and systematic. In its center is the seed of fascism, which, if allowed to sprout, would strangle us all. To successfully confront and bring a halt to this systematic, nationally organized repression, we need a national apparatus to organize our resistance.”

Of course, this was a sentiment the CPUSA – as well as the broad array of progressive forces then coalescing around Davis – agreed with. Over 800 civil rights leaders and organizers attended the NAARPR’s founding Conference in Chicago.



Continuing the Fight

The NAARPR continued to defend political prisoners throughout the 1970s and 1980's, participating in a number of civil rights cases, and remains active to this day. The last NAARPR conference was held in 2021 during which Angela Davis gave the following statement:

“When we initially created the Alliance, we saw the era of the 1970s as unprecedented in the reach of its repression.... At that time...we clearly understood the interdependency of racist repression and political repression. Today, we have an even deeper appreciation of the centrality of structural racism and the violence it spawns, and the ways in which racism continually produces and extends and exacerbates crises in our society. “



The NAARPR in its Modern Incarnation



Discussion



Education & Cultural Development



Highlander Folk School

- The Highlander Folk School was a “Popular Education” school in Monteagle, Tennessee
- Focused on labor organizing and Civil Rights in the South.
- The CPUSA played a strong role in the school with famous CPUSA members and fellow travelers such as Abner Berry, Aubrey Williams, James Dombrowski, Pete Seeger, and Rosa Parks teaching at the school





Highlander Folk School

Highlander Folk School—founded at Monteagle in 1932—has concluded a workshop for community leaders' study of areas where transitions have been made; "economics and geography of discrimination"; history of segregation; "moral and mental limitations imposed on those who discriminate and who are discriminated against"; human-relations progress in the South during the past year; "problems of tenures in integrated faculties," and state officials' attitudes toward the decision. At Highlander, a 200-acre Cumberland Mountain farm which supplies its own food, Negro and white students share sleeping quarters in the main farmhouse or in cabins in the woods.

Fisk University opened at Nashville June 28 its 11th annual "Institute of Race Relations" to go through July 10. The institute invited lecturers to talk on the general topic of "Meeting the Challenge of Integration."





Highlander Folk School (From Daily Worker November 1932)

U. S. Writers League Ends Summer Session in South

A successful two weeks session for student writers held under the auspices of the League of American Writers, a nationally known organization with headquarters in New York City, at the Highlander Folk School at Monteagle, Tennessee, has just been concluded with a registration of students from many states in the South. This Writing Session was held in recognition of the deep interest of writers throughout the country in the modern literary development of the South and is in line with the aims of the League: "To aid young literary talent," a practical step in this direction is the Writers' School which the League conducts in New York City for student writers. This Session in Tennessee is the first effort of the League to bring to the young writers of the South, practical guidance in problems of craftsmanship. The school was conducted on a laboratory workshop basis with less emphasis on art for art's sake and more on the fundamental relations of modern literature to the world today.

Lillian Barnard Gilkes, Chairman of the Writers' School in New York City, and herself a Southerner, was the chairman of the Southern Session. Included among the staff were, Myra Page of Virginia, who taught the class in Reportage; Barrie Stavis of New York, who conducted the Playwriting course; Leo Grulow of California, who taught Journalism and Ruth Lechlitrner of Indiana, who taught the class in the Technique of Verse Writing.

In addition to the regular faculty, guest lecturers were invited to speak to the students. Frieda, Meredith Deitz, Editor of the Southern Literary Messenger, talked to the students about the "Old" Southern Literary Messenger, and told of her experiences in reviving the magazine. She gave a brief survey of its present aims and editorial policies. This meeting was attended by a number of Chattanooga newspapermen and women, as well as by other visitors from the community at Monteagle.



Famous figures such as MLK Jr. and Rosa Parks were students and teachers at the school.



Southern Worker

SOUTHERN WORKER

Issued Weekly by Communist Party of U. S. A.

BIRMINGHAM, ALA. August 16, 1930

The *Southern Worker* was a CPUSA newspaper founded in 1930. It focused on building up the Party and black membership which was acknowledged by General Secretary Earl Browder as being a shortcoming of the Party.



Southern Worker

What Do We Stand For?

This is the first number of the Southern Worker, which is to be published regularly every week by the Communist Party of the U. S. A.

The Southern Worker is the Communist paper for the South.

It is being published because the Southern workers and farmers need it and want it. The Southern Worker is the voice of the Negro and white workers and farmers of the South crying in united protest against the state of starvation, suffering and persecution to which they have been subjected by the white ruling class.

This is the first really workers' paper ever published below the Mason and Dixon line. It is the first Communist publication ever issued in the South. As such it will carry the Communist program to the white and black workers and farmers, pointing out the path to struggle, offering the militant and understanding leadership of the Communist party to the millions of Southern toilers.

The Southern Worker is neither a "white" paper, nor a "Negro" paper. It is a paper of and for both the white and black workers and farmers. It recognizes only one division, the bosses against the workers and the workers against the bosses. In this class struggle the Southern Worker stands always, without exception, unflinchingly, for the workers. It is a workers' paper.

While fighting constantly for all the immediate demands of the workers and farmers, fighting for better conditions, we realize that the only way the workers can fully obtain their demands is through a proletarian revolution. Only by following the example of the Russian workers and farmers, who overthrew tsardom and set up their own Soviet Government, can we finally obtain our liberation. This is the final aim which will be obtained by the organized might of the toiling masses.

Never before have the workers of the South needed their own paper as much as now.

Thousands upon thousands are unemployed. And yet not a cent from either the government or the employers for the unemployed workers, although billions are spent for warships and armaments. The workers and their families are left to starve. And they do starve to death, victims of that dread disease of the South, pellagra, the disease that comes when there is nothing to eat.

The share-croppers and tenant farmers, "poor white" and Negro, face complete ruin. Many of the tenant farmers are losing their crops to the landlords because they cannot hang on long enough to harvest them. When a crop is finally raised the farmer finds that the prices have been kept so low by the agents of the buyers that he cannot get enough money not only to pay off his debts, but to keep going at all. Potatoes and cabbage is now the only food for many of the farmers in the South.

Those who are "lucky" enough to get a job get miserably low wages, work long hours at a tremendous speed, and are never sure how soon they will be fired.

The Negro worker is the most oppressed worker in the South. His lot is worse than any. Kept jim-crowed at every turn, working at lower wages than the white worker, subject to lynching and persecution, he is kept a virtual slave by the Southern white bosses.

The Southern Worker is here to voice the rebellion against these conditions. It is here to serve as the tribunal for the demands of the Southern toilers. It is here to give them Communist leadership in their struggle.

As a Communist paper it realizes that the only way by which the Southern toilers can be victorious in their struggle is through firm and solid organization in militant unions, and, politically, in the Communist Party.



Southern Worker

The unions we speak of are not the jim-crowed, weak-kneed unions of the American Federation of Labor. The Southern workers have had their experience with the A. F. of L. Too often have they been betrayed and sold out as at Elizabethton, Tenn., at Marion, N. C., at Anniston, Ala. We stand openly and solidly against the treacherous, boss-controlled American Federation of Labor, which is closely allied with the K. K. K., supports bosses' candidates in the election campaign, cries for the blood of Communist organizers.

The unions we speak of are the militant, industrial unions of the Trade Union Unity League, which, like us, recognize only one division—the one between the bosses and the workers.

The Southern Worker stands unalterably for full social, economic and political equality for the Negro workers and farmers. This is one of its chief planks.

The Southern workers draws the workers of the South closer to the workers of the North and all countries. It builds the strong bond of workers' solidarity. It brings to the Southern workers news of the Soviet Union, the only country in the world where the workers and farmers own and run the factories and farms and have their own government. It will make the Southern workers realize that they, too, must join in the defense of the Soviet Union, must defeat the war that is being planned against it by the bosses government.

The Southern Worker is published from Birmingham, Ala., despite the reign of terror directed by the Tennessee Coal and Iron Company, and supported by the A. F. of L. and the K. K. K. against the organizers and members of the Communist Party and Trade Union Unity League. That is a sign of our strength. Persecutions cannot drive us away.

We are here and we will stay. Workers of the south, here is your paper. It is for all of us to write in. It is for all of us to spread and build. The Southern Worker will grow and expand with the struggles of the Southern workers.

Write for, spread and build the Southern Worker!

Force Transfer of Two Scottsboro Cases To Juvenile Court (SEE PAGE 2)

The SOUTHERN WORKER
The Paper of the Southern TOLLERS
Vol III No. 2 Birmingham, Alabama, June 10, 1933 Price 2 Cents

STRIKES IN SOUTH WIN PAY INCREASES FOR THOUSANDS

A wave of strikes is sweeping the South, chiefly in textile mills. The workers in many plants have already won their demands by militant action. The workers have won gains in Mobile, Ala., Greenville, S. C., Anniston, Ala. (Cordage Company), Columbia, S. C., and Norfolk, Va.

The chief grievances of the workers are:

1. The installation of new and terrific stretch-out systems, sometimes in connection with announcement of wage-increases of a few measly pennies.
2. Wages so low that they do not begin to cover the cost of necessities, especially now that inflation is raising prices.
3. In two cases, wage-cuts of from 10 to 50 per cent.

The strikers have shown a splendid spirit of struggle, in spite of militia, sheriffs and deputies, eviction notices, and attempts at sell-outs by the Department of Labor and by representatives of the misleadership of the American Federation of Labor.

Greenville Strike Wins 10 Pc Raise

SOUTHERN TEXTILE LABOR STIRS AGAIN

GREENVILLE, S. C.—One thousand textile workers of the W. T. Poir Manufacturing Company went on strike here on May 25, and won their demands. They struck against the new stretch-out system, which forced the workers to

Utica Mill Strikers in Anniston Defy Militia

STRUGGLE AGAINST NEW STRETCH-OUT

ANNISTON, Ala.—In spite of every effort to break the strike, the 600 workers of the Utica Knitting Mills here are solidly out against a 10 per cent wage-cut and a vicious new stretch-out system.

Guardsmen, with two fully-loaded machine guns, are all around the mill. The strikers picket constantly, and only about 15 have gone back to work. One day last week, the 15 scabs were loaded into autos on which stood several guardsmen with rifles and revolvers in their hands. The



Literacy, the Afro-American and World War II - *Afro American History* - H. Aptheker

On May 14, 1941, the Army, by regulation, announced that no registrant possessing an education less than the fourth grade in an American elementary school was to be inducted. This, it was believed, "was certainly a low enough minimum."¹⁷ But facts and necessities were to prove the contrary. Within six weeks after the promulgation of this regulation about fifty-five thousand registrants were deferred because of it and by September 15, 1941, this number increased to over one hundred-forty thousand men, of whom about sixty thousand were white and the remainder Black.¹⁸



Army Illustrated Literacy Test DST-11a (for Special Training units) 1943

About 150,000 (85% successfully completed training) (~86,600 were Black)



Literacy, the Afro-American and World War II - *Afro American History* - H. Aptheker

ly"²⁶ the significance of this error...
The plan of the experiment was as follows:²⁷ Illiterates
accepted for training in the Special Training Units were
to receive psychological interviews and careful medical
tests. They were then to be given placement tests de-
signed to reveal their degree of functional literacy, as a
result of which they were to be placed in classes of
appropriate levels. In addition, periodic achievement
tests were to be administered and men reassigned, if
necessary, as a result of these findings, thus permitting
them to advance as quickly as possible and assuring the
homogeneous content (in terms of learning standards) to
the classes.



African-American students at
Roger Williams University in
Nashville, Tennessee, ca. 1899.



Literacy, the Afro-American and World War II - *Afro American History* - H. Aptheker



A teacher instructs a segregated class of black students at a poorly funded, one-room school in the backwoods of Georgia in 1941.

Of particular importance is the fact that of the whites who entered these units during the aforesaid period 84.2 percent successfully completed it, while 15.8 percent failed and were discharged from the Army. Of the Blacks who entered these units during the same period 87.1 percent successfully completed it, and 12.9 percent failed and were discharged. "In other words," as General Trudeau has stated, "experience in the Army indicates that a slightly higher percentage of the Negroes than the

whites successfully complete the Special Training Program, i.e., achieve fourth-grade standards in reading, language, and arithmetic and demonstrate sufficient mastery of basic military subjects to warrant their being forwarded for regular training."³¹



Literacy, the Afro-American and World War II - *Afro American History* - H. Aptheker

These data not only constitute a shattering blow to racists, but present a challenge to their opponents to urge and to demand that the government do in peacetime what it felt had to be done and what it at least began to do in wartime—namely, conduct an all-out, scientific, and democratic assault upon the twin disgraces of illiteracy and educational inequality that remain as huge blights upon the lives of millions of its citizens.³²



Ronald McNair NC A&T State graduate and astronaut who died on the *Challenger* Space Shuttle



Discussion & New Members Introductions



New Member Introductions

- What is your name, pronouns and state (or country/territory)?
- Where do you work? Is it unionized?
- How did you find out about the People's School?
- What do you think about tonight's class?



Discussion & Wrap Up



Announcements

- The PSMLS has recovered our old Youtube account we lost to wreckers in 2022 and we have re-uploaded all our old videos. Like, subscribe, and check out what subjects we covered prior and what we aware saying in the past.
- PCUSA Cell Chairs need to call members of their cells to remind them about attendance.
- The next issue of New Masses (2025) has begun production. If you have art you want us to feature, email it to info@partyofcommunistsusa.net.



Volunteers Needed!

We are in need of volunteers for the staff of the People's School! Here's a few roles we need filled:

- People to help manage posting on our social media and podcast platforms
- Video Editors, Audio Editors, Graphic Designers, Artists, Narrators
- Facilitators, Web Controls, Moderators

Email info@peopleschool.us if you're interested and try to attend our next staff meeting if possible.



View From Left Field

<https://viewfromleftfield.libsyn.com>



The Old PSMLS Youtube is now the Youtube of View From Left Field, a podcast of analysis and discussion of current events from a progressive perspective.

Like the Youtube videos and subscribe with 5 star ratings on your podcast platforms.

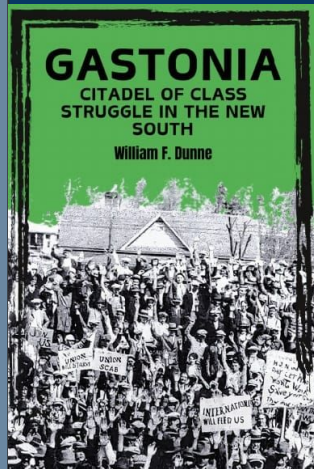




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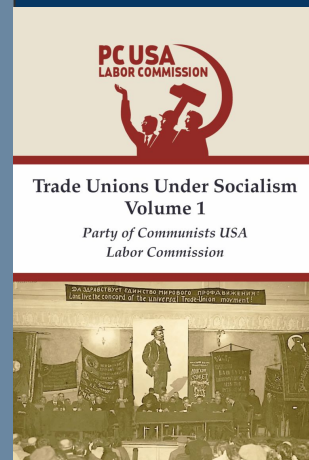
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OF TRADE UNIONS
1945-1985



New Outlook Publishers

Selected Works of
Henry Winston

Volume 3





Harry Bridges School of Labor

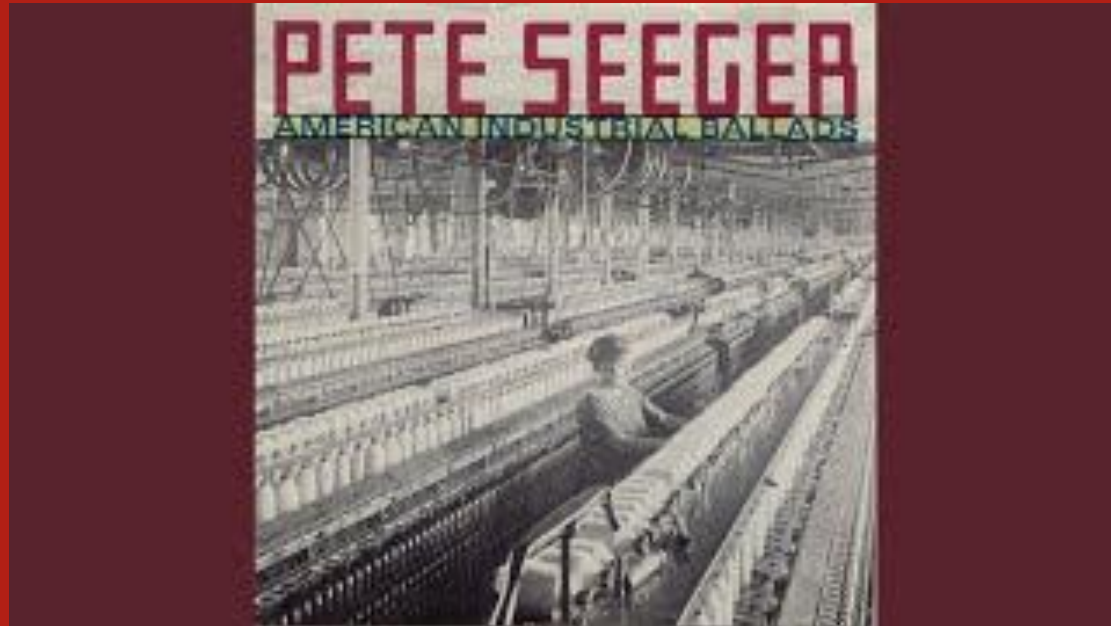
luel.us/laborschool/



The Harry Bridges School of Labor is a monthly class held 2x per month. Classes cover a variety of topics aimed at building class conscious among union members.

August's class will be a viewing of "Salt of the Earth." Class will be Wednesday August 6, 2025 at 8pm EST/6pm PST and Saturday August 9, 2025 at 7pm EST/4pm PST.





Mill Mother's Lament - Originally Written by Loray Mill Striker Ella
Mae Wiggins - Sung By Pete Seeger