

## I. Introduction

The United States is a racist society. Within its borders no fewer than 40 million people, one-fifth of the total population, suffer discrimination because they are non-white. Some, like black people, are tagged for racist discrimination on characteristics like skin color. For others, like Chicanos, Asian-Americans and Native Americans, discrimination is tied to national characteristics such as language and culture, as well as color. Whatever the specific excuse for discrimination, its essence is the overall lower conditions forced on minority people.

What does the face of racism look like? Minorities endure lower wages, worse housing, inferior education, higher prices and more unemployment than white Americans; their quality of life reflects racist discrimination. In addition, the quantity of life—even the very question of life itself—reflects the machinery of racism. Whether one is talking about the infant mortality rate in the ghetto, the police killing of minority youth, or the decimation of the Native American population over the last 200 years, racism means murder.

Racism must be smashed, and only the working people of the whole country can do it. That is why this pamphlet was written. Its purpose is to increase all workers' understanding of racism and to explore effective ways of fighting it.

### WHAT'S IN THIS PAMPHLET

We hear a lot about racism in the newspapers, on television, in school and from the pulpit. But the rich use these tools to mold the opinions of working people. Almost everything heard about racism is a lie.

It is false that minorities in the U.S. are making progress and catching up to the average standard of living. We will prove that in chapter two.

It is false that only minorities are hurt by racism. Everyone who earns his or her living by working for a wage or salary suffers from racist discrimination, although obviously minority people suffer the most. We will prove that in chapter three.

It is false that we can only fight racism by taking something away from one group of workers and giving it to another. We can identify the real racists and murderers, the tiny class of big businessmen who run this country. We can build struggles which force them to come across with more resources for minority people. In this struggle we can strengthen the hand of all working people, poor, and unemployed. We will look at specific areas of fighting racism in chapter four.

It is false that racism is primarily a bad attitude or a part of human nature. Racism is part of the economic and political system. The United States is a racist society, and it is also a capitalist society run for the profit of big businessmen. It is racist precisely because it is capitalist. In order to wipe out racism, we must replace capitalism by socialism. We will discuss that in chapter five.

#### WORKING PEOPLE HAVE UNITED TO FIGHT RACISM

Is it necessary that anti-racist struggles pit minorities against white working people? No. In fact, the U.S. working class has a proud history of fighting together on many fronts, including the anti-racist front. The great majority of workers can be won to oppose discrimination in their own class interests. Let us glance at some examples from history.

While the struggle against racism has had its ups and downs, the greatest gains have been made when the anti-racist struggle involved large sections of the working class, employed and unemployed.

In the 1930's, the years of the Great Depression, ordinary people struggled on many fronts to defend their interests and livelihood. Anti-racist struggles were part of the ferment. Blacks and whites marched in the streets and saved the lives of nine black youth—the

Scottsboro Boys—who had been framed on a charge of raping two white women. In 1934, the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union was organized by almost equal numbers of black and white sharecroppers to fight against oppression by the rich plantation owners.



Perhaps the greatest anti-racist movement of that day came in the form of a trade union movement. The Congress of Industrial Organization (CIO) was formed in direct opposition to the sellout misleaders of the old American Federation of Labor (AFL). While the AFL practiced collaboration with the bosses, craft unionism and strict segregation of races, the CIO embraced industrial unionism, militancy and demands for integration and equality both in the unions and on the job. The CIO is the best example that the fight against racism is tightly connected to other working-class issues, and it makes its greatest advances when masses of working people are on the move against big business exploitation.

There are many recent examples of the same thing. Struggles on the job are especially good in showing the necessity for uniting white and minority workers and the relation between anti-racist and other workers' issues. A wildcat strike at the Newport News shipyard in Virginia began in 1967 over an incident that occurred in a primarily black section of the yards. The walkout escalated to encompass grievances common to all the workers. Black and white workers, as even one cop admitted, fought together like brothers—and won major concessions.

Detroit, Michigan boiled over into rebellion during the summer of 1967. Most television and newspaper reports of ghetto rebellions pictured them as blacks gone wild attacking all whites. Detroit disproves that lie. The rebellion began in the heart of the black ghetto, sparked by an incident of racist oppression by the police. But the battle quickly spread throughout Detroit, involving many white working-class neighborhoods. The common target became the chain groceries and other major retail distributors which feed off all working people, especially in ghettos and poor neighborhoods. Even the capitalist media were forced to report "integrated looting" in Detroit.

There have been numerous examples of struggle against the oppression of other minorities as well. At San Francisco State College in 1968-69, a coalition of black, Latino, Chicano, Asian-American and

white students staged the most militant and effective struggle against racism ever seen on a college campus. This strike was a landmark in the anti-racist movement of the 1960's. After it, many college administrations conceded some ethnic studies and affirmative action programs in order to avoid the militancy displayed at SF State.

In 1977-78 a united struggle encompassing all races and nationalities won a clear-cut victory in defeating the frame-up of Filipina Narciso and Leonora Perez, two Filipina nurses accused of murdering patients.

Also in 1977, unity of black and white was the foundation for defending the Camp Pendleton 14, black Marines who took aggressive action against the growing threat of the Ku Klux Klan within the Corps. Defense activities won reduced sentences and accomplished a thorough exposure of the racist na-

#### WHAT IS NATIONAL MINORITY OPPRESSION?

The United States is a land of immigrants. People who come here from other nations are national minorities—Chicanos from Mexico, Filipinos from the Philippines, Portuguese from Portugal, etc. They and many of their descendants retain certain characteristics of the nation, such as their language.

Many national minority people suffer discrimination and oppression. Chicanos, other Latinos, Asian-Americans and others are discriminated against in employment, ignored by schools, and forced into ghettos, much like black people victimized by racism. National minority oppression and racism overlap: it is no accident that the most oppressed national minorities are those who are not white Europeans. Although immigrants from Italy, Ireland and Poland suffered, too, Chicanos and

Filipinos, for example, face much more entrenched barriers to equality.

When we refer to national minority oppression, we mean the combined national and racist oppression of these people. Two areas of particular concern to them are equality of their language with English and freedom from deportation threats (see chapter four).

Big businessmen seize upon any historical circumstance they can to mark out a section of the working people for discrimination. Whether it is the skin color of descendants of African slaves or the national characteristics of Chicanos from the Mexican nation, reactionaries try to draw lines of oppression and divide up people. We stand for equality of all working people without regard to skin color, national origin, etc.

ture of the military brass.

This pamphlet attempts to arm all working people, of whatever color or nationality, with an arsenal of information about racism, to prove that racism can be and has been fought, and to present a program which will lead the fight against racism to victory. We can win!