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Toward a Program of Resistance

Hacia un programa de resistencia

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INTRODUCTION

The authors of this document—the Program Demand Group—are individual left organizers who have built a substantial degree of political unity through struggles in shared practice over a long period of time. We met each other through our work in mass campaigns initiated by the Labor/Community Strategy Center in Los Angeles. *Our unity as a group is based on a common commitment to antiracist organizing in the United States set within an internationalist framework.* As organizers, we have chosen to spend the majority of our energies on the exceedingly difficult tasks involved in building multiracial, multi-class, independent social movements that confront corporate and governmental elites in the arenas of civil rights, mass transportation, reforms in labor union organizing, and environmental justice. As we faced the 2000 Presidential Election, we determined that our ability to contribute to coalescing an effective antiracist tendency on the Left and among progressive organizers in the U.S. rested on clarifying our political line: *What does it mean to situate antiracist struggles within the larger strategy of building an international united front against imperialism?* A draft document was circulated nationally at the time and has been the basis of the last year's work and many productive discussions with other antiracist organizers. The struggle for clarity of political line drives our continuing efforts to consolidate our unity and communicate it to others in this version of the document.

STATE OF THE STATE

Situated as we are within the United States, we begin with a critique of the U.S. government. Based on such a critique, we seek to articulate a program capable of countering both pro-imperialist political parties, the Clinton/Gore/Democratic Leadership Council and the Bush/Cheney/Scalia/Thomas right-wing that proceeded to steal an election and successfully execute a political coup.

Under Bill Clinton's internationalist globalization

strategy, the U.S. was confronted with its inability to manage its world affairs. The U.S. more and more took over NATO (North-Atlantic Treaty Organization), the IMF (International Monetary Fund), and the World Bank as instruments for U.S. ruling class hegemony. With Operation Desert Fox, Clinton continued the bombing of Iraq begun by George Bush Sr.'s war in the Persian Gulf, Operation Desert Storm.

With a deceptive feint to “compassionate conservatism” during the Presidential campaign, followed by Democratic Party claims that Bush was weak and would have no power, the Bush administration in Washington has in fact moved with the rapidity of a revolution—or counterrevolution—to break the back of what remained of liberal/center agreements within the U.S. ruling class. Overnight Bush began to court oil drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, eliminate the inheritance tax, withdraw funds for worldwide programs offering access to abortion, place the U.S. openly in defiance of all international treaties, and “reinvigorate” sanctions against Iraq. Bush went after the unilateral right for the U.S. to rule the world without even nominal checks to its power: “reject Kyoto, reject anti-ballistic missile (ABM) treaties, reject regulation of arsenic, reject human rights challenges to the death penalty, reject international courts, reject United Nations (UN) declarations, reject the Geneva Accords.”

The Bush administration made clear its disregard for international decision-making processes by walking out of the United Nations World Conference Against Racism, Xenophobia, Racial Discrimination and Related Intolerance, held in Durban, South Africa, that many oppressed nations and peoples embraced as an arena to advance their demands. People all over the world watched as the United States used defense of Israel in an attempt to hide its own history as a genocidal settler state built on stolen lands, the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, and the profits of enslaved labor within the U.S.

U.S. imperialism was already under the spotlight on the world political stage when on September 11, 2001, the U.S. population suffered the devastating consequences

of the “new world order,” over which the United States exercises dominion. How did the illegitimate, unpopular, but enthroned and aggressive Bush presidency respond? In the face of tragedy, the Bush Sr./Cheney/Bush Jr. apparatus exploited the fear felt by the U.S. population in order to legitimate and expand their control over the long-standing U.S. military incursion into the oil-rich Middle East. Bush immediately declared a state of war against an amorphous enemy and moved for congressional approval of expanded powers. George W., now catapulted onto the stage of history—as his father dreamed he would be—rose to his position as Commander-in-Chief, called all military forces into action, restricted civil liberties, and unleashed a wave of U.S. patriotism that has revealed the true nature of the U.S. empire. Even as protesters in New York shouted “Our grief is not a cry for war!” the Bush administration began to bomb Afghanistan.

For years, U.S. domination in the Middle East has produced anti-western/anti-U.S. sentiment. On September 11, some force, as yet unproven, achieved what was planned on February 26, 1993 when the World Trade Center was bombed but not destroyed. The fear the strategic multi-target strike instilled in the U.S. public gave a president who lacked a mandate to govern the charge to “protect the free world.”

For the eight years since the 1993 bombing, if not more, U.S. administrations have understood the dangerous effects on the U.S.—strikes on the so-called “homeland”—of their bipartisan plan for imperialist economic expansion, military aggression, political control and cultural hegemony. If war is necessary to rescue stagnating imperialist economies, the Bush dynasty certainly knows it and has long considered war an option for fueling the military-industrial complex in the face of domestic economic crisis, even without being attacked. When congress inevitably approves an “economic stimulus package” (which Bush hoped would yield \$89 billion in 2002 and \$73 billion in 2003), big dollars will be spent to extend corporate tax breaks and tax cuts for the wealthy, thereby enabling implementation of his already-existing economic reorganization plan.

George W. Bush, ushering in the new phase of his right-wing faith-based crusade, will find and destroy “evil” in the name of securing U.S. interests abroad. His policies will dismantle domestic civil rights and democratic liberties in order to achieve “homeland defense.” As the U.S. closes its borders and goes to war against the entire Middle East and Muslim world behind the slogan “Infinite Justice-Enduring Freedom”—in order to defend the entire

“civilized world”—the world crisis of bourgeois democracy became apparent. While we count the Bush response to the September tragedy as an acceleration in a long history of civilian death in the name of “one nation,” the “united states,” we also recognize that the U.S. response marks a qualitative leap into a new period of increasingly reactionary U.S. foreign and domestic policy. Bush, Jr. says the enemy is so-called “terrorists”; in actuality it is people of color, Arabs, Muslims, oil-producing states, nations in the “axis of evil,” nations that harbor “terrorism” or produce weapons of mass destruction, and anyone who defies or attacks U.S. dominance. We fear for the people of the world.

WHY WRITE THIS DOCUMENT?

We reject the Bush administration’s program for imperialism and its distasteful opportunism in turning pain and fear into hatred and aggression. We realize that any alternative to the Bush/Cheney regime will involve a politics that is not a liberal extension of the Democratic Leadership Council strategy but rather its opposite. In order to advance such an opposition, we are attempting to go beyond a list of righteous demands and present an approach to a program of resistance that challenges the policies of the two-party capitalist democracy of the United States.

The current situation raises the stakes for all oppressed people who suffer at the hands of this country. All around the world, the Left is struggling to find a common path forward to oppose the latest U.S.-initiated war. As many progressive forces seek solidarity in fighting for their demands, our approach as the Program Demand Group is to offer coherence, then focus, to a series of interrelated structural demands against the institutions of U.S. imperialism. Together, these demands constitute a program of resistance.

The demands we present require militant, multiracial, mass-based left social movements and developed national and international coalitions of organizations, movements, and political forces—the very forces that have been dismantled in recent decades or are not yet in existence. As history has shown us, the forces we believe are required cannot be willed into being, they must and will evolve out of existing forms of struggle. Yet, the burden on social movements to make history has never been greater. We believe that a key link in the evolution of a unified antiracist, antiimperialist tendency in the U.S. Left—especially at this historic juncture—is

the articulation of oppositional proposals, which can be exchanged, explored, debated, and tested in practice.

We believe that the different ways progressive people respond to such proposals, especially to the interconnections between them, establish commitment to one or another strategy, whether we are aware of it or not. We think that all of us who are situated on the front lines of struggles of resistance will benefit greatly from theorizing our practice, and thus propose writing positions that we can exchange, sharing discussion of our aims and experiments, debating the lessons we think we learn from the different political lines of march we take.

PROBLEMS OF IMPERIALISM

We are aiming demands at the institutions of U.S. imperialist power globally and domestically—U.S.-based transnational corporations, the U.S. government, the pro-imperialist political parties, and international bodies which the U.S. dominates such as the Group of 8 (G8),¹ World Bank, and IMF. We consider the current international political economy to be imperialist; ever-new developments transform capitalism as history unfolds but the kind of revolutionary transformation that would end imperialism as we know it has not yet developed.

Why target the U.S. when many in the world and certainly within the U.S., even many progressives, see its domination of world order as just that—a capacity to dominate, with a responsibility to maintain order in an increasingly chaotic world in which U.S. bourgeois democracy looks pretty good compared to the violence and repression occurring in other nations? Our starting point is always that we are here in the “homeland” whose privileges are made possible by the superprofits of our government’s economic, political, and military aggression in defense of U.S. interests.

For the purposes of developing demands, we assert the Program Demand Group’s fundamental unifying premise that the mechanisms that establish the class, race, and gender relationships we struggle over on a daily basis are integral to the operation of a transnational imperialist world system dominated by the United States. U.S. imperialism depends upon the subjugation of whole nations and peoples manifested in a global program of systematic economic exploitation, national oppression, the subjugation of women, the degradation of nature, racism, xenophobia, misogyny, and increasing imposition of human suffering and destruction of human dignity.

We understand imperialism to be an advanced form of capitalism in which all corners of the globe are integrated in an economy driven by finance capital to scavenge the globe and exploit every opportunity for maximization of profit and domination. While this global system appears all-powerful and its pressures seemingly cannot be resisted, it is in crisis. There is no doubt that capitalism as a system has a vast potential to recuperate and gasp for one, then another breath. But capitalism is not a sustainable economic system; it must constantly expand its markets by one nation defeating another through competition, colonization, military aggression, or war. At its imperialist stage, its rate of profit is declining. It has no new lands to “discover,” and it cannot possibly accommodate all nations in an egalitarian world system. Equality aside, capitalism is no longer a stable, self-reinforcing global system of inequality; it is “moribund,” in the process of dying.

The increasing integration of all nations into a single world economic system is characteristic of capitalism’s drive to expand. As capitalism reaches its monopoly stage, *global integration is forced* through the systematic subjugation of nations and peoples in order to maximize the advantage (profit) of financiers and the countries that harbor them, peoples who produce are subjugated to satisfy the whims of those who exploit.

We reserve the term “imperialism” to refer to this late monopoly stage of capitalism as a global economic system when it is most far-reaching but also in crisis. Under imperialism, transnational financial oligarchies join together to monopolize not just national markets, but global markets as well. In this integrated economy, imperialists seek superprofits.

Under monopoly capitalism, the exploitation of the working class at home intensifies and the subordination of women into an invisible economy maximizes their superexploitation. As this system is driven to conquer foreign markets, exploitation takes the form of oppression of whole countries and the superexploitation of colonial and female labor in an internationalization of a shadow economy comprised of cheap labor, slave labor, and “free” labor. Certainly, the working class and poor peasants, principally women, in every country are exploited by domestic or regional capitalists. But the decadent nature of imperialism’s concentration and centralization of power in very few transnational finance capitalist enterprises, backed by very few nation-states, gives birth to *a new form of class struggle on a world scale. In this*

internationalization of antagonism between exploiters and producers, class struggle often takes the form of national liberation struggle. Indeed in some countries an identity is reached between these struggles.

In this light, struggles for national liberation from the superexploitive domination of imperialism and for the protection of the right to self-determination are essential to any possible future achievement of a voluntary union of nations. We believe that our opportunity to transform the contradiction between the productive nations and peoples of the world and the exploiting ruling classes of imperialism lies in an *international strategic alliance of the multinational working class movements (industrial and agrarian) with the national liberation struggles* against the apparatuses of imperialism. This alliance can find strength in the very instability of the imperialist nation-states. This is the basis for our insistence on analyzing imperialism today—particularly U.S. imperialism—and devising an antiimperialist strategic plan.

We use the term “imperialist patriarchy” to refer to the system of relations of domination under capitalism and imperialism which could not exist without the subjugation of women and colonies. In other words, capitalism in all its stages (and the ownership of property before capitalism) has only ever been patriarchal. Thus, national oppression and women’s oppression function together to achieve the extra profits needed by the system.

We target imperialism at a time when global integration is posited by the ruling elite as the policy for development of “undeveloped” nations and, alternately, by progressive scholars as the cause of “underdevelopment” itself. To us, the phenomena of global integration are not policies but rather economic and political necessities in the development of imperialism.

As a generalization, we don’t use the term “globalization” because the anti-globalization movements in their use of the term tend to refer to the policies of neoliberalism. Consciously or not, this use erases the specific manifestations of imperialism, such as racism, patriarchy, environmental devastation, as well as the specific impacts on oppressed nationalities inside and outside the U.S. The term “anti-globalization” is politically amorphous and vague in a way that lets U.S.-led imperialism off the hook because it does not identify a particular enemy. This, in turn, impacts what demands are made against who: for example, there’s a big difference between the trade union demand “keep U.S. jobs here” and, alternately, “reparations.” From our point of view, globalization itself is not a bad word under a non-capitalist social, political,

economic system. “Workers of the world unite...” is, in fact, a call for socialized globalization.

Furthermore, the term “globalization” is chosen very consciously by some to replace “imperialism,” in the belief that imperialism is the term used to describe a prior period, however much empire-building is operative now or however much the economic imperatives characteristic to imperialism continue to drive world history. We imagine that they don’t want to be saddled with the obvious but daunting problem that, in order to end oppression and achieve liberation, imperialism must be overthrown. In this light, it is much simpler to see globalization as a set of policies that should be changed. The Program Demand Group emphatically rejects this maneuver, which we believe serves only to strengthen imperialism by the presumption that it can stop its globalizing “policies.” For us, the analysis of imperialism is more powerful in explaining the contradictory phenomena we are describing and in understanding that these contradictions describe an economic system driven by crisis through competition in a struggle for its own survival—an unstable, collapsing system whose ferocity is a manifestation of eating itself alive.

The subjugation we describe as inherent in imperialism is supported by the systematic cultivation of racist ideology, reactionary nationalism, xenophobia, male supremacy and misogyny. We know that successful world domination by the United States today depends not only on its openly repressive practices but, increasingly, on all the manipulative ideological practices involved in building world-wide consent to its empire. Ideological agreement is fundamental to the functioning of U.S. hegemony, that is, domination by means of consent—consent to integration into an international economy pegged to the dollar. While imperialism is defined by its development as a capitalist mode of production in a stage of decay, there is a “relative autonomy” between economic and political spheres within this complex social totality. Thus, the social constructs of racism, xenophobia, supremacy, and misogyny, while definitely serving to subordinate and superexploit groups of people for economic purposes, also work somewhat independently to suppress political resistance to imperialism. Difference, discrimination and hate take on a life of their own; racism spreads independent of the material basis for it. When such supremacy appears to be based on “natural distinctions”, the decay of imperialism is put on display in everyday life.

As oppressed nations and peoples refuse to consent and fight back by trying to limit the scope of this

subjugated form of integration, the imperialist imperative for integration intensifies—and conditions for war are present everywhere. We aim to challenge the program of U.S. imperialism, its policies and practices with a strategy of resistance.

COMPONENTS OF OUR APPROACH TO DEMAND DEVELOPMENT

The individuals in the Program Demand Group work within projects of the Labor/Community Strategy Center.

The Strategy Center was formed from day one as multi-issue, with a multinational, multiracial, multilingual grouping of women and men with roots in the working class—with black autoworkers, Chicano academics, Latino and Korean immigrant activists, white antiracist organizers, feminist labor historians, welfare reform resisters, students and workers, radicals, revolutionary nationalists, and communists within our common internationalist political orientation. The art of achieving our organizational culture is crafted through a constant balancing between respect for our differences and pursuit of our common goals. In order to achieve a culture capable of sustaining this “unstable balance,” the Strategy Center has consistently sought to achieve a certain political clarity—not necessarily agreement—to create an environment that supports experimentation, searching, learning.

From its beginning, these very different people have shared a fundamental approach to tactics aimed in a clear direction: fight to win. Through much experimentation we have built a “think tank/act tank” that is consistently integrating theory and practice in the course of everyday struggle: *social practice is the arena in which the social totality can be seen, the current conditions analyzed, the burning questions of our time theorized, and strategy and tactics conceived, tested, and imagined again.* The Strategy Center’s history rests on a practice of building a mass base of oppressed people; fundamental to this practice is the process of developing demands that link specific mass struggles to the need for broad structural changes. In this way, we strive to situate tactical campaigns within an overarching strategy.

At the Strategy Center, organizers have chosen—within the strategy to struggle against imperialism from inside the U.S. empire—to *build social movements of the multinational working class as our primary activity.* A central objective of our work has been to organize mass social movements, new organizations, and coalitions that—

in the course of waging resistance struggles against the fundamental ideals of capitalism—build leadership, consciousness and organization among oppressed nationalities, women, immigrants and the multiracial/multinational working class.

We believe in the role of the conscious organizer. That is to say, the organizer at the Strategy Center cultivates her base by contextualizing the experiences of oppressed people in an analysis that recognizes that the vast majority of peoples’ sufferings are systemic manifestations of U.S.-led imperialism. Therefore, paramount to our base building is the political education of oppressed people. Through political education we make every effort to move people from an individual outrage toward an antiimperialist politics that explains specific atrocities through the lens of a global analysis of U.S.-led transnational capitalism and institutional racism.

Our organizing model has given us the opportunity to build multiracial/multinational organizations that achieve a voluntary unity which can only be gained through the daily practice of struggle. The struggle we are talking about entails common practice in a consciously-constructed plan to join together very different people with a commitment to engage contradictions among us that have historically obstructed Left unity in the United States. Latino immigrant Spanish speakers, black revolutionary nationalists and antiracist whites, for example, deal together with questions of organizational composition on a daily basis and together formulate tactical plans that can combat the specific oppressions of different peoples as well as the attacks they suffer in common. We see our role as developing successful experiences in multinational organizing.

To be clear, we work with and support “national-in-form” organizations in their vital role of speaking directly to the specific needs of Asian/Pacific Islander, black, Latino and indigenous peoples among others and advancing their peoples’ struggle for liberation. Our strength is organizing all peoples who stand in contradiction to U.S. imperialism—building the alliance between movements of the multinational working class and national liberation movements.

Our approach to developing multinational organizations and labor/community coalitions has generated some of the most powerful social movements in Los Angeles for two decades. In the Reagan/Bush-Clinton/Gore era of lowered expectations, the Campaign to Keep GM Van Nuys Open stopped General Motors from closing down the last and largest auto plant in California for a

period of ten years; the Labor/Community Watchdog environmental justice campaign exposed Texaco and the oil giants who are poisoning the low-income, predominantly Latino community of Wilmington; and the “Billions for Buses” campaign of the Bus Riders Union/Sindicato de Pasajeros is aggressively obstructing the Los Angeles MTA’s racist destruction of the regional bus system.

There are many contradictions, crises, and atrocities that concern us as we build multiracial, multinational, multi-issue organizations of women and men who also speak different languages (in the Bus Riders Union, predominantly Spanish, Korean and English), and it is often difficult to select priorities. Over time we have evolved an approach that guides the process of demand development so that contradictions are analyzed, dilemmas addressed and priorities chosen with greater clarity. Our radical approach to reforms is reflected in campaigns, demands, mass movements of oppressed nationalities and the multinational working class, and an ideology of resistance.

The Program Demand Group, born out of this history of common work, is applying this approach in an effort to devise ideological and structural challenges to the foundations of empire. As we present the strategic demands that follow, we want to explain the framework we are using in demand development.

A. Antiimperialism. We select demands that *situate a specific campaign within an international framework of opposition to U.S. imperialism* in order to confront structural racism, national oppression, xenophobia, patriarchy and suffering from indignity that is perpetrated throughout the world by the country in which we live and work.

B. New constituencies for a strategic alliance. We select demands that *coalesce new constituencies* to expand the base of working class people of color who are capable of leading a strategic alliance of the multiracial, multinational working class and the oppressed peoples’ movements for liberation.

C. Unity in diversity. We select demands that have the potential to *build unity within the multiracial working class* in the U.S. while addressing the specificity of needs of different peoples. We select demands that *create opportunities for oppressed nationalities, women, and immigrants* to expand consciousness and lead struggles.

D. Learning through new forms of

counterhegemonic struggle. We select demands that *create new forms of struggle* that break out of a culture of accommodation to expand space for antagonistic, adversarial negotiation with corporations and the government. We select demands with counterhegemonic content that can challenge the domination of capitalist ideology. We select demands that create collective learning experiences that expose the complex interrelationships of the U.S. political system we are challenging and create the basis for ideological transformation.

E. Institution building. We select demands that *create new forms of organization* as platforms for expanding power from which to demand greater rights, power and influence.

F. Redistribution of resources/Redress and reparations. We select demands that, if won, would *radically redistribute power and resources to the oppressed.* We select demands that, if won, would *redress the wrongs of historic oppression and superexploitation* specific to peoples who have suffered from the brutality of U.S. imperialist expansion.

This document is a work-in-progress that we hope will provide a basis for discussion. We proceed with the understanding that the demands are incomplete, their scopes are different, and the distinction of categories, while useful, is fluid and ultimately artificial. There are many important single-issue demands being presented by people around the world in struggle against U.S. imperialism. Where possible, we are trying to incorporate the demands of existing social movements, while struggling to sharpen the politics that has become our basis of unity. In every category there are political differences among progressives, and at times the demands that we initially thought we embraced actually contradicted each other or we simply did not yet agree. By looking at them together we have made some sharp political choices that are reflected not only in our strategic demands but in the demands for the focus campaigns we prioritize. We have selected demands that are transitional; they do not constitute a program for a future in which the people of the world control their economic and political relationships, although our vision of the future is imbedded in our present demands. We hope to pose an *alternative set of possible political choices* that, taken together, create a vision

of a more just and humane world society. We aim to plant seeds of change in a counterhegemonic program that captures our imaginations and can motivate masses of people to envision “the possible.”

Thus, while at the present time we present the demands in outline form without extensive explanation, our immediate purpose is to *illustrate our approach* and *cohere a political unity* that will be distinct and establish a basis for debate and for the development of more elaborated writings and engagements.

The specific procedure we have undertaken in building our unity in this document involved the following steps, which correspond to the categories that organize the text that follows.

■ *Conditions.* We have attempted to analyze the *current conditions* defined by the center-right political consensus that governs U.S. imperialism.

■ *Dilemmas.* We have grappled with some of the *dilemmas for the Left* posed by the contradictions inherent in our work, dilemmas that cause disorientation and ultimately require decisions that become decisive in shaping different political trends.

■ *Strategic challenges.* We have categorized demands into *strategic challenges*, that is, structural demands that challenge the premises of U.S. imperialism so that, if won, they would advance radical, systemic change.

■ *Tactical campaigns.* We have selected and emphasized the radical demands of *campaigns we prioritize*. These demands are, at least in theory, winnable under imperialism. Yet, taken together, they create a picture of what we would propose for an alternate form of governance.

NOTE

¹ The Group of 8 includes the U.S., Japan, Italy, France, Britain, Germany, Canada, Russia—the major industrial “democracies” whose heads of state or government have been meeting annually since 1975 to address the major economic and political issues facing the international community as a whole.

I. U.S. Intervention Around the Globe: Government and Corporations

What can the organized Left and the social movements demand of the institutions of U.S. imperialism to counter its world domination of global military, economic, and political affairs?

CURRENT CONDITIONS

The imperialist countries of the Group of 8, currently under the hegemony of the United States, dominate the globe. They struggle constantly to redivide their controlling power over other nations in a continual shifting of spheres of influence within the modern world system. The United States claims hegemony over this political/economic system of transnational capitalism and, for the time being, has no contending counterforce—be it a revolutionary socialist nation or another imperialist state.

In this context, of the many contradictions that cause motion in world affairs, *we analyze the principal contradiction to be between U.S. imperialism, with its international operations and apparatuses on the one hand, and the exploited and oppressed nations and peoples of the world, on the other. Opposing the U.S. imperialist program is our strategic aim. We look to the global oppressed nationality, predominantly female, working class as the main force in a strategic alliance between the multinational working class movements and the national liberation movements around the world. The creation of an antiimperialist united front as a center of resistance is our strategic plan, and therefore the overarching focus of our organizational and ideological practice.*

Therefore, as the internationalist perspective of our work has grown through twelve years of shared practice, we find ourselves placing a frontal challenge to the country in which we live. This requires a program for resistance to U.S. imperialism in its many manifestations—from its determination to be the policing power of a new world order (through the world market and the world military) to its fierce control over formal and informal colonies (for example, its violation of Hawaii's sovereignty and rejection of independence for Puerto Rico) to its intensification of structural racism and aggression against the many nationalities now being exploited and oppressed within the borders of the United States.

In the most recent manifestation of U.S. imperialist expansionism, after September 11, 2001 the Bush Administration unleashed A War on the World. The U.S. “War on Terrorism” is already being waged on at least four different fronts: Afghanistan where the U.S. bombing campaign killed at least 4,000 Afghans, the Philippines where the U.S. has deployed 3350 ground troops—including 160 Special Forces soldiers, Columbia which has received a \$1.3 billion aid package for its ongoing war against the popular revolutionary movements under the pretext of fighting the “war on drugs” and now on “terrorism”, and Iraq which the U.S. has openly declared its intention to bomb. The U.S. led war has also given regimes the world over the pretext for launching attacks on opposition forces by labeling them as “terrorist.” In particular, it has given Israel the diplomatic and military green light to further expand its genocidal war against the Palestinian people.

In the last 18 months of the Palestinian uprising—and with even greater frenzy since September 11—Israel has carried out a campaign of massive demolition of civilian infrastructure, including homes and refugee camps, the assassination and mass arrest of Palestinian political leaders and activists and deliberate targeting of civilians and resisters—more than 1,500 dead and 33,000 injured at the time of this writing. Most notably, in the April reoccupation of Jenin refugee camp in the northern West Bank, some 13,000 of the camp's 15,000 residents have been displaced and their entire community reduced to rubble; hundreds of people are missing—either dead, buried beneath the rubble, or are being held by the Israeli military. When Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon called Palestinian President Yasser Arafat “our bin Laden”, Israel seized on the propaganda tool provided by the U.S. to accelerate its assault on Palestinian self determination under the guise of furthering the “War on Terrorism”.

Currently, there is no organized antiimperialist or socialist movement in the world capable of challenging

U.S. hegemony—either based on class struggle or national liberation. In a period of accelerated aggression, the U.S. ruling class is forcing every nation to pledge allegiance to its power—“either you are with us or against us.” Yet, we see critical resistance. The world over peoples are struggling to quell the appetite of U.S. imperialism—such as the people of Palestine, who, in their resistance to Israeli aggression, know that every tank, bullet, helicopter gun ship and machine gun used against them is Made in the USA. Thus, we give priority to supporting all such struggles outside the U.S. and to all progressive forms of organized resistance within the U.S.

DILEMMAS FOR THE LEFT

A central obstacle for the Left—within the U.S. and internationally— is that it is not unified around a common analysis of U.S. imperialism. The dilemma here is that all progressives want to “unite all who can be united,” but there must be a clear, principled basis of unity in order to even begin to work towards a common program. How can we build a united front if we can’t agree on common aims? For the most part, demands against imperialist aggression *seem* straightforward. But actually agreeing to focus on a common strategic objective of opposition to U.S. imperialism is more difficult. Even forces who agree in theory can disagree in practice or lose focus and easily become disoriented in the current morass of human suffering. Increasingly, we see progressives framing demands in ways that actually call for U.S. intervention.

Some progressive forces call for interventions into states whose present troubles are significantly the result of U.S. intervention. For example, when the elected Aristide government in Haiti was overthrown by a military coup (with strong U.S. support), the Congressional Black Caucus and other black progressives demanded U.S. intervention to re-install Aristide and to get the military junta to step down. Clinton sent Jimmy Carter to negotiate a withdrawal of the same military government the U.S. had helped come to power while pressuring Aristide to institute policies affirming ties to the U.S. and to reject running for re-election. This created a new form of U.S. exercise of control in the internal affairs of Haiti.

Another recent example concerns China. We are all motivated to act in defense of the students struggling for democracy, the old revolutionary cadre who are now being imprisoned for their activism, the right of Chinese

minority nationalities to exercise some form of self-determination. Yet when western human rights groups ask the U.S. government to impose sanctions against China, when Chinese in the West ask the U.S. government to prepare to use force in order to obstruct the negotiated reunification of Taiwan with the mainland, or when the AFL-CIO demands that the U.S. government keep China out of international trade organizations in order to protect jobs for U.S. workers, they give complete authority to U.S. imperialism to intervene in a sovereign nation. From the point of view of the U.S., the sovereign nation of China poses the greatest obstacle to U.S. world domination, a factor that helps the international antiimperialist forces. This makes the demand for U.S. sanctions even more problematic for the Left. From the point of view of the Program Demand Group, it is the human rights violations of our country that we must first address.

At the present time we face similar unclarities among progressives about U.S. aggression in the Middle East. Historically, left analysis of this complex region has led to widespread support for the Palestinian national liberation struggle against the Zionist strategy of occupation, apartheid and genocide. Many young activists today came into social movements through their opposition to Bush Sr.’s invasion of Iraq in the Persian Gulf war. Yet a U.S. Left that has never had consensus about the USSR has suffered tremendous disorientation since the collapse of this socialist experiment and the dis-unification of the soviet republics that had long struggled to maintain a voluntary unity. The resulting widespread repudiation of left politics combined with political upheaval in eastern Europe and the Middle East has caused some progressives to, again, look to the U.S. for protection of the starving people of Kosovo or ask the U.S. to broker an Israeli/Palestinian peace process.

The call for further U.S. involvement in the Middle East masks the centrality of the U.S. support for Israel’s expansionist policies. Israel is currently the largest recipient of U.S. foreign aid in the world, receiving upwards of \$5 billion per year in military and economic aid. Since the 1948 establishment of the state of Israel, the U.S. has played a defining role in its development. Initially the U.S., along with Britain, decided to back Israel as a beachhead for Western interests in the region and then, when Israel proved its military capability through its swift “success” in occupying Arab lands in 1967, it became an even more valuable military ally to the U.S. In the 1993 signing of the Oslo Accords, the U.S. asserted itself

as a so-called neutral broker in a deal designed to make permanent Israel's control over Palestine by granting Palestinians limited autonomy in isolated population centers, amounting to no more than 18% of the West Bank and Gaza—a so called Palestinian state. In addition to direct military and economic aid, the United States has provided Israel with diplomatic cover in the UN since its inception, through use of its veto power on the Security Council to block world consensus on the just implementation of the UN resolutions on Palestine, which mandate Israel's withdrawal from occupied lands and the full right of return for Palestinian refugees. The material and strategic relationship between Israel and the U.S. creates conditions in which the U.S. can never be a neutral broker, much less a defender of Palestinian rights.

Some of the progressive forces calling for U.S. intervention now also buy into the proposition that the U.S. can be the leader of a would-be anti-fascist united front against so-called "terrorism." We too see the rapid rise and popularization of fascist principles of belligerent nationalism, but in the form of George W. Bush's right-wing religious crusade against the so-called "axis of evil." Further, Bush's call to "depend on the eyes and ears of alert citizens" to secure our homeland is not the call of an anti-fascist but the recall of well-known tactics of the National Fascist Party of Italy, the German Nazi Party which rallied the working class under the banner of "national socialism," the U.S. House Un-American Activities Committee and the FBI's domestic counterintelligence program, COINTELPRO. Whatever concern we have about the practices of politicized religious fundamentalism, progressives are being called upon to defend the very freedom that the USA Freedom Core homeland security force is preparing to deny.

There are many examples of countries in which there are serious violations of international human rights conventions, yet there is no country whose brutality is more far-reaching than the United States, especially since the U.S. blocks implementation of these conventions through its veto power on the UN Security Council. Whatever other approaches we might develop with increased left clarity and capacity, *we cannot allow the U.S. to be the world's police force.* We need demands that oppose imperialism not that request its intervention. Thus, the Program Demand Group focuses on the long term and structural danger of U.S. intervention. We focus here on stopping U.S. intervention and prioritize campaigns that demand military, economic, and political withdrawal of U.S. forces.

U.S. INTERVENTION AROUND THE GLOBE: GOVERNMENT AND CORPORATIONS

STRATEGIC DEMANDS AROUND WHICH THE STRATEGY CENTER'S PROGRAM DEMAND GROUP IS UNIFIED

We call upon the U.S. government and all U.S. corporations to stop aggression against sovereign nations, colonial and semi-colonial lands, and indigenous peoples—whether through political diplomacy, the economic speculation of private corporations, the restructuring policies of the U.S.-dominated international apparatuses of the Group of 8, the IMF and World Bank, covert/overt military operations, or imperialist war.

FOCAL CAMPAIGNS WE PRIORITIZE

- U.S. government, stop the bombing; end military and economic attacks on sovereign nations, such as Afghanistan, currently occurring in the name of the so-called “war on terrorism.”
- U.S. government, engage in full diplomatic relations with the People’s Republic of Cuba; stop the embargo and the systematic campaign of harassment and destabilization.
- U.S. and all Group of 8 countries and their various U.S.-dominated international apparatuses, cancel all Third World and Apartheid debt without conditions.
- U.S. corporations, cease exploitation of indigenous peoples and destruction of their lands; for example, Occidental Petroleum Corporation cease attacks on the rights of the U’wa People of Columbia. U.S. government, end all economic and military assistance to other countries for suppression of indigenous peoples, such as the massive U.S. aid to the Mexican government for attacks on the peoples of Chiapas in the name of the so-called “war on drugs” and the U.S. intervention to train so-called “anti-terrorist” units in the Philippines. U.S. government, stop the bombing of Vieques.
- U.S. government, cease political, economic and military support for Israel’s war to defeat the Palestinian struggle for self-determination. U.S. government cease all diplomatic and political actions that block the rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes of origin, in accordance with UN resolution 194. U.S. government, end all support for Israel’s system of apartheid and the racist, exclusionary ideology it is founded upon. U.S. government, in accordance with UN resolutions 242 and 338, end all forms of support for the illegal Israeli occupation of Palestinian land in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, the annexation of Jerusalem, and the destruction of Palestinian homes, infrastructure, and agriculture. U.S. government, stop supplying military aid and weaponry that Israel uses to target political leaders for assassination and to bomb and shell civilians.

II. U.S. Responsibility for National Oppression and Racism Within the United States

What can the organized Left and the social movements demand of the institutions of U.S. imperialism to counter national oppression and racism within the United States?

CURRENT CONDITIONS

Within the U.S., we analyze the principal contradiction to be between the ruling class of U.S. imperialism and its operations and apparatuses on the one hand, and the exploited and oppressed multiracial working class and oppressed nationalities on the other. The Program Demand Group's unity resides in our shared focus on the particular nature of imperialism that places the oppression of nations, both external and internal to U.S. borders, at the center of the complex interrelationships between class, race, and gender oppression. We characterize the U.S. as a settler state which fed the growth of European empires that gave birth to capitalism and its system of nation-states. The United States was built by extracting superprofits gained from genocide of the indigenous peoples, the stealing of lands, the enslavement of African peoples, and profiteering from speculation in slave trade. We live with this inheritance as a foundation of both the U.S. economy and the global capitalist system.

As a result, we see the United States as a multinational state comprised of many peoples, many of whom have not been incorporated into the "one nation, indivisible"—as defined by the colonial settler revolution for independence from the British Empire and for the formation of a modern bourgeois nation-state. Therefore, by definition, the U.S. nation-state is an illegitimate and unstable form of government. Further, given that the colonization of the Americas provided a material foundation for European capitalism and its 500 year history of development, *we believe that class relations in the United States are defined by the subjugation of nations*, especially as the U.S. exercises its role as the greatest imperial nation.

Recognizing peoples of color within the U.S. as well as Third World peoples outside of the U.S. as oppressed nationalities acknowledges that whole nations and peoples within this "one nation" continue to suffer

under U.S. imperialism. *We carry out our work based on the belief that all oppressed-nationality peoples within the United States have a "conditional" relationship to the state. This conditional relationship is the most basic concept we use to acknowledge the history of forced enclosure (or participation) within a falsely unified state as well as the variety of forms of exclusion experienced today by the different oppressed nationality peoples who reside within the so-called "homeland."*

As a group, we have not developed clarity about the particular character of national oppression specific to the wide variety of different peoples living inside the U.S.—Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, Korean, Vietnamese, Jamaican, Haitian, Trinidadian, Barbadian, Grenadian, Puerto Rican, Dominican, Nicaraguan, Salvadoran, Pakistani, Saudi Arabian, South African, Nigerian, Chicano, black and indigenous peoples—and other peoples who, taken together, are commonly referred to as "people of color." These distinctions are important for any particular people in determining their demands, yet the basic principle remains the same: the attitude of the Left toward specific oppressed nationality peoples must be one that recognizes their conditional relationship to the state and supports expansion of their rights, whatever specific forms that might take. At this point, we cannot be clear about many important questions: which peoples constitute an actual "nation" internal to the U.S.; which could be coalesced as a national minority "autonomous region"; which peoples are dispersed and suffer national oppression and racial discrimination wherever they reside in the U.S.; which peoples are foreign-national immigrants; which peoples are super-exploited workers imported as cheap labor or forced from their homelands by U.S. foreign policy-created poverty. But we do know that we share commitment to the recognition of national oppression internal to the

United States; this recognition gives an explanation to the complex relations we see everyday as organizers and allows for the possibility of self-determination, regional autonomy, or reparations—demands that, if fought for, would not be within the right of the white majority electorate to deny!

Also, we believe that the various oppressed peoples movements of resistance are critical to the Left in this country, and that the working class strata within these movements has an historic role to play in both the class struggle and the various struggles for national liberation, equality, and freedom from Great Nation supremacy. The widening divide of classes in the United States locates peoples of color, particularly women, in the lowest strata of the working class, making the importance of the oppressed nationality working class to the class struggle of the multinational laboring force evident. While the entire working class is exploited, the capitalist drive for superexploitation leads to many of the most egregious “class” attacks, which are directed against the working class of color, and against women of color in particular—that is, the strata comprised of various indigenous peoples, descendants of slaves, and immigrants from Third World nations—with negative impacts on poor white workers as well. Of equal importance, this group comprises the working class strata within each multi-class oppressed nationality. For these reasons, we see the oppressed nationality working class, predominantly female, as the main force for the successful development of an antiimperialist united front within the U.S. This force is capable of leading both the multinational working class movements and the liberation movements of specific nationalities. These movements, which are so often counterposed, become natural allies under common leadership with a common enemy.

Given the importance we place on national oppression, we are working to understand the relationship between national oppression and racism. We recognize that the system of European colonial domination long-ago elaborated a variety of systems of demarcation for peoples designated as inferior for the purposes of subordination. Patriarchy legitimates the supremacy of men over women by creating a “gender” distinction. National oppression establishes another system of domination/subjugation justified through theories of fundamental biological difference based on reactionary

pseudo-scientific “race” categories.

Within the U.S., racism takes the form of white supremacy which gives privileges to even the least fortunate if they are designated “white.” “Not-white” people of color, including the bourgeois strata, are subjected to racism by the dominant white Great Nation culture, which is institutionalized in all corporate and state apparatuses. Because racism takes on a power that can be disconnected from any immediate self-interest of the perpetrators, it has become relatively autonomous from its economic imperative. It then becomes a material force in its own right, through which discrimination determines who gets food, shelter, transportation, healthcare, education. White supremacist ideology is completely interwoven with the development of imperialism. While the mechanisms of national oppression we have just described are hidden (by many progressives as well as the ruling class), racism’s vicious power is in our face and impossible to deny. This is why we affirm our basic unity as a group in the struggle against racism; we are committed to building an antiracist movement within the United States.

We believe that the relationship between racism and national oppression is illustrated in the U.S. criminal justice system, which is the primary method of state repression of people of color—particularly those who refuse to consent to the U.S. system of superexploitation. The U.S. ranks the highest country in the world in the percentage of its population in prison; every effort to overturn mass convictions on the grounds that blacks, Latinos, and Native Americans are overwhelmingly overrepresented in the prisons has been rejected by the courts. Racial profiling and laws like California’s Three Strikes target men of color regardless of their class. While blacks comprise only 7 percent of California’s population, they are over 60 percent of inmates imprisoned under the Three Strikes law! *This is certainly institutionalized racism; it is also the subjugation of entire groups of historically-constituted oppressed nationality peoples.*

Liberals often lament, correctly, that the U.S. is one of the few advanced industrial nations that still has the death penalty. But that hides the fact that the U.S. is the most racist advanced capitalist country with the largest “minority” populations of blacks, Latinos, and Asian/Pacific Islanders. The massive explosion in public executions is part of the counterrevolution against the

antiracist victories of the New Left in the United States, which had at one time effectively pressured many states and the Supreme Court to revoke the death penalty. Of course there are also white people murdered by the state, but the driving force is consent to the U.S. history of genocide that takes the particular form of fear and hatred of black people by the white majority. *This is certainly racism; it is also the consent to annihilation of an oppressed nation.*

Despite this oppression, resistance continues on a daily basis in communities across the country. We believe that challenges to this racist and genocidal criminal justice system are fundamental to any strategy for ending racism and national oppression in the U.S.

In order to combat racism, national oppression, and their economic underbelly—class exploitation, we form organizations that bring together many peoples to find bases for unity while learning about each other’s specific different needs. Since its inception, the Labor/Community Strategy Center has worked to build democratic structures that challenge racism at its core as it impacts all communities of color, each in specific ways. If the Left can’t figure out how oppressed nationality peoples can work together to defeat racism, the Right will present multiracial “opportunities.”

The U.S. ruling class has a long history of organizing potentially oppositional forces into their U.S. imperialist coalition, for example, the AFL-CIO and the bourgeoisie of color. The Bush administration offers the latest example in understanding the value to imperialism of a racially diverse, but ideologically unified, ruling class. Many working class blacks take pride in the accomplishments of Secretary of State Colin Powell, yet it was his job to make the decision to pull the U.S. out of the UN World Conference Against Racism. As this ruling junta accelerates its war plans, the rush to assimilate oppressed nations into its imperialist plans includes the invitation to rulers of all nations to be part of the U.S. regime—or risk being bombed for harboring so-called terrorists!

DILEMMAS FOR THE LEFT

Again, we have the dilemma of how to proceed when progressive people are not unified around a shared understanding of the interrelationship between class

exploitation, national oppression, racism and patriarchy internal to the U.S. *This divide is surely the greatest obstacle to the advancement of struggles of resistance in the United States.* Many progressives believe that the principal contradiction within the U.S. is simple—between the working class and capitalism. They believe that a focus of antiracism “divides” the working class, and, conversely, that campaigns for affirmative action on the basis of race lead to charges of “reverse discrimination,” which these progressives believe have helped consolidate the white electorate who have been allowed to vote to eliminate any such policies. And, there are many revolutionary nationalists who are so righteously furious with the longstanding chauvinism of the U.S. Left that they reject working in multiracial campaigns, much less with white progressives. Also, there are antiracist activists who believe that racial oppression within capitalism—as distinct from national oppression inherent under imperialism—is the central problem within the U.S. All of these forces are potentially part of an antiimperialist united front.

We believe that any real left unity will be achieved by sharing the understanding that racist ideology, institutions, and policies are powerful historically constructed forces in U.S. society and politics, rooted in the oppression of nations which is fundamental to the strength of the U.S. political economy. In this context, we focus on demands that challenge U.S. hegemony at its racist core. We recognize that the feverish relegation of slavery to a momentary moral lapse and the consequent refusal to produce serious plans for redress and reparations for the continuing legacy of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade is central to *international white supremacy*. Assassination of the U.S. Black Left in particular, and imprisonment of colonial subjects in general, is a cornerstone of U.S. police force tactics for dealing with “insurgents.” Thus, we regard the struggle for reparations as a fundamental aspect of the struggle for self-determination among peoples of African descent.

With regard to issues like language rights, we uphold the equality of languages as a form of equality of nations and peoples. By framing these types of demands as a means to remedy national oppression, it becomes clear that there is no such thing as “reverse discrimination” within the United States; there is no such thing as suffering discrimination for being part of the dominant nation; there is no discrimination for

speaking English.

Constituting another dilemma, demands on the bourgeois State to intervene against other sectors of the State and corporations involve tactical alliances with sectors of the same capitalist State we aim to challenge. Examples from our work include asking federal courts to uphold the Civil Rights Act to restrain and compel the MTA; asking the MTA board to curtail rail contractors; asking the Air Quality Management District (AQMD) to regulate the MTA and the diesel bus industry. This produces tremendous confusion. On the one hand, it's easy to fall into the ideology that the State will rescue us from racism or "truth will win"; on the other hand, it is easy to think that if we are opposed to state-institutionalized national oppression, we can't fight to advance democratic rights or make demands that expand the social welfare state without succumbing to capitalist domination. At the Strategy Center, we spend a great deal of time experimenting in our campaign development so as to avoid both of these dead-end positions. We often devise plans that use the state to expose the state. This involves a complex dialectic of confrontation and compromise, winning immediate reforms while developing new structures of resistance from which to make greater demands on the system.

U.S. RESPONSIBILITY FOR NATIONAL OPPRESSION AND RACISM WITHIN THE UNITED STATES

STRATEGIC DEMANDS AROUND WHICH THE STRATEGY CENTER'S PROGRAM DEMAND GROUP IS UNIFIED

We call upon the U.S. government to reveal and repeal all policies that structurally reinforce national oppression and racism. We call upon the U.S. government to recognize the principle of self-determination for all nations of indigenous peoples, for Puerto Rico and Hawaii, for people of African descent enslaved in the United States, and for the Chicanos of the southwest whose land was stolen by the U.S., and to take responsibility for redress and reparations. We call upon the U.S. government to establish full and effective equality for all oppressed nationality peoples inside the United States.

FOCAL CAMPAIGNS WE PRIORITIZE

- U.S. government, eliminate immigrant-nationality and racial profiling, especially the current wrongful detention of people who appear to be Middle Eastern; abolish the Immigration and Naturalization Service and open the borders!
- U.S. federal and state governments, free the U.S. Two Million—immediately release from prison all indigenous, black and Latino colonial subjects and unconditionally fund community controlled education, detoxification and job placement programs. Free political prisoners Leonard Peltier and Mumia Abu Jamal!
- U.S. governmental bodies, recognize specifically the sovereignty and control of all lands claimed by the nations of Native American peoples. Grant full equality to all U.S. nationalities and the right of self-determination to any oppressed nation.
- U.S. government, make reparations to African nations and to black people in the U.S. and throughout the African Diaspora for centuries of the barbaric Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade.

III. U.S. Responsibility for Subjugation of Women Around the Globe and Within the U.S.

What can the organized Left and the social movements demand of the institutions of U.S. imperialism to counter the subjugation of women?

CURRENT CONDITIONS

The exploitation and abuse of women across the globe is escalating. At the same time, women everywhere are resisting, and the movements of women in the Third World are placing demands on the U.S. military, in particular, and on international bodies such as the United Nations to stop the mass murder of women and children and to establish global standards for women's rights in general. There is tremendous motion, yet the international Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1979, is still not ratified by the United States. The Bush administration is using defense of women's rights as a justification for a war that kills women and children. The President himself promotes the right-wing religious fundamentalism that has led the attack on hard-won women's rights inside the U.S. Around the world and right in their own home, U.S. corporations, the U.S. military, and all U.S. institutions of governance insist upon the structural subjugation of women, in fact, play a leading role in violating presumed inalienable rights.

Male supremacy, including men's groups organizing to protect their dominance and individual male brutality, seems to be on the rise. Yet it is U.S. economic and military policies that join forces to effectively and massively control women's bodies. The U.S. executes policies of "population control," such as forced sterilization of poor and oppressed nationality women, on the one hand and denies affordable birth control and access to safe abortion on the other. The U.S. promotes pharmaceutical research that uses the bodies of Third World women for testing and is complicit with the sex-slave trade and prostitution that cater to U.S. military bases and business/corporate class men nationally and internationally. The U.S. backs structural adjustment policies that displace women small farmers in favor of transnational agricultural corporations and thereby drive girls and women of all ages into prostitution. As the unchecked military power

of the United States is projected across the globe, the confluence between gendered oppression, sexual violence and military aggression grows daily.

Women now constitute the majority of the poor in the Western countries and the bulk of the Third World labor force. As Maria Meis has analyzed beginning with *Women: The Last Colony*, women's labor in particular is relegated to invisible sectors—concentrated in Free Production Zones employed by large-scale manufacturers at very low wages, in small-scale production better known as "income generating activity," in subsistence agriculture, in caregiving and domestic labor, in the transnational sex trade—where women are isolated and unorganized.

These conditions pervade every area of our political work; every campaign is a campaign for the liberation of women and needs to be understood in those terms.

We believe it is critical to understand the interdependence of class exploitation, the exploitation of nations and peoples, and the subjugation of women under imperialism. We do not see distinct systems of patriarchy, capitalism, and national/colonial exploitation. Today these operations are causally linked in one world system—imperialism—which cannot survive without patriarchy. This requires an understanding that the subjugation of women is based in the *exploitation* of women. The oppressions of sexual discrimination, inequality of rights, objectification and domination by men in general have a material basis in the superexploitation of women in the informal economy of subsistence production and reproduction of the species.

We recognize imperialist patriarchy as a foundation for extraction of surplus value and understand violence against women as fundamental to colonial conquest and superexploitation achieved

through low-paid and unpaid labor. Women do not voluntarily submit to these conditions. Millions of women have been raped, tortured, murdered and had their property confiscated in the development of capitalism. Violence today is not simply a leftover from a feudal past, but rather it is totally integral to the development of capitalism. Patriarchy today ensures “ownership” of women’s bodies (in production and reproduction) as well as the conquest of nature and appropriation of colonies as property.

Patriarchy has developed as a structure of familial relationships through which the head of family, designated as father, owns his wife, his and her offspring, property, livestock, servants, serfs, slaves. Patriarchy constructs all relations of economic domination and dependence as familial. Rooted in patriarchal systems that predate and transcend particular modes of production, the sexual division of labor has provided the basis for the gendered division of labor in the international economy and all political, social and military institutions. This international division of labor denotes wage labor as “male” and non-wage labor (servant or subsistence labor) as “female.” This is the ideology with which international development strategies are implemented.

The “visible” exploitation of male wage labor in the advanced industrial countries could only come about on the backs of women in the advanced capitalist countries and colonized peoples, predominantly women. The formally recognized wage laborer then is given a so-called “family wage” in order to establish himself as a nuclear family patriarch and thus believes he has a stake in the global system of imperialist patriarchy.

Imperialist patriarchy entails the subjugation of women and oppression of nations and colonies in a predatory mode of production that needs warfare, conquest and accumulation. Colonization and housewifization are inextricably linked in a process Maria Meis calls “universal housewifization.” To be “housewifed” means that—female or male, spouse or child, in a home, a factory, a field, or a street—your labor is “gendered” and regarded as that of a “free good” given by nature. Labor such as the nurturing of a wife/mother is considered natural, outside of work and society; more specifically, the labor of marriage and child bearing, the labor of education and socialization of children to become

future producers and consumers, and the labor of “nurturer” of the worker are considered given freely by nature, therefore invisible to the economy. According to nuclear family ideology, if a woman is a “housewife,” she is not the primary breadwinner. Her income is considered “supplemental” so she will work for less pay. Ironically, this in fact makes women the most desirable labor force. They become head of household while being designated “wife”—both by an economy that does not want to recognize their labor and also often by their own partner who has been forced to compete for lower wages or be displaced from the wage labor market. In many households such dynamics create the conditions for domestic violence.

In previous sections we have described how the superexploitation of colonies, nations and peoples is fundamental to the process of capitalist accumulation, especially in the current stage of imperialist global integration. The superexploitation of women through no-wage and low-wage labor is fundamental to both the exploitation of wage labor in the industrialized countries and the superexploitation of nations, in which women undertake the majority of labor. We have described the role that conquest of colonies played in funding early capitalism. Without the superexploitation of women—as invisible no-wage labor in the home (precondition for the proletarianization of the man) and invisible low-wage labor in social production—capitalism could never have developed. Taken together, the subjugation and superexploitation of women and conquered peoples creates an international invisible economy made up of highly productive but unrecognized (and unaccounted for) labor. This is imperialist patriarchy in which the global “family” is defined by a few transnational corporations as patriarchs who view oppressed nations and peoples as either the “free goods” of nature or the accumulation of productive property.

Then there is the supremacy/submission *ideology* that has taken on a relatively autonomous life of its own as sexism, misogyny (the hatred of women) and subordination occur in every gendered relationship—whether between corporate patriarchs and their female labor force or between husband and wife bonded in the wedlock of the nuclear family. The ideology of male supremacy pervades so-called civilized societies; it can be found in the very social construction

of nature as “female” and not yet colonized lands as “virgin,” in the metaphor through which “man married to the sea” is used to describe man’s voyage to gain control over nature, and in the language employed by the Left to describe settler exploitation of natural resources, “the rape of the land.” As we discussed earlier when looking at the ideology of racism, these ideological constructs (while always in some way related to economic imperatives) develop a logic of their own that becomes itself a material force.

Although explicitly gender-based oppression is unquestionably on the rise, none of the main types of social organizations in the U.S. that have arisen to combat such oppression today seem able to link the struggle for women’s liberation with struggles for national liberation and international class struggle. Thus, the organized sectors of the U.S. working class remain bitterly divided, unable to effectively confront even the basest gender oppression. The predominantly white women’s movement remains unable to effectively dialogue with women of color, and often seems led by class interests very similar to those which seek to guide the black and Latino middle class. While organizations comprised of women of color throughout the world aim to link these struggles, they confront triple and sometimes quadruple “jeopardies,” often doing so with only tangential support or even awareness from women in the United States.

At the same time, women’s liberation cannot happen without an antiimperialist analysis. For this reason, we choose to look to the organized Third World women’s movements for our strategic focus.

DILEMMAS FOR THE LEFT

Perhaps the biggest dilemma for the Left with regard to the position of women internationally is how to develop unity about the status of gendered subjugation and the role and responsibility of Leftists in the U.S. All too often, because analysis of the subjugation of women focuses not on exploitation but on the oppression of women—discrimination, violence, rape and harassment by men, exclusion, even misogyny—capitalism and male supremacy are viewed as two separate systems. This leads to tremendous disorientation and down right hopelessness because of the lack of a viable comprehensive strategy.

Even Marxists who focus on women’s liberation through the integration of women in production miss the essence of the problem by conciliating with the erasure of women’s unpaid labor. *Women do not need to “enter production;” we are already always at the heart of production.*

Another dilemma is that being a women is not more unifying to women across the world than being different nationalities, races and classes. It is not only disunifying but antagonistic. White and middle class Western women are on the defensive, benefiting from but often rejecting feminism. Moreover, these women disregard and exploit the working class women of color they rely on to replace them in the home as childcare workers and maids in order to achieve their own gains. At the same time, superexploited and oppressed women of color the world over experience class, nationality, race and gender as one human being. They must not be made to choose identity. Yet because they are often, in fact, faced with that choice, they rarely ally with the Western movement for women’s equality; rather, they have given birth to many campaigns of women organized to resist U.S. imperialism that make the struggle for women’s liberation part of a national liberation strategy.

A persistent dilemma for the Left is posed by the fact that there seems to be a need for state intervention against male brutality for the protection of women; repeat abuse of women, spouses and children is rampant. At the same time, 2 million men and women—predominantly blacks and Latinos, who we have called colonial subjects—are in prisons, and there is no way under the current legal and judicial systems to stop the racialization of enforcement and sentencing. Further, the very women who seek protection and, due to sexism, do not get taken seriously by the police or the legal system are all too often taken very seriously when the State can put them in prison for self-defense against male attackers—be they partners or strangers. We have learned that calls for community control of police or for a “people’s enforcement” system are commonly co-opted by the State apparatuses themselves—a case in point is the police-led “Neighborhood Watch” that trains neighbors to watch each other. Now Bush wants expansion of Neighborhood Watch and recruitment of volunteers for a “homeland security” force called the USA Freedom Core.

We want to address the serious obstacle that violence against women poses for our work, while we continue to explore various approaches to transform this critical contradiction. We want to recognize the State's responsibility to protect basic women's right to not suffer from misogyny, yet craft demands that don't reinforce the criminal justice system or U.S. intervention in Third World countries. We talk throughout this paper about exercising our rights to demand social services from the State. We think that we should demand of the State every possible resource that can protect women, such as shelters, physical and mental health care, resources for reconstructing lives, creation of jobs, childcare, educational programs for anger management and violence prevention.

Our focus then is on demanding U.S. governmental compliance with all standards of equality for women and children and on U.S. government funding of all social service resources needed to aid women in obtaining protection from violence. And, as part of our commitment to reparations, we make demands for redress for past acts of cruelty, misogyny and genocide suffered by oppressed nationality women in the brutal white male supremacist construction of the U.S.—both within this country and throughout the world.

U.S. RESPONSIBILITY FOR SUBJUGATION OF WOMEN AROUND THE GLOBE AND WITHIN THE UNITED STATES

STRATEGIC DEMANDS AROUND WHICH THE STRATEGY CENTER'S PROGRAM DEMAND GROUP IS UNIFIED

We call upon the U.S. government and all U.S. corporations to take action to advance economic, cultural, and political independence for women. We call upon the U.S. government to act affirmatively against state-sanctioned forms of misogyny, discrimination, subjugation, including sexual and economic brutality, and male supremacy against women.

FOCAL CAMPAIGNS WE PRIORITIZE

- U.S. government and U.S. corporations, reverse all policies that foster, explicitly and tacitly, the superexploitation of women, trafficking in women, particularly at U.S. military bases, and acts of hatred and violence against women.
- U.S. government, ratify the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and fulfill the commitments of the Beijing World Conference on Women's Rights; act now to enforce its provisions.
- U.S. government, reinstate AFDC (Aid to Families with Dependent Children)—guarantee jobs or income, free childcare, transportation and health care.
- All U.S. governmental institutions and U.S. corporations, act now to ensure the right of women to control their own bodies. Guarantee free and accessible abortions and free birth control in the United States and throughout the Third World; fund these medical services vital to women's very lives. End all practices of "population control" and social control that result in forced surgical and chemical sterilization, and dumping of dangerous birth control methods into Third World countries, which constitute genocide of future generations of oppressed peoples.

IV. U.S. Responsibility for Degradation of the Environment and Destruction of Public Health

What can the organized Left and the social movements demand of the institutions of U.S. imperialism to counter degradation of the environment and destruction of the human species?

CURRENT CONDITIONS

The colonization of nature is fundamental to every act of empire building. Capitalist empire building is unsustainable, beginning with the expanding need for control of land and water—with all the natural resources they produce. As we discussed in the previous section, we connect the historic subjugation of women with the feminization of nature, which Mankind seeks to conquer, and with the systematic imperialist exploitation of so-called “untamed” lands and “uncivilized” nations and peoples in the guise of globalizing “modern democracy.”

The U.S. drive to colonize every resource in every remote terrain of nature has destroyed natural ecologies as well as agrarian economies the world over. Around the world and within the United States, the ecological crisis continues to expand: the globe is warming, the food is contaminated, the air is lethal, and women, children and workers are dying of environmentally caused and exacerbated disease.

Earth Day 1970 took place during the “two decades of the sixties” when the civil rights, black liberation, and anti-Vietnam war movements were at their height. Those movements proposed a radical environmentalism that was part of the New Left, and had a strong anti-war, anti-nuclear component. Over the years, an environmental establishment that has pushed for modest but still significant limitations on corporate behavior has supplanted that radical approach.

Barry Commoner, in the late 1980s, wrote a stinging condemnation of the environmental establishment, arguing that its emphasis on reducing and even regulating toxic chemical production was ultimately bankrupt, as more chemicals that are toxic were in the environment each year. His biological principle was simple: “Everything has to go somewhere.” Once polluting chemicals are produced they must go into the air, or water, or earth, and from there into plants and animals, overwhelmingly

impacting poor communities and communities of color. Thus, the core of environmental policy had to be the banning of all polluting chemicals and the mandatory enforcement of non-polluting alternatives. This would require the most aggressive role for the state, in regulating profit driven corporations, through a “command and control” form of the most stringent restrictions, penalties, and interventions. His radical ecological analysis led us to radical political conclusions—the only hope was a Left movement to transform and control production, based on the broadest political agenda, such as Dr. King’s antiracist, anti-poverty, anti-war strategy, or a hoped for Red/Green alliance.

During the early 1990s, an environmental justice movement, rooted in low-income communities of color, gained greater prominence. It challenged the environmental, upper middle class establishment; it accelerated the militancy of the movement, and drew far more compelling connections between corporate chemical production, air, water, and on-the-ground toxics and a public health epidemic among poor oppressed nationality people. Despite Al Gore’s *Earth in the Balance* rhetoric before the election, he and Clinton spent eight years focused on the expansion of stock market wealth and imperialist influence in the world economy. They capitulated to corporate hostility toward state regulation, rather than initiating radical state incursions into corporate industrial and chemical processes. By the end of the 1990s and the beginning of the 21st century, after promising beginnings of the environmental movement in terms of state regulation of environmental standards—e.g. the Clean Air Act of 1970—*corporate science overpowered environmental science*. While the environmental movement has lost momentum, power, and public support, communities of color and labor unions have been threatened and seduced with the mantra of “jobs”

and “community economic development.” Bizarre and later discredited schemes for “pollution trading,” that is the buying and selling of pollution “credits” between polluting companies reflected the free market attack on state regulation and the dismantling of effective and compulsory laws to ban or dramatically phase out known carcinogens and other toxins.

Bush Jr.’s administration began with selective incursions into what remained of even moderate liberal state policy—testing the waters before making more far reaching right-wing attacks. Bush’s efforts to legitimize arsenic in water, his talk of drilling for oil in Alaska, his open focus on oil production rather than the most minimal ecological conservation gave the Democrats weapons. Since they had no real fundamental differences, or proposed no alternative, they seized on “the environment” in the most limited sense, as a safe majority issue with a white, privileged electorate. But all of that was destroyed in the bipartisan hysteria after September 11. Bush openly advertised that he plans to use the widespread public support for his war against the world to manipulate his advantage, “use his capital” as he aptly calls it, to push through and expand his agenda. Defiantly, he asserts that global warming is not a problem, he plans to gut the 1970 Clean Air Act and he refuses to ratify the Kyoto protocols. U.S. society, with its white conservative majority, is in a period of reactionary hysteria; virtually any regressive environmental programs—especially those that combine blatant appeals to U.S. xenophobia with pandering to reactionary U.S. trade unions on the “jobs” issue—will be very hard to defeat, particularly in the short run. Under these conditions, liberals expose themselves as the most cowardly defenders of imperialism and the most patriotic collaborators with the Right. But it is precisely in these seemingly hopeless moments that the Left has its greatest opportunities; just as Bush plans to “use his capital,” we plan to “use our labor.”

One of the most structural and devastating ecological challenges is the clear and present danger of global warming. We are in the process of expanding our knowledge of its causes and effects, but we already know that greenhouse gases, such as carbon dioxide, emitted from automobiles and electricity generating emissions from the burning of coal are among the worst culprits. The impacts make any Hollywood disaster film pale by comparison. On March 19, 2002, “an Antarctic ice shelf the size of a small country disintegrated under the impact

of global warming”—the Larson B ice shelf, that existed for 12,000 years has disintegrated over a period of 35 days. This crisis motivates our desire to build international relationships and participate in the antiimperialist challenges that will be raised at the World Summit on Sustainable Development to be held in Johannesburg in August 2002.

Through participation in the UN preparatory conferences, we hear chilling first hand commentaries from the Alliance of Small Island States. Nations like Samoa have talked about how the warming of the oceans by only a few degrees over the past few decades have had profoundly disruptive impacts on the viability of their entire society. Tuna, a major source of export and foreign exchange, have been moving away from the island and its fishermen because the increase in sea water temperatures have diverted their natural trajectories. The warmer water is deteriorating coral reefs that have protected the coastlines for centuries, leading to massive flooding and growing coastal inundation. On some island states with very little inland territory, their coastlines essentially bind them and the flooding has required them to build massive concrete dams that last for a few years and then collapse under the water pressure. Friends from Guyana in South America have told us that their seacoast is more than 1 meter under water and again the floods are devastating peoples homes and livestock—the country of less than 1 million people is threatened by massive out-migration. In a struggle for survival, the Small Island States have issued an international call for a world reduction in fossil fuels by 50% in order to have a chance, again over decades, to reverse the impacts of global warming. In return, as George Bush Sr. told the delegates at Rio in 1992, the U.S. does not intend to change its lifestyle because of threats from other nations. Representatives from the small island states have angrily replied, “for you, autos and SUVs are a question of lifestyle; for us stopping global warming is a matter of life and death.”

The Strategy Center’s Bus Riders Union has already initiated a Billions for Buses campaign and forced the Los Angeles MTA to rebuild its dilapidated bus system, purchasing more than 1800 new Compressed Natural Gas buses and replacing more than 1800 dilapidated diesel buses. Our next challenge will be to organize a more frontal assault on the automobile in Los Angeles, where more than 8 million cars daily pollute the atmosphere, poison the air, and contribute massively to global warming.

Could we build a movement to reduce autos to only 4 million a day? Could we expand the MTA bus fleet from 2300 to 4000 and dramatically expand public transportation options that would combine with restrictions on auto use? Can we advocate for “auto free zones” where only public transportation, bicycles, and pedestrians would be allowed? These are some of the programmatic arenas we are moving in to address the challenge from our friends in the Third World—for the global warming disaster will impact all of us. As usual, it will be provoked by the capitalist west and impact the most dependent third world nations first, but then will come back to wreak havoc with Western imperialist societies as well. We see this work as a high priority and a chance to build life and death alliances between communities and workers in the U.S. with oppressed nations in the Third World fighting for their lives.

Despite very difficult international conditions, there are continued movements in low-income communities of color in the U.S., and movements coming out of the Third World South confronting the industrial North on a wide variety of interrelated ecological abuses. At the World Summit on Sustainable Development, environmental devastation and public health catastrophe will be central to a growing antiimperialist challenge.

DILEMMAS FOR THE LEFT

The united front between the Left and liberals on the environment begins with an agreement that profit-driven corporate behavior must be regulated by the capitalist state in the interests of public good. The Left faces the dilemma of how to develop unity on demands that account for the contradictory behavior of the state under capitalism. This problem is reflected in a structural contradiction: since the capitalist class controls both political parties, the State, and society at large, it is extremely difficult for the state to regulate the corporations that it serves. Environmental regulation does restrict profits, does ban entire products and even industries—and thus, cannot help but generate the most ferocious counterattack from oil, atomic, chemical, auto, rubber, and virtually every other heavy industry. While the 1990s in particular reflected an initial period of popular anti-corporate environmental regulation—the polluters have regained the political and ideological offensive. More powerful and sophisticated corporate lobbyists, often with the active support of

reactionary trade unions that are willing to do their master’s bidding in a desperate push for jobs at any cost, began a *deregulatory assault*. They worked to remove appointed environmentalists from environmental agencies, cut the funds and authority of regulatory agencies, pass regulations that are even more permissive than existing pollution levels, and extend timelines for compliance.

The Strategy Center, through its Labor/Community Watchdog project, devoted more than five years to direct organizing in low-income communities of color to protect the public health from assault—most directly from LA’s massive oil refineries. The Center and the Watchdog organized a powerful county-wide coalition which won passage of a strong air toxics law—the Right to Know rule—at the South Coast Air Quality Management District (AQMD). Under the rule, any companies that emitted toxics at a concentration above a “1 person per million” cancer exposure standard would be required to inform community residents of the chemicals to which they are exposed. Had it been implemented, the Right to Know rule would have created the conditions to pass very strict “toxic use reduction” regulations that would have mandated companies to radically change their industrial processes and phase out many carcinogenic chemicals. However, in response, the polluters—lead by the Western States Petroleum Association—launched a massive counteroffensive, took over the AQMD board and, despite our most militant and organized resistance, passed an air toxics standard that was *twice as carcinogenic as the existing, unregulated level of emissions*. Most companies could then boast that they were in compliance with federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) standards because the Clinton/Gore administration did virtually nothing to raise standards and in many cases granted additional delays and exemptions to even the existing weak ones.

Thus, a contradiction the Left must address is that while we make demands on the State to regulate and enforce environmental standards, the capitalists control the State and use its powers to legitimize industrial poisoning and to make ecological assaults even more “legal.” The negative impacts of these actions are often concentrated in low-income communities of color but they threatening the ecological viability of the entire society and the planet.

In order to combat this assault, an anti-corporate united front needs unity on its view of the State. As with

regard to other issues, we do not rely on the State just because there is a good law or regulation on paper; nor do we oppose placing demands on the State that contend with the corporate agenda. We seek ways to use the State to expose the State while fighting for actual gains.

A second contradiction is that the greatest ecological crisis of Western imperialism is being forced on oppressed nations and peoples outside the U.S., and yet those nations are presently in a world situation of dependency and inequality that prevents them from establishing independent, ecologically viable alternative means of sustainable development. This forced dependency and violation of self-determination takes many forms, such as the exporting of banned chemicals from the West into the Third World. There are many instances—the most well-known is that of DDT—where chemicals proven to be hazardous, toxic, and carcinogenic, are banned in the West, but instead of destroying the products or even ceasing to produce them, U.S. transnationals unload them onto Third World nations. These practices kill children as well as the workers who must use these poisons. Many Third World nations are placed in a horrific contradiction: they are aware of the devastating impacts of Western models of industrial and agricultural chemical driven production, but they are saddled with debt, coerced by imperialist dominated institutions such as the World Bank, WTO and IMF. Under these conditions, these exploited and oppressed nations must compete with the advanced capitalist nations in a global context and, therefore, often approach environmental issues seeking solutions that are as “cheap” as possible.

If individual nations try to have higher environmental standards than the U.S., as can be seen in the growing “fair trade” movement, they are vulnerable to retaliation for undermining free competition—as the U.S. has retaliated against France for its efforts to ban U.S. hormone injected beef. Similarly, the U.S. uses the threat of competition from countries it has forced into underdevelopment as a basis for deregulation of its own domestic environmental standards, claiming that they threaten U.S. competitiveness in foreign markets consume and destroy the land, natural habitat, and ecological viability of the planet.

This is made even more difficult because of the particularly reactionary trajectory of U.S. imperialism at this point in its history. During the height of socialist and

Third World influence, there were efforts at liberal imperialist theory: coexistence with socialist forms of economic development, foreign aid to help Third World nations “take off” through a jump start of Western capital for example. But today, without the counterforce to push the debate to the left, both the Clinton and Bush strategies of imperialist economic development have focused on the greatest penetration of U.S. imperialism into the world economy—ruthlessly driving nature and society to its will. Clinton’s tactics involved a massive stock market bubble, the penetration and consolidation of foreign markets into world economic institutions that tried to mask political and military domination, and the domination of international institutions. Bush focuses on U.S. unilateralism and brute force; both offer an *ecological colonialism* that is consuming and destroying the land, natural habitat, and ecological viability of the planet.

This leads to our emphasis on developing international standards to ban toxic chemicals worldwide. Yet, this demand must be combined with debt relief, widespread reparations, and actual non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries by the US, the EU, and the regional sub-imperialists to allow Third World nations to have a chance to pursue non-toxic models of industrial production. This scenario requires a major expansion of Third World revolutionary activity and organization.

Another contradiction exists in the international scale of struggle against imperialism today. The U.S.—in violation of international, ecological, and war crimes statutes and conventions—has implemented an international war of terrorism against the entire planet, and is using massive aerial bombardment of the most grotesque and devastating proportions to destroy entire societies, natural habitats, and ecosystems, the most recent of which are in Afghanistan and Palestine. The U.S. permanent war against the world threatens the ecological viability of the planet—this is not science fiction but, unfortunately, indisputable scientific fact.

Thus, we are giving greater attention to international bodies that at least purport to advocate world peace, ecological sustainability, and human rights—in particular the United Nations. We think that international forums in general, and the UN in particular, are important arenas for the U.S. Left. It is energizing and consciousness-raising for low-income, working class organizers of black, Latino, and Asian/Pacific Islander

communities to understand more fully their relationship to the Third World and its diverse realities. It can be truly empowering to meet first hand antiimperialist social movements, activists, and organizers from the Third World, and also Europe, in the international spaces and forums created by the UN.

And yet, the Left is weak and faces the dilemma that most groups are forced to prioritize either international alliances or grassroots organizing. Most grassroots groups have very little capacity for such work. Most of the groups doing this work are national non-governmental organizations (NGOs) with very few ties to—let alone membership/leadership in—the working class of color, or any communities of color.

There is not much value in building an “international alliance” of groups without a base of people in struggle, and yet the groups that are most committed to building a militant grassroots base have little financial or organizational capacity to carry out sustained international work, either inside or outside of the UN.

A related dilemma is strategic as well as tactical: we lack agreement on how to approach the inherent contradictions of international governmental forms. Even when groups have the capacity to maneuver in its spaces, the UN is a double-edged sword. While it does provide an important international arena for challenges to U.S. imperialism, it is often a bureaucratized and ossified institution dominated by the U.S. imperialists and the G8 bandits. There are some on the Left who feel that the U.S. is so often able to push through its will on the UN through the structure of the Security Council, despite General Assembly protests, that the UN legitimizes U.S. aggression in the world more than checks it. Our view is that the balance of benefits and costs right now favor an active experiment in working within UN structures, supporting initiatives from the nations of the South that are objectively antiimperialist—such as debt cancellation and bans on corporate theft of natural resources from indigenous peoples. As one important arena in which to understand the current balance of forces internationally, the work does not proceed without areas of concern and potential danger.

U.S. RESPONSIBILITY FOR DEGRADATION OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND DESTRUCTION OF PUBLIC HEALTH

STRATEGIC DEMANDS AROUND WHICH THE STRATEGY CENTER'S PROGRAM DEMAND GROUP IS UNIFIED

We call on the U.S. government and U.S. transnational corporations to ban known carcinogens, toxic chemicals, and smog producing pollutants from manufacture, thereby using government regulation to force a public health and environmental revolution in industrial products and processes. We call on the U.S. government to prohibit and stop the export of banned chemicals and to provide reparations for its environmental and public health imperialism in communities of color in the U.S. and in the Third World. We call on the U.S. government to attend, stop sabotaging, and implement the recommendations of international conferences and treaties to stop and reverse global warming, to reduce toxic chemicals, to dramatically reduce the production and use of fossil fuel internal combustion engines, and to commit massive funds to produce clean energy technology such as hydrogen fuel cells and solar electric power.

FOCAL CAMPAIGNS WE PRIORITIZE

- U.S. government, implement a zero tolerance for carcinogens policy, prohibiting the manufacture, use, and distribution of a specific list of known carcinogenic and toxic chemicals by U.S. corporations and the Pentagon. U.S. government, mandate a clean fuel policy, reflected in radical fuel economy measures, the phasing out of fossil fuels for autos, and the required use of natural gas, hydrogen fuel cells and electric vehicles, beginning with all government agencies and companies receiving government contracts.
- U.S. government, combat environmental racism by prioritizing the removal of all toxic chemicals and the radical reduction in industrial and auto emissions from Latino, black and other communities of color throughout the United States. U.S. government, remove all toxic chemicals from Native American lands and communities in the U.S., and provide billions for reparations and the creation of economically viable sustainable production under the self-determination of residents. U.S. government, make environmental racism and degradation by U.S. corporations a criminal offense; pass laws making it criminal to violate the civil and human rights of communities of color by destroying public health; make it criminal to dump known toxic chemicals, to subject workers to environmental toxins, and to violate the environmental rights of indigenous peoples internationally, such as the Ogoni of Nigeria; impose severe civil and criminal penalties on corporate executives who violate such laws.
- U.S. government, abide by all international treaties and UN conference resolutions on the environment, human rights, and antiracism, which demand the radical reduction in greenhouse gases, and the provision of massive funds to Third World nations already suffering soil erosion, species extinction, and epidemics caused or exacerbated by climate change and global warming—in particular, implement Agenda 21, the resolutions of the 1992 UN Rio Conference, the Kyoto Accords, the International Criminal Court, the Treaty on Persistent Organizing Pollutants and the forthcoming World Summit on Sustainable Development. US government, implement a national policy to reduce greenhouse gases by 50% in 10 years—far more stringent than Kyoto, and yet called for by the Organization of Small Island States faced with floods and the potential extinction of their islands, populations, and cultures.
- U.S. government, stop the bombing of Afghanistan and halt all plans to bomb other potential targets in the so-called “war on terrorism”; stop the use of aerial bombardment of civilian populations—now anticipated with unmanned planes. Stop the devastation of infrastructure, ecological viability, and public health through the military use of chemical weapons and weapons testing, such as in Vieques. Stop the permanent war against the world and the planet.

V. U.S. ATTACK ON SOCIAL WELFARE WITHIN THE UNITED STATES

What can the organized Left and the social movements demand of the institutions of U.S. imperialism to counter the attacks on social welfare?

CURRENT CONDITIONS

The war on poverty in the U.S.—initiated by the Johnson presidency during the Vietnam War era—is over, but the war on the poor is in full swing. The “safety net” won by the U.S. working class in the 1930s—the social welfare state concept of unemployment, social security and welfare—is being systematically dismantled. The Reagan administration launched the attack which was then advanced by Clinton and Gore through massive and cruel “welfare reform.” Under George W. Bush, *corporate welfare* is unabashed at the same time that structural adjustment debt is forced onto Third World countries.

The social safety net has been torn to shreds; living without a home has now become an illegal act. The class divide between rich and poor in the United States continues to widen. The State’s abandonment of social welfare has led to this growing polarization which concentrates people of color, predominantly women, in the low-wage and no-wage working class. The evidence further illustrates systematic national oppression, racism, and subjugation of women.

The Bush administration plans to continue shifting state resources from the poor to the rich, from public education to private prisons, from healthcare to weapons research. Domestically, the elimination of the social welfare state has to be reconciled with the fact that many people desperately need unemployment benefits and social security—never more so than during the current recession, largely created by the speculative practice of corporations like Enron. Remembering the progressive safety net policies of long ago, some people still think that government funds should compensate for the blunders of capitalism; they imagine that their government will return to policies that provide programs for those in need. Yet, Republicans have attacked any social spending as a violation of the “balanced budget” mandate, which means deficit spending for the war but not for the poor. One of the ways the government is justifying elimination of funding for social programs is

by “giving” public money away to the middle class, the wealthy, corporate America, and the military industrial complex. Two examples are the Bush tax bribe and the post September 11 fast-track military funding to wage war on Afghanistan and other countries deemed as harboring so-called “terrorists.” This deceitful device—creating the political and economic illusion that there is “no money” to spend when they actually mean no money for social welfare—is in full play right now.

George W. Bush came into office with the promise to use the budget surplus for a massive tax cut to benefit all “working Americans who should get something back from their government.” Throughout the summer of 2001 people who earned \$40,000 or more in the previous year received a tax rebate of up to \$600. A one-time \$300-\$600 does not begin to compensate for the expenses of a social wage—in the form of first rate public healthcare, education, transportation, etc.—that a government should provide under the inherently unequal economic distributions of capitalism. Furthermore, millions of people were not “eligible” for the rebate. Bush failed to mention that the tax rebate is a bribe to the middle class electoral majority in exchange for their support to settle all poor and working class claims for government programs. Bush is counting, once again, on the growing racially-coded backlash in the electoral arena.

Immediately following the retaliatory attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon, the President’s rallying cry was: “All monies to the war front; the U.S. must invade the Middle East and protect national security at all costs!” Democrats and Republicans alike are unabashedly uniting around an aggressive pro-imperialist strategy of invasion in any country deemed a harbor for armed or otherwise militant resistance to U.S. imperialism. This bipartisan Great Nation patriotism will lead to an exponential increase in military spending. The first \$40 billion that Bush fast-tracked days after the strikes was just the beginning of cash-ins on the blank check for corporate tax cuts that Bush has been

given.

Bush seized the presidency with the support of a new conservative force in U.S. politics; besides the white racist majority electorate, there is an especially voracious middle class that benefits from the superprofits of imperialism. They therefore now side with the wealthy on many questions, and—committed to stock market wealth—look for legislation through which their lifestyle can be protected, their losses minimized and their gains secured, through tax breaks, school vouchers, end of inheritance tax. These forces are completely tied to U.S. imperialist domination of the globe, especially as the U.S. economy falters. They are all too ready to embrace the attitude “it’s us or them,” whether concerning national security or national economic interests. Unfortunately, this class contains significant sectors that are from communities of color, including black, Latino, and Asian/Pacific Islander.

After brief gains in which income gaps between the black and Latino working class and the white majority were partially closed during the 1960s and early 1970s, the disproportionate representation of oppressed nationalities in the lower strata of the working class has grown. The New Deal and Great Society safety net programs have been shut down with an vengeance, followed by explicit ideological attacks on women and people of color—with reference to “welfare queens,” “a culture of dependency” and “political correctness.” The Right and Center-Right are leading an ideological counterattack on prior liberal arguments that society has some responsibility for racism and poverty; some black leaders now talk about the poor “taking responsibility for their poverty.” White liberals, confronted with the fact that there is an overwhelmingly disproportionate number of people of color in jail, give their consent to the racist ideological construct that disproportionate imprisonment of those in poverty proves the existence of a “disproportionate tendency towards criminal and violent anti-social activity.”

In an effort to consolidate U.S. imperialist patriotism, not only will young working class soldiers be trained to kill poor youth in Arab and Middle Eastern countries, those who do not literally drop bombs will be asked to forgo civil liberties and even the remaining crumbs that fund the failing social welfare state. While there are no funds for AFDC (Aid to Families with Dependant Children), there are funds for the FBI to

expand wire tapping, surveillance and interrogation of anyone they deem suspicious. These racist ideas are being used to justify the exorbitant amount of money being spent on the prison industrial complex and are directly connected to the inadequate funding for much-needed public programs in low-income communities of color, for example healthcare and education .

We elaborate the example of the social welfare crisis in education and its relationship to the jailing of youth in California because of our experience in the Coalition for Educational Justice (CEJ), a multiracial antiracist grassroots group of parents, teachers and students, fighting to change public education policy that maintains or creates more inequality in Los Angeles.

Public education was originally institutionalized with the promise that equal access to education was the responsibility of the government. Yet the inequality of access to federal education funds in separate and unequal public school became a test case of the racism and national oppression embedded in the social welfare system. In 1954, *Brown v. Board of Education* established the linkage between racism, funding, and access to education. Now we face the prospect of publicly-funded “vouchers” for private schools combined with the reversal of monies allotted through affirmative action and the dismantling of the Civil Rights Act’s power to withhold federal funds from public schools that clearly practice racial discrimination. These attacks on social welfare establish very clearly the right-wing racist attack on people of color within the United States.

Increasingly, the little money spent on schools is *conditional*. Low-income students of color are required to *earn* public funds by achieving high scores on culturally-biased and language-biased high stakes standardized tests, which are administered across unequal schools. Most standardized tests are given only in the English language; these tests continue their historic “tracking” role that Eugenicists in the 1920s intended when they were first invented. They are administered under grossly-disadvantaged conditions; students of color attending overcrowded schools with little to no resources compete with students from wealthy, majority-white schools which annually have up to three times the amount of money to spend per student. The ideology of meritocracy ignores these inequalities, denies the historical racism and classism of U.S. policies against immigrants, blacks and all peoples of color and deepens

the existing gap of inequality by punishing students for being poor youth of color.

We focus on opposition to standardized tests—and their proponents in the Bush Administration, California’s Davis Administration, and the corporate sector—because they lead to narrowing the already-racist, class-biased, sexist and homophobic curriculum taught in schools and further socialize students and teachers to embrace an imperialist ideology. State governments and local districts, as they eliminate bilingual education programs and deny people of color their rights to their language and culture, are increasingly mandating that teachers in low-income schools of color use cookie-cutter, “back-to-the-basics” curricular programs and that they teach to standardized tests, in order to raise test scores. An already jingoistic, militaristic, and pro-U.S. war school curriculum and atmosphere—complete with daily pledges of allegiance to the flag—is strengthened, which means that teachers who bring in social justice-oriented and critical thinking-based lessons are criticized for “not teaching to the standards and the tests.” Students, parents and teachers are resisting these conditions, but school districts respond by spending more money on militarizing schools with a heavy police presence that systematically violates the rights of students of color rather than supporting them with better facilities, antiracist education programs developed by parents, teachers and students, and more job creation programs.

The diversion of funds from educating youth to policing youth is not new. Bush Sr.’s “Weed and Seed” program actually moved funds from the Department of Health and Human Welfare to the Defense Department so that any youth seeking public aid would automatically be entered in a “weed” database of problem children. What youth now actually learn is the role of the State in systematic repression. Youth who fight this mandatory indoctrination are moved to juvenile incarceration facilities and tracked as criminals through “gang” databases. There are no high-wage jobs for youth, no affirmative action to ensure college entrance, yet there are for-profit corporations paying prisoners slave wages to manufacture consumer products like blue jeans. While schools are starved, the State pays private corporations to construct and manage prisons. Public monies are spent to remove children from their mothers, to try youth as adults, to

lock up young women for 25 years-to-life sentences without parole for their mere association with known or suspected drug dealers.

Meanwhile, as the welfare and education budget decreases and funding for prison-construction rises, corporate welfare expands and military industrial subsidy for U.S. imperialism skyrockets. In the aftermath of September 11, the role of the State in service of capital has been completely unmasked. Rather than corporate plans for employee income protection and public unemployment benefits, we see tax cuts to “pump prime” the economy, further tax cuts to bail out businesses, massive and overnight aid to the airlines, to the insurance industry; unthinking demands for sky marshals on every airplane threaten to bankrupt the U.S. government and make it virtually impossible to maintain social security, medicare, public education and urgently needed social programs that have already been cut. While the President asks everyone to spend money as a patriotic act, one third of all hotel employees in the U.S. have been laid off, airline employees have been terminated, and every sector of the economy is expecting cut backs. Legitimated by “defense of the American way,” the Bush administration has entered a new period of accelerated deficit spending. Bush’s economic stimulus package is intended to eliminate any notion of social welfare and convince the general population to consent to the transfer of all tax revenues to the corporate welfare system. We must not allow this to happen.

DILEMMAS FOR THE LEFT

As we addressed in Sections II and III regarding the role of the State in maintaining national oppression, racism, and male supremacy, there is widespread confusion about the responsibility of the State. Similarly, there is disorientation about the seemingly-progressive concept of “self-help.” The demeaning and debilitating impacts of the discourse about the so-called “culture of poverty” and the permanent “underclass” pits oppressed peoples against each other. Further, many oppressed people blame themselves for their poverty, when they are in fact pushed into poverty by a white supremacist, patriarchal, capitalist economic system.

The Left is painfully aware that it is depressing to be poor; working for an unlivable wage, struggling in

the illegal job market and depending on welfare does not feel good. No one debates that despondency and despair are widespread; the growth of “children-bearing-children” and “black-on-black crime” will eat away at the self-esteem of any community.

Now, simple demands for social services are used to stigmatize black and Latina women and children (despite the white majority among welfare recipients), and many white people, as well as many black and Latino males, consent to this ideology that demonizes and degrades women, particularly in their role as mothers whose invisible labor is not valued and whose independence from the nuclear family structure threatens patriarchy.

Franz Fanon and other revolutionary antiimperialists have explained despair in the face of degradation as one of the brutal impacts of colonization and racism—the internalization of oppression—and called for a violent, militant counterattack on colonialism in order to raise the mental health and collective consciousness of the oppressed. Obviously, such a powerful awareness among oppressed people is not in the interest of the State.

The war cause creates the so-called “opportunity” for the low-wage and no-wage population to make personal sacrifices in exchange for a sense of belonging to the Great Nation of the United States. Who wants the stigma of collecting unemployment when “homeland defense” is at stake? The reconstruction of an ideological defense of guaranteed incomes, social welfare programs, equal access to quality public education, health, housing and transportation requires hard thinking, creative demand development and an innovative antiracist, antiimperialist ideological counterattack by the Left—never more so than under the present conditions.

U.S. ATTACK ON SOCIAL WELFARE WITHIN THE UNITED STATES

STRATEGIC DEMANDS AROUND WHICH THE STRATEGY CENTER'S PROGRAM DEMAND GROUP IS UNIFIED

We call upon the U.S. government to commit to govern through public funding of all basic human needs. We call on the U.S. government to affirm the role of compensating for the cruel and inhumane effects of market forces on the poor and working class. We call upon the U.S. government to acknowledge the systematic institutionalization of racism in social welfare policy and, therefore, prioritize social welfare programs that focus on the low-wage and unemployed working class in which oppressed nationality peoples, and specifically women, are concentrated. We call upon all components of government to stop corporate welfare and privatization of public services—end public subsidy for private speculation as well as outsourcing of jobs previously performed by the public sector. We call on all sectors of government to establish themselves as high-wage employers and to require high-wage policies of all businesses receiving government contracts and all corporations operating internationally under the banner of U.S. investment.

FOCAL CAMPAIGNS WE PRIORITIZE

- U.S. federal government, stop the massive diversion of funds to a war that threatens people the world over and jeopardizes the entire U.S. budget.
- Jobs or Income Now! U.S. federal government, end poverty and homelessness. Fund education not incarceration. Fund a massive program of free Head Start programs and health clinics. Provide unconditional funds to equalize public schools as well as free higher education. Create jobs, subsidize housing and guarantee family and individual basic income level.
- U.S. federal government, enforce the Bus Riders Union civil rights Consent Decree with the Los Angeles Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA), which remedies past discrimination and ensures equality in access to public transportation consistent with Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act by prioritizing funds for the bus system. Enact an immediate moratorium on all rail construction in Los Angeles until the Consent Decree's bus-priority policy is implemented.
- U.S. Congress, increase and expand—rather than reduce or eliminate—gift and inheritance tax, earmarked to fund social welfare programs.
- U.S. government, nationalize and fund all medical care. Establish a public health plan in which doctors and hospitals are administered by the government and all residents in the U.S.—regardless of income or immigration status—receive equal and free medical care, including all medications.

VI. U.S. Responsibility for Denial of Rights Internationally and Domestically

What can the organized Left and the social movements demand of the institutions of U.S. imperialism to counter the U.S. government's denial of fundamental rights?

CURRENT CONDITIONS

Governments throughout the world commit massive violations of fundamental human rights. The United States, with its sheltered transnational corporations and aggressive military force, is among the greatest perpetrators. Obviously, the global system of imperialism does not operate by ensuring human rights. Protecting rights is the opposite of maximizing profit through exploitation and oppression of nations and peoples. Indeed, *the very concept of an unfettered "free" market system is based on an entirely different principle: do not acknowledge rights in the first place; if rights are won through struggle, restrict their scope as much as possible; then steadfastly proceed to eliminate them.*

But the *struggle for rights* is essential to thwarting imperialism's extreme disregard for human life, to protecting the right of nations to self-determination, to gaining the greatest expanse of rights possible under any set of given conditions, and to creating and protecting space for oppositional political activity. The struggle of social movements to win, defend, and expand *actual rights*—contrary to the interests of imperialism—is critical. The *concept of rights*—particularly civil liberties such as the right to vote, to dissent, to assemble and to protest—is essential to organizing the movements of oppressed peoples against growing repression, racism and xenophobia.

Meanwhile, the discourse surrounding the concept of *human rights* has become a key weapon of U.S. cultural imperialism. Promotion of "American democracy" effectively builds consent for the "right" of the United States to invade any country deemed a threat to "democracy"—for U.S. hegemony at home and abroad. *The U.S. needs political control over the terrain of rights discourse.* This control is essential to assuring U.S. ability to maintain its faltering legitimacy in the current international order.

As the United States dramatically accelerates its already-aggressive assault on civil rights and

liberties, we give special focus to our struggle for clarity on this question. *We enter into battle on this terrain with the objective of expanding the definition and scope of human rights, while exposing the limits of rights discourse in achieving the all-too-readily promised contradictory attributes of democracy—freedom and equality.*

The whole idea behind democracy is freedom, but it is freedom as defined by a government. The *bourgeois democratic* revolutions of the 18th and 19th centuries won freedom for individual bourgeois and the capitalist market to operate without restriction by a monarchy. For example, the American Revolution brought "freedom" for the settler colonialists from British rule. Thus the term "bourgeois democracy" means the right of the bourgeoisie under capitalism to control markets, to stop giving taxes to a king or queen and to define their own political system of governance; it has nothing to do with working class democracy for all. The promise of "liberty and justice for all," as inalienable rights, is framed by the particular history of the United States; thus contradiction exists within the theory of bourgeois—or capitalist—democracy. Freedoms or rights are only granted or won through a process of struggle over the power to govern—that is, the so-called "balance of power" between those who legislate the law, those who execute the law, and those who judge the law.

What are "inalienable" rights? We think of inalienable rights as birthrights that cannot be taken away. In the U.S., "inalienable rights" are defined by the law of governance; *liberty belongs to those in power and they decide what justice will be.*

When the U.S. Declaration of Independence and Constitution evolved certain theories of so-called "inalienable rights" written into the Bill of Rights, they were intended to protect members of society from the invasive use of police and military force—initially in the revolutionary war against the British monarchy. One

particular contribution of the Bill of Rights was to theorize the protection of political or philosophical minority voices against “the tyranny of the majority.” Yet, these lofty, and in fact progressive, theories of protecting the individual and groups from state repression—freedom of speech and assembly in particular—were from the outset based on the “rights” of a white, male, landowning bourgeois class that was in antagonism to the British crown. They excluded all “minority” slaves, Native American peoples and effective-minority women.

For centuries, in a country built on a minority conquest over an indigenous majority, the concept of “majority vote” enabled white male property owners to determine the rights of others. *Those with votes have argued among themselves as to whether those without the vote can vote.* After the Civil War, it took a white male electoral majority to pass the 13th Amendment freeing the slaves, the 14th Amendment making them citizens with equal protection under the law, and the 15th Amendment giving them the “right” to vote. It was also white male voters who, by 1877, overturned the progressive and revolutionary achievements of post-civil war Reconstruction and imposed Jim Crow laws to literally re-enslave recently freed blacks. In 1919, a male electorate finally voted for women’s suffrage. Still, to this day, it is the unwillingness of the white male voters and politicians in representative bodies across the country that have prevented the ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment. In each of these situations, the voteless have typically had to find ways to pressure, appeal to, and compromise with those with voting power in order to gain any rights. The norm of majority voting behavior, on the other hand, has been to further institutionalize exclusion and the denial of rights at every opportunity, and even to reverse them and take them away.

Freedom and *equality* exist in contradiction under bourgeois democracy. Capitalism can grant liberty if that means freedom for those individuals who are franchised; it cannot survive based on actual justice, that is, equal rights for all. The “promise” of governance based on all persons being “created equal” is the lie upon which the United States was built. *Bourgeois democracy requires those with rights to decide if those without rights can have rights.*

The structural disenfranchisement of voting minorities continues today and neither voting rights law nor civil rights law has successfully changed this condition. At the national level, in the past eight years, a steady stream of Supreme Court decisions have given the police

expanded rights to elicit coerced confessions, allowed tainted evidence to be admitted in court, overturned minority electoral districts, and restricted the authority and remedies of civil rights laws. The U.S. Congress and the Clinton administration passed the Effective Death Penalty act that violates habeas corpus rights which have existed for centuries, in an effort to make sure they effectively execute the far over-represented black and brown prisoners on death row. Today, nine states have lifetime bans on the right to vote for felons who have been released from custody.

In California over the past decade, racist, conservative majorities have voted in favor of cleverly crafted attacks on minorities using the general election initiative process. Proposition 187 “Save Our State” denies medical care, education, and even food to undocumented immigrants; Proposition 184 “Three Strikes and You’re Out” imposes mandatory life sentences on many low-income black, Latino, Native American, and Asian/Pacific Islander men; Proposition 209 “The Civil Rights Initiative” outlaws state-supported affirmative action programs; Proposition 21 “The Juvenile Justice Initiative” imposes adult sentences on black and brown youth; Proposition 227 “English for the Children” eliminates language rights and bilingual education programs for Latino and Asian immigrants.

The thoroughly right-wing character of this administration is visible in the open political partisanship of the Supreme Court, the branch of government charged with the power to exercise *justice*. The Courts’ unprecedented intervention in the 2000 election which gave Bush the presidency not only defied all legal precedent but, in substance, virtually repealed voting rights law. Just months later in *Alexander v. Sandoval*, the Court attacked Title VI of the Civil Rights Act by ruling that *discriminatory effects* cannot be challenged in courts by “private parties”—namely any civil rights or grassroots plaintiffs. Without proof of discriminatory “intent,” the discriminating party is treated as the victim.

Reaching far beyond the attack on the hard won victories of the Civil Rights movement, the recent *Sandoval* ruling reversed progressive lower court decisions *upholding language rights as civil rights*. The lower court judged Alabama’s English-only (anti-Spanish language) laws to be instruments of “national origin discrimination.” Upholding charges brought by a working class immigrant woman, the lower court sought to overturn the racist laws and force public services to be provided in Spanish. Yet the Supreme Court moved with

right-wing reaction to defend Alabama's racism. In a nation built on systematic destruction of indigenous languages, cultures and peoples, this aggressive legalization of racism and xenophobia characterizes the Bush administration's defiance of human rights within the U.S. and internationally.

The vociferous rejection of all peoples' right to live in this multinational country and speak their own language is widespread. Throughout the U.S., an electoral majority dominated by white supremacist ideology is so xenophobic that it tends toward consent to the Great Nation patriotic belief that the U.S. is a superior "civilized" country in which civil rights are not needed. Ready to support all repressive government measures against people of color and against the Left, this group does not recognize the danger in its own loss of rights. This pro-imperialist racist electoral majority focuses on one international issue—human rights violations in *other* nations—and it begs for U.S. military intervention. These people have focused on only one domestic issue—individual liberty.

"America the Beautiful" has garnered the reputation as a home that people from other nations will risk their lives to reach in order to protect their human rights. Yet, if the recent rejection of UN leadership at the World Conference Against Racism is any measure, the U.S. government's discourse on human rights does not acknowledge the ethnic cleansing of indigenous people from their own stolen lands, and it rejects responsibility for crimes against humanity in the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade.

As the United States claims to defend human rights by declaring an international war on "terrorism," U.S. military assistance is directly responsible for consistent human rights violations in places like Colombia and Guatemala. Today in Afghanistan, the U.S. is perpetrating serious human rights abuses and war crimes not only by direct bombings but also by the unconditional transfer of weapons of war into a country which has already suffered massive human misery as a result of previous U.S. military intervention, last time supporting the Taliban against the pro-Russian alliance! Not only does the U.S. export arms, it exports leg-irons, thumb-cuffs, and electro-shock torture devices. And, as world expert on lethal injection killings, the U.S. has now trained the Philippines to execute the death penalty and, further has committed U.S. troops to "teach" the Philippine military to hunt down insurgents.

The United States remains one of the worst and most consistent violators of human rights treaties that have been agreed to by many countries within the United

Nations. For example, the United States has not signed the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, drafted in 1998—with already 98 signatories and 14 ratifications—to establish a permanent court of international law for trying individuals accused of committing genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity. The United States wants to institutionalize the court but it claims the "right" to complete exemption from the court's jurisdiction. It fears the ability of a Third World or future socialist bloc to hold the U.S. to the standards it tries to impose on others.

Similarly, while it regularly receives Amnesty International evaluations documenting torture-related offenses in the U.S. criminal justice system, as well as police brutality linked to racial profiling, the U.S. has entered a variety of "reservations, declarations or understandings" that block it from ratifying the United Nations Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. The U.S. violates all international human rights conventions against the death penalty and specifically targets the oppressed nationality prison population in the U.S. for execution. On death row, people of color face exceptionally cruel conditions and condemned foreign nationals are systematically denied consular notification and assistance. Asylum-seekers are routinely incarcerated and maltreated while political prisoners, such as Leonard Peltier and Mumia Abu Jamal, are persecuted for their opposition to the U.S. government. The U.S. is the world leader in killing "child offenders," and women imprisoned in the U.S. number ten times those in all western European nations combined. It is frightening but not surprising that the Bush administration has used the post-September 11 patriotic wave to accelerate the evisceration of individual rights, which are a foundation of U.S. bourgeois democracy. The wave of repression before us abandons all the bourgeois democratic principles: freedom, equality, justice, and any form of representative government.

Our basic approach remains: we oppose U.S. domination; we oppose any notion of exception for the United States; we oppose all forms of ideological hegemony, state repression, and physical abuse; we reject bourgeois demagoguery about human rights; we support the actual struggle for inalienable human rights throughout the world; and we insist that the United States be held accountable for all its human rights violations.

DILEMMAS FOR THE LEFT

Confusion stands in our way again. Progressives want to stop all U.S. human rights violations at home and abroad—all U.S. aggression, intervention, overt and covert strategies of hegemony. Yet, we are gravely concerned about violations of international human rights conventions by other nations as well, and understandably seek approaches to stop them. The growing atrocities in the world—among them saturation bombing of civilian populations, torture, land mines, rape and enslavement of women and children, wholesale massacres of ethnic populations—present a strategic dilemma. The U.S., as the only military power that can impose its will on all other nations, uses human rights violations in Third World and other nations—real and imagined—as a pretense for U.S. intervention. As we have recognized, many crimes in the Third World are instigated by U.S. foreign policy and are at least partially caused or exacerbated by U.S. presence. Thus, any time a movement for human rights turns to the U.S. world police force for help, it must confront the fact that it is asking the greatest force of world domination to be the arbiter of human rights! *We cannot let the U.S. police other nations in order to “protect” them.* We can, however, demand of the U.S. that it police itself. We can place demands upon the U.S. government to outlaw the human rights violations of U.S. corporations. We can call upon the U.S. government to abide by international law and sign international treaties. We can demand that violation of the UN Declaration of Human Rights by any U.S.-based entity be made a national as well as international crime.

Uncertainty and disagreement also arises, as discussed before, when progressives approach the role of the State in U.S. domestic affairs. After all, it is the U.S. government that is supposed to serve people in the U.S.—provide healthcare, transportation, education. We want these things—all the components of the social welfare state discussed in Section V. We want more, not less: more services, more benefits, more rights. Yet we know that a government dedicated to a corporate welfare policy is not our friend; we cannot put our lives in the hands of the State. The State is not neutral; therefore, we have an obligation as Leftists to struggle to force policies upon it. We believe that it is our right and duty to demand that the U.S. government live up to all its promises and be forced, through political struggle, to expose its lies and to expand the space for actual democratic action.

Therefore, we demand of the government—that has built the State by means of the subjugation of internal nations and oppressed nationalities—that it enact restrictive laws to curtail national oppression, white supremacy, and racism. We demand reparations.

Another area of confusion among progressives is how to approach different sectors of government. This dilemma arises especially on the issue of “federalism”—the role of the federal government in policing the affairs of states and municipalities. Some find reassurance in federal and state “separation of power”: Appeal to the FBI to stop the Ku Klux Klan when local government refuses to act? All branches of government are essentially divisions of labor of the same ruling class. Nonetheless, these formal distinctions have been the site of significant progressive struggle within U.S. history and the issues of state and federal rights are critical arenas of potential tactical interventions by social movements.

From the point of view of our strategy, *we oppose the many pro-imperialist/racist policies of all levels of government in the United States.* However, in general, we place great emphasis on the interrelationship of federal powers and protection of the hard-won rights of oppressed peoples that should be inalienable. For example, the revolutionary fight against national oppression and racism in the U.S. has at times forced the federal government to intervene in order to uphold civil rights. A case in point: at the end of the Civil War, which was fought over the “rights of states” to have slavery, the only way to guarantee the newly achieved and fragile rights of the freed slaves was to impose federal military control over the defeated states of the confederacy. Unfortunately, those federal protections were soon nullified with the federal Hayes-Tilden deal in 1877, by which northern capitalism allowed the defeated Southern aristocracy to re-enslave the black population through Jim Crow laws, under the banner of “states’ rights.”

From that time to the present, states’ rights has remained the cry of the Southern rebels—as well as enraged slave owners, Klansmen, and segregationists throughout the country—and for another century they got their way. Indeed, this states’ rights doctrine has completely overlaid the racist perpetuation of exclusionary voting rights, economic impoverishment, as well as massive Klan and police terror. In this context, the democratic advances of the antiracist movement in the United States have been critically aided by winning, where possible, federal protections against “the tyranny of the majority,” federal laws against discrimination, and federal

powers to enforce the protection of subjugated people—including the use of federal troops to integrate schools and the use of federal law to secure in limited cases the sovereignty of indigenous nations.

As we write, the Bus Riders Union is engaged in a test of civil rights law that was appealed all the way to the Supreme Court. The MTA refuses to comply with federal judges who have repeatedly upheld civil rights law as embodied in a 1996 Consent Decree between the Bus Riders Union and the Los Angeles MTA. In 1999 we won a federal court order that required the MTA to purchase 350 new buses and hire sufficient drivers to reduce overcrowding levels on the buses for 400,000 bus riders, overwhelmingly people of color. The MTA appealed the decision on the grounds that “states’ rights” theory allows them to disregard the Consent Decree, because it was an improper intervention by the federal courts in the running of a local government agency. The Ninth Circuit Court upheld the lower court ruling against the MTA, and upheld it again upon a full district court appeal. In a tremendous victory for the Bus Riders Union, the Supreme Court rejected the MTA’s appeal. In this context, the stakes for protection of federal power are high for the antiracist movement across the country and specifically for bus riders in Los Angeles. This is a legal tactic driven by a Left strategy and a mass-based social movement with a variety of other forms of struggle. Should we have used the federal court to sue a regional agency? Should we have used the bourgeois civil rights law at all? Our approach to the role of the government is to always fight for the protection and expansion of rights, which *usually* means rights won at the federal level.

At the same time, we know that there are many instances in which “local,” “regional,” “statewide,” or other progressive struggles are in direct contradiction to the power and “authority” of the federal government and must be supported—such as support for indigenous nations, state-specific expansion of legal rights such as legal marriage between same-gender partners, regional autonomy for concentrated populations of an oppressed nationality, special voting districts, local environmental regulations that provide greater protections, etc. In past years, federal Supreme Court decisions have overturned specially-created minority nationality electoral districts in particular states to concentrate (and therefore benefit) black and Latino voters, overturned the right of a state to curtail corporate sales to a military junta, overturned the right of a state to prevent nuclear waste from being trucked through its borders and dramatically reduced the

rights of women to file sexual harassment suits. In such cases, we believe any effort by the federal government to overturn *expanded* rights at the local and state level is an abuse of federal power.

It is clear that progressives involved in using the government to fight the government face constant dilemmas. Over time, given experience with a variety of situations like this one, we have come to advocate relying on concrete analysis of specific times, places, and conditions. And we have developed a principle to determine the best interests of oppressed peoples in concrete conditions: *the rights of oppressed, exploited, subjugated peoples, as well as the powers to enforce these rights, must be protected and expanded, whether at the local, state or federal level of government.* We are dedicated to restraining the U.S. government at all levels any time it acts to deny rights. Our support for federal powers in relation to “states’ rights,” therefore, is historically specific to the expansion and protection of the rights of subjugated people, and the expansion of the social welfare state to satisfy the basic needs of oppressed people. *Therefore, it is not only possible but, actually, historically necessary for the Left to defend regional autonomy rights to oppose oppressive acts, while maintaining a commitment to federal powers to enforce protections from oppressive acts.*

We have no illusions—about bourgeois democracy or bourgeois law—but we know from many years of struggle that *democratic rights can be won and must then be defended.* We are very aware of the character of bourgeois democracy and we believe in pushing it to its limits as part of a multi-faceted united front strategy against racism, national oppression, the subjugation of women, and the tolls of imperialism. One of the worst errors for the antiimperialist Left would be to instill illusions about bourgeois democracy in the heart of the U.S. empire at a time when our unique responsibility is to challenge its fundamental precepts. Therefore, we fight in the present based on a vision of the future when the human rights of all peoples, but especially minority nationalities and groups without suffrage, are inviolable; when the rights of oppressed nationality peoples, indigenous peoples, and immigrants cannot be voted away or abrogated by the dominant racial group or any other form of electoral or political majority.

Even as we advocate using the instruments of bourgeois democracy to fight for space, we must expose the contradictions and steadfastly pursue other approaches, or we will objectively foster the illusion

that the U.S. government and capitalism in its moribund stage can actually create both liberty and justice, freedom and equality.

As we struggle with these contradictions and the Left's dilemmas about how to engage them, we look to other models of democratic struggle as critical to our work. During the height of the antiracist movements of the 1960s in the U.S., the Black Panthers called for a referendum by all black people to determine their relationship to the United States, and Malcolm X proposed that black people go to the United Nations to assert their human rights and have them recognized and protected, independent of the U.S. system. During that period, war resisters denied the legitimacy of the U.S. government to "legally" wage a genocidal war in Vietnam and engaged in a wide variety of anti-war draft resistance tactics to challenge an unjust and imperialist war. *This extra-legal, extra-electoral perspective is the unique contribution of the antiimperialist Left to the human rights debate, and it retains compelling relevance, perhaps even greater, today.*

When we take this perspective on the struggle for human rights, we can see that there is a need for a strong mass movement—rooted in organizing, civil disobedience, the refusal to abide by unjust laws, and militant direct action—to challenge the entire legitimacy of the bourgeois justice system. As the Bush administration launches a wave of repression not seen since the McCarthy days and makes every effort to deny our rights, we challenge all progressives to struggle for clarity, and fight for the principle that the rights of oppressed nationalities can never be determined by vote of the oppressor nation's electoral majority. We must begin preparation now to use every means necessary to assert our inalienable rights.

U.S. RESPONSIBILITY FOR DENIAL OF RIGHTS INTERNATIONALLY AND DOMESTICALLY

STRATEGIC DEMAND AROUND WHICH THE STRATEGY CENTER'S PROGRAM DEMAND GROUP IS UNIFIED

We call on the U.S. government to cease its war and uphold the terms of international treaties protecting the rights of all peoples during war and peace. We call upon the U.S. government to enforce the terms of these treaties in relation to all U.S. corporations. We call upon the U.S. government to recognize the inalienable rights of indigenous peoples, oppressed nationality and racial groups, women and children.

FOCAL CAMPAIGNS WE PRIORITIZE

- U.S. military, stop all human rights abuses and cease overt and covert military intervention in the internal affairs of sovereign nations—end Plan Columbia.
- All U.S. governmental bodies and U.S. corporations, reverse and repeal any racially coded propositions or policies that lead to a denial of equal rights or to a disproportionately discriminatory impacts on oppressed nationalities, racial, ethnic, or gender groups, internationally and domestically (such as California propositions 187, 209, 227, 21, etc.).
- U.S. government, extend civil and human rights protection with regard to sexual orientation and gender identity—that is, full protection of all rights for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender peoples.
- U.S. government, support and facilitate the basic rights of self-determination for black, Latino, Asian/Pacific Islander populations, and Native Americans, specifically the right to devise electoral proposals for political representation. Uphold the inalienable cultural and language rights of oppressed nationalities.
- U.S. government, begin investigation of the U.S. role in the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, as proposed by the Conyers Bill and prepare to make reparations to all nations who suffered from this heinous crime against humanity.
- U.S. government, abolish the death penalty!

AhoraNow

Commentary Series * Serie de Comentarios

A bilingual political commentary series/ Una serie de comentarios políticos bilingües

En el momento justo en que la ideología de derecha afirma su dominio, AhoraNow avanza la teoría y práctica izquierdista. AhoraNow se enfoca primordialmente en las voces de las líneas del frente, la estrategia y las tácticas. AhoraNow surge de una cultura internacionalista de izquierda que sostiene explícita y consistentemente un anticapitalismo y antiimperialismo, promueve el internacionalismo e interpone al bilingüismo como una política de lenguaje. ¿Piensas que existe vida más allá de la izquierda con debates muertecinos en varias publicaciones progresistas? ¿Cansada/o de 25 años de liberalismo defensivo? ¿Harta/o de la movilización derechista sin vergüenza? Lee AhoraNow.

At a time when Right-wing ideology claims dominion, AhoraNow advances left theory and practice. AhoraNow gives primacy to voices from the front lines, to strategy and tactics. AhoraNow is born out of a multiracial left culture that asserts a consistent and explicit anticapitalism and antiimperialism, promotes internationalism, and engages bilingualism as a politics of language. Think there's life far to the left of the anemic debate in many progressive publications? Tired of 25 years of defensive liberalism? Sick of unapologetic and effective Right wing organizing? Read AhoraNow.

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Labor/Community Strategy Center is a multiracial "think tank/act tank" committed to building democratic, internationalist, Left social movements and challenging the ideological, economic, and political domination of transnational capital. The Strategy Center's work encompasses all aspects of urban life: it emphasizes class-conscious labor organizing, fighting for environmental justice, immigrant rights, and first-class mass transportation, as well as actively confronting the growing criminalization, racialization, and feminization of poverty. The Strategy Center synthesizes grassroots organizing—the Bus Riders Union, Watchdog environmental organization, and countywide social justice campaigns—with education and policy development—Strategy Center Publications, the Urban Strategies Group, the National School for Civil Rights and Environmental Organizing, and gatherings of activists and scholars—to generate a creative and aggressive response to the growing power of the corporate-led political Right.

Centro de Estrategia Laboral/Comunitario es un "banco intelectual/banco de acción" multiracial dedicado a la creación de movimientos sociales izquierdistas democráticos e internacionalistas y al desafío de la dominación política, económica e ideológica del capital transnacional. El trabajo del Centro de Estrategia penetra todas las dimensiones de la vida urbana: acentúa las tareas de sindicalizar a conciencia de clase; de luchar por la justicia ambiental, un sistema de transporte público de primera clase, y los derechos de inmigrantes; así como confrontar agresivamente la creciente política de criminalizar, racializar, y feminizar la pobreza. El Centro de Estrategias sintetiza el trabajo popular—realizados por el Sindicato de Pasajeros, el grupo ambiental Watchdog, y campañas de justicia social por el condado entero—con educación y el desarrollo de política—las publicaciones del Centro de Estrategia, el Grupo de Estrategias Urbanas y el Instituto Internacional de Organizar Estrategia y la convocación de asambleas de estrategia para activistas y académicos—para generar una reacción creativa y agresiva al creciente poder de la Derecha política encabezada por las corporaciones.

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