

# CHALLENGE-DESAFIO

December 23, 1976  
Volume 13, Number 30

Published weekly, except Christmas week  
by the Progressive Labor Party

Publication and Circulation Office:

220 East 23rd Street  
New York, N.Y. 10010

Production Office: (212) 685-3650

Second class postage paid  
Subscription: 1 year—\$5.00



**THE PROGRESSIVE LABOR PARTY FIGHTS FOR SOCIALISM.** Socialism means liberation for the entire working class—the destruction of the bosses—a society of abundance and full employment—an end to exploitation—a secure and creative future for all workers—and an end to the racism, fascism and wars that are all products of capitalism.

In order to achieve socialism, the capitalist system, the bosses and their dictatorial government must be crushed. This cannot be accomplished peacefully through elections.

It can only happen when the majority of the exploited unite behind communist leadership, violently overthrow the bosses, and install a new government of revolutionary workers—the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Members of the PROGRESSIVE LABOR PARTY are devoted to this goal. They dedicate their lives to actively building, promoting and organizing for the cause of revolutionary communism.

The Progressive Labor Party and its newspaper, CHALLENGE, are dedicated to the U.S. working class and the working class of the entire world—black, Latin, white, Asian and Native American.

Our newspaper, CHALLENGE, strives to present the unconditional truth of class struggle, so our class can learn from experience how to win.

## The Vital Role of Our Party in the Struggle for Workers' Power

Our party, The Progressive Labor Party, has developed in spite of the collapse of the international communist movement. The history of our party is one of swimming against the current. Not only has our party developed in the face of betrayals by the Chinese and Soviet parties, but it developed at the point U.S. imperialism was at its height. As the communist parties of the world went to the right (revisionism), our party moved to the left. We steadily strengthened our ideological outlook, and in general developed a sounder revolutionary position. Our present stage marks a qualitative break with reformism. We are developing practice in which our revolutionary politics are in the forefront. This gives the working class a clear-cut choice between reformism and revolution!

**THIS IS NO SMALL ACHIEVEMENT. IT IS CRUCIAL TO THE INTERNATIONAL** working class that the banners of Marxism-Leninism are flying despite the adverse winds of imperialism and counter-revolution. Our growth is modest, but our members are learning how to stand their ground in the face of all forms of attacks. More importantly, our party is expanding its ties with vital sectors of the working class. We are organizing revolutionary forces, from the farmworkers of West Texas and the San Joaquin Valley in California, to steel and auto workers in the Mid-West to ghetto residents and hospital workers in New York. We are truly a nationwide party as our forces reach out across the country and are active on many fronts. Wherever workers are attacked, our party is to be found putting forward the line of revolution, and organizing the workers to sharpen the struggle by fighting back.

### Progressive Labor Party Editorial

Most importantly, we have an international outlook, developing ties with workers in other countries. **Marxism-Leninism is an international development. Revolution has no borders.** Comrades in Canada and Mexico as well as other lands march hand-in-hand with us to our revolutionary goal. We all realize that these are small but important steps in restoring the international communist movement.

Our development has its roots in the history of the working-class movement and the international communist movement. The fundamental lessons of revolution—the dictatorship of the proletariat—were taught by a long line of revolutionaries like Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin. Gradually our party is becoming steeped in the rich history of the communist movement. This enables us to draw strengths and lessons so that we can have a future. The PLP is guided by the positive aspects of the communist movement. These are its **primary** features. But we also learn from others' past mistakes, as well as from our own. The point is that, **by ourselves, we could never develop into a serious party.** We rely on the lessons of the working class past, present and future.

People inside and outside of our party take our existence casually; they are unable to evaluate the importance of a communist party. Too many people judge things superficially. They see things statically—as they are. And they do not know or understand history. The picture people often get is that the PLP is "O.K. but its small so what can it



do?" They are cynical or disillusioned by the sellout of the large Soviet and Chinese communist parties and are overwhelmed by the seemingly powerful U.S. imperialists. In sum they feel you "can't fight city hall."

In all probability a similar picture could have been drawn just before the Paris Commune, the Russian Revolution, the Chinese Revolution and prior to the war against the Nazis. It wasn't too many years ago that various bourgeois forces were quaking in their boots about the "invincibility" of the Hitlerites. And many of these same forces and others were later convinced of the "invincibility" of U.S. forces in Korea and then Vietnam. Contradictions between imperialists and the class struggle produce **constant CHANGE!** And often things change faster than seem possible. Marxism-Leninism, among other things, is based on the laws of change; that "there are contradictions in everything."

As our previous editorials have pointed out, we are living in the period when imperialist rivalries, especially between the Soviets and the U.S., are in the forefront. The U.S.-Soviet rivalry is leading to war and fascism. But, as our past articles have pointed out, we have great possibilities to intervene in this situation and enable the working class to come out on top, through the revolutionary process. Every day there is more evidence of the positive prospects for us and our class. These are both objective and subjective. At the moment, U.S. capitalists are having a tough time fielding a reliable military force. An article in the Dec. 11 **New York Times** makes this point graphically: "Navy Desertion Rate Hits Peak," is the headline. It states: "The Navy suffered its highest desertion rate on record during 1976; and Navy officials don't know why." The article says the Army is doing better and the Marine Corps has the "highest desertion rate of all services."

The ruling class may be able to straighten things out for a while. But the goals of the U.S. bosses and its military are opposed to the interests of the workers in the U.S. and all over the globe. Only recently our party and its allies were able to participate on the side of the black Marines and their anti-racist struggles at Camp Pendleton, Calif. These Marines were fighting the organization of the KKK on the post. Obviously, the KKK was known to, and approved by, the brass. But the fight put up by the black Marines exposed this development and forced the Marine brass to retreat. However, our party and friends were able to quickly react and join in the struggle. This important anti-racist battle can also give our part the opportunity to raise revolutionary consciousness. We know that racism can never be defeated within the framework of capitalism. Additionally, many military forces, both black and white, will learn and approve of the action on this vital question.

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CHALLENGE-DESAFIO Cultural Page

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## Cultural Page

# Roots

Review: **Roots, The Saga of an American Family**  
By Alex Haley, published by Doubleday, \$2.50  
(available at libraries)

A young boy sat on his grandmother's porch in Tennessee listening to stories about his family that wended their way back through slavery all the way to his great, great, great-grandfather, "the African." **Roots** is the dramatic history of the oppression through 200 years of Haley's family. It is a striking and moving account, based on oral history passed down from generation to generation in both the U.S. and Africa.

**THE PEOPLE IN ROOTS ARE REAL PEOPLE**, not the childlike, racist stereotypes found in much literature about African and American slaves. They stand in contradiction to the predominant bourgeois historian's image of "happy slaves" and "good masters," making it crystal clear that the slaveowners were the only savages. The characters in the book repeatedly remind each other that there is no such thing as a "good master." They show the under-the-surface resistance that was a characteristic of slavery.

Without particularly intending to, the book also unmasks other "roots"—the roots of racism in the U.S. Black people were brought to this country exclusively for one purpose: to make their owners rich off their labor. And it is the profit base of capitalism that makes racism so necessary for the bosses to continue to this day.

At first it may seem that Haley has written a history from the working people's point of view. Two things about it are bothersome, and seem to show Haley's class outlook to be bourgeois. The first, noticeable right from the beginning, is male chauvinism. The description of the life of the African ancestor, Kunta Kinte, is done in great detail—it is one of the best parts of the book—but it contains at most a few lines on the life of the women and girls in the community. This trend is basically continued through the book. Haley clearly considers the women to be less important, whereas a working-class outlook considers men and women equal and helps to build unity between them.

The other thing that is bothersome is Haley's evident view that American blacks have had it good since Emancipation. His family, according to the book, basically experienced little racism or hardship from the Civil War on. The post-Reconstruction Jim Crow period of intense repression against blacks is not even mentioned.

However, it goes deeper than those two things. Why is the bourgeois press pushing this book so hard (reviews, excerpts, a planned TV show)? The answer is that **Roots** does not present the true picture of the slaves' heroic fight-back.

"All white folks scart us niggers sometime gwine organize an' rise up together," Haley has one of his lesser characters say. "But niggers ain't gwine never do **nothin'** together."

The rest of the book does nothing to contradict that statement; it even seems to prove it. The qualities Haley puts in his main characters (they were real people, but Haley gave them their thoughts and put the words in their mouths) were those of dignity, pride in heritage, respect for each other and particularly for elders, and a desire for freedom—but **not rebelliousness**.

"Well," one might say, "maybe most slaves were not rebellious; he has to portray slave life as it really was." But history shows that the opposite is true: slavery in the U.S. only existed by naked force against people who never gave up fighting back, even though the odds were almost insurmountable. **Haley has tried to present his book as anti-racist, but it is not anti-racist, because it denies class struggle.**

Let's compare Haley's version of slave history with what really happened. (Information on slave revolts is from Herbert Aptheker's **American Negro Slave Revolts**, New World Paperbacks, \$2.25). Haley's first character, Kunta Kinte, fights heroically all the way through his fourth abortive escape attempt. After that, he basically gives up

## Book Review

trying to fight. He becomes his master's buggy driver, and the slaves' main source of news from the outside world from the 1770's through 1806. During that time there were many, many slave revolts in his home state of Virginia, some within a day's drive. Many of these were reported in the newspapers, and Kinte's wife is described secretly reading and discussing the master's discarded newspapers. For example, there were many reports of fugitive slaves attacking slave owners' property from **armed ships** along the coast, sometimes in the company of whites. Kinte lived less than 20 miles from the coast.

From 1790-1809, Virginia and North Carolina were two of the states hardest hit by slave unrest. In 1792, 900 slaves in Virginia, armed with whatever they could get their hands on, assembled and attacked various slave owners. There are many more examples. How is it possible that Kunta Kinte, a truly noble figure who had fought back with everything he had, could drive his master all across the country-side and not even be aware of these events, while at the same time bringing home detailed information on the Revolutionary War, the Continental Congress, etc.? Why didn't it cross his mind to organize his fellow slaves, or to try to join the fugitives? Those things probably **did** play a big part in the real Kunta Kinte's life, but Haley prefers



to act as if they never happened.

And so it goes down through the generations. Kinte's grandson George (the generation in between was a woman, and only skimmed over briefly) was a trainer of fighting gamecocks, and as such also traveled all over the place with his master. Haley does mention Denmark Vesey and the Nat Turner rebellion, but what about just south of where George lived in North Carolina, where in 1830, slaveowners petitioned the legislature for aid because their "slaves are becoming almost uncontrollable. They go and come when and where they please, and if an attempt is made to stop them they immediately fly to the woods and they continue for months and years committing depredations." (From Aptheker) Or in 1831, when blacks and whites plotted rebellion, or 1835 similarly?

And George's son, Tom, Haley's great-grandfather, portrayed as a hard-working, reserved man with thoughts of buying his family's freedom, somehow didn't think about the two nearby, well-publicized plots in 1860, involving 300 slaves and some poor whites. Haley shows, in his book that communication about current events was pretty good in slave quarters; slaves undoubtedly knew about many of these actions by their brothers and sisters, and also undoubtedly thought and spoke about them a lot, even if they themselves were not involved. But after Kunta Kinte's escape attempts, none of the characters in Haley's book even talks about slave revolts, much less take any action.

Aptheker's book documents 250 revolts and conspiracies of slaves, and he only included the ones that involved at least 10 people. These are the real roots of black workers in America. These are roots to be far more treasured and learned from than anything in Haley's book. Most of the people in **Roots** are dignified but basically passive; the real-life ancestors of blacks in this country give testament to the indomitable spirit of rebellion against oppression that is the essence of humanity—then and NOW!

Read **Roots**, especially for the first 200 pages. Those pages contain a dramatic account of the boyhood, capture, passage and escape attempts of Kunta Kinte. But as you read, remember that this book is a darling of the bosses, and with good reason. Use the class hatred that it arouses to **continue the unending rebellion that is our real heritage.**

## Vital Role of the Party

(Continued from page 2)

Recently, our party and friends were able to react with some vigor in a black ghetto in Brooklyn when a racist cop murdered a black youth. Within this important anti-racist fight, we raised our political line; the revolutionary line was greeted warmly. Through our efforts in this fight we have laid the groundwork for a long-range struggle in this area. At the moment we are involved in an important battle among Texas farmworkers, trying to organize the workers under revolutionary leadership as opposed to the dead-end Cesar Chavez-type leadership. Ultimately most workers and their unions must be under communist leadership, not only to try to win this or that demand, but **to make revolution**. A socialist revolution is the only way the workers can secure their future.

Since our inception our party has been a fighting party, and despite our small size, it has had an important impact on political developments in the country. The student trips to Cuba were one of the first anti-imperialist blows of the sixties. Support for the Hazard, Kentucky miners brought national attention to their fight and laid the basis for worker-student unity. Fighting within and alongside the Harlem rebellion helped give rise to nationwide rebellions by black workers. Organizing the first anti-Vietnam War demonstration paved the way for a national movement. Our party's efforts in front of the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) led to the end of

this committee, who had terrorized many people for years. During the past few years we have intensified our anti-racist efforts and organized and exposed the campus racists masquerading under false genetic and sociological "theories." And currently we are fighting in the fields, the shops, communities, and schools for our revolutionary line. Additionally, we have brought thousands of people's attention to the attacks on foreign-born workers; within this fight we are carrying the line of "smash all borders;" "workers of the world unite—it is the bosses who are illegal!"

Just as Vietnam became a focus during the sixties, South Africa is becoming a focal area of the seventies in the battle between the Soviet and U.S. bosses. We support the workers and students of South Africa who are fighting back against apartheid. We know that apartheid is not peculiar only to South Africa; it is developing rapidly in our country as a consequence of the fascist direction of the ruling class. We say to our comrades in South Africa as we say to the workers in the U.S., **fascist apartheid cannot be crushed unless socialist revolution is made.**

So, despite our modest size today, our ability to play an important role in many struggles is growing, and is **MORE NECESSARY THAN EVER!** These efforts by our party will earn us the confidence from, and in, the working class. In the future our party will develop so that it can lead the working class to defeat imperialism by crushing their development of war and fascism. There is no doubt that we and the working class, through socialist revolution, can emerge as the dominant force in society.