Police and military recruiters out of the schools
No cops, prison or security guards in the unions

Campus Protest, Capitalist “Security” and the Program of Class Struggle

Part 1: The Policed Campus
Part 2: From Slave Patrols and Pinkertons to Private Jails for “Shopping While Black”

September 2013: Brutal NYPD attack on demonstrators protesting CUNY’s appointment of former Iraq/Afghanistan war chief and ex-CIA head David Petraeus. (Photos: CUNY Internationalist Clubs)

Reprinted from
Class Struggle Education Workers Newsletter
Issue No. 4 (Summer-Fall 2014)
“Educate – Agitate – Organize”
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Campus Protest, Capitalist “Security” and the Program of Class Struggle

Part 1: The Policed Campus

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Students at the City University of New York have been targeted by increasing repression together with an orchestrated effort to align higher education more fully with the requirements of U.S. imperialism’s armed forces. The assault on tuition-hike protesters in November 2011 and the brutal beating of students protesting against David “Death Squad” Petraeus in September 2013 highlighted the role of CUNY’s burgeoning “security” apparatus.

The crackdown at the country’s largest urban public university is part of a larger picture of repression. Like the mass racist profiling of “stop-and frisk,” the NYPD murders of Sean Bell, Kimani Grey and so many others have their echo across the land. The racist killing of Trayvon Martin and Oscar Grant, the execution by El Paso police of Daniel Saenz, police executions of Latinos and the homeless in Albuquerque, New Mexico: these are but a few examples. In America’s vast prison complex, lockdowns and solitary confinement are so horrendously routine that 29,000 California prisoners went on hunger strike in 2013. Months later, immigrants held at private detention centers of GEO Group (formerly Wackenhut) carried out their own desperate hunger strikes from Tacoma to Texas.

The militarization of American policing has become so extreme that the mainstream liberal ACLU just issued a report titled released War Comes Home (June 2014), showing how billions of dollars from federal programs “have armed state and local law enforcement agencies with the weapons and tactics of war.” This has made the use of “paramilitary squads” a pervasive part of daily police operations, particularly through “the routine use of heavily armed SWAT teams.”

A clear understanding of how campus security forces fit into U.S. capitalist society’s apparatus of repression is crucial for defenders of public education, especially those committed to a class-struggle perspective and program. The CUNY administration, appointed by trustees drawn from the city’s financial elite, has been raising the level of campus repression for a reason. They seek to make the campuses, and the largely black, Latino and Asian student population, fully available to the military as resources for imperialist war. And the administration wants to be sure that no one can object without facing police violence.

The police powers of the university security apparatus have been amplified since student protests erupted two decades ago against tuition hikes and the destruction of open admissions’ last remnants. From the 1990s on the CUNY tops girded their security foot soldiers to impose “order” on a student population drawn predominantly from oppressed sectors of the city’s working class. A decade and a half has passed since the New York Post broke the story of the “arsenal” stockpiled by CUNY cops, “including 4,000 rounds of hollow-point bullets,” and the training of “six security guards to become firearms instructors.”

In 2001, the Borough of Manhattan Community College announced plans for a Homeland Security program, complete with courses on “interrogation techniques” and surveillance technology. A campaign of protest and exposure spiked this attempt to set up “Abu Ghraib on the Hudson.” The brutal arrest and 2005 trial of Hostos Community


College student leader Miguel Malo (for holding up a sign protesting cuts in bilingual programs) marked another milestone, as the need to resist this attack on basic rights brought radical civil liberties lawyer Lynne Stewart in to represent him in court. The “war on terror” impinged directly on the case: Stewart was forced to withdraw after being convicted on phony conspiracy and “support to terrorism” charges in February 2005. The U.S. “intelligence community” tops $52 billion, as Edward Snowden revealed to The Washington Post last year. What next, CUNY security drones?

Since then, campus after CUNY campus has been sealed off with turnstiles, staffed with security officers and equipped with keycard readers that electronically snoop on the whereabouts of students, faculty and staff. Expenditures on policing and spying on the campus population have skyrocketed even as administrators dismiss the idea of paying adjuncts a living wage (to pick one example) as an exercise in financial utopianism. There’s always plenty of cash on hand for the latest security boondoggle, for Big Brother gizmos and gadgets galore. It is, after all, a time when the “intelligence community” tops $52 billion, as Edward Snowden revealed to The Washington Post last year. What next, CUNY security drones?

From the Police Riot at Baruch to the “Expressive Conduct” Policy

The latest phase of CUNY’s security-state escalation can be dated to November 21, 2011, when CUNY cops launched a brutal attack on students protesting a tuition hike scheduled to be rubber-stamped by a Board of Trustees meeting at Baruch College. Campus security acted hand-in-fist with the NYPD. It was all done on the orders of the CUNY trustees – the unelected board of bankers, real-estate speculators and patronage appointees that lords it over the university. Fingerprinting and processing of arrestees, as well as their transfer to the NYPD’s 7th precinct, were carried out by CUNY security. Scenes of campus cops brutalizing students at Baruch, piling on top of Asian women students and dragging them across the floor, caused widespread indignation. The brutality starkly illustrates why the Class Struggle Education Workers program demands: “Police and military recruiters out of the schools. No cops, prison or security guards in the unions.” (See “Protesting Repression at CUNY,” Class Struggle, April-May 2012.)

Outrage over the Baruch attack intersected alarm over police attacks on the populist Occupy Wall Street movement, as well as growing opposition to the NYPD’s notorious stop-and-frisk program. Less than two weeks before the Baruch incident, University of California Davis cops pepper-sprayed student demonstrators at a peaceful sit-in at the campus quad. A judge later awarded $38,000 in “workman’s comp” to the pepper-spraying campus cop for “psychological pain and suffering!” The presence of NYPD officers inside the Baruch lobby on November 21 was denied...
by then-chancellor Matthew Goldstein, but his claims were exposed admirably by the Hunter College student paper, The Envoy. Student journalists went on to critique the cover-up report on the incident issued by Kroll Inc. (“the world’s leading risk and security consultancy”). CUNY had hired Kroll to whitewash the events, and that’s what it did. So then what happened? Six months after the cop attack at Baruch, a City University press release headlined: “$2 Million Gift from Lynn and Jules Kroll Kicks Off Campaign for the Future of Justice at John Jay College” (CUNY Newswire, 12 May 2012). Describing the couple’s commitment to the school’s “mission of education for justice,” the puff piece noted that Jules Kroll was Board President of the John Jay College of Criminal Justice Foundation, describing him as “the acknowledged pioneer of the modern investigations, intelligence, and corporate security industry” since founding the Kroll company forty years previously. In ruling-class circles, one hand washes the other — with student blood if necessary as well as student fees.

Central to the trustees’ push to militarize CUNY has been their appointment of U.S. imperialist war chief and ex-CIA head David Petraeus to “teach” at CUNY’s Macaulay Honors College, and reinstitution of the Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (ROTC). These moves have been well reported and documented, most fully in a special issue of the CUNY Internationalist Clubs’ newspaper Revolution. The intimate collaboration between CUNY security and the NYPD was on display once again at the September 17, 2013 protest against a gala honoring Petraeus outside Macaulay Honors College. As university security forces sealed off the entrance area and part of the sidewalk, city cops forced demonstrators into the street, then launched a violent assault, slamming them down, repeatedly pummeling them, and arresting six on trumped-up charges.

Class Struggle Education Workers activists played a leading role in the campaign of protest and exposure against ROTC and Petraeus, which involved demonstrations and teach-ins. The CSEW was part of the Ad Hoc Committee Against the Militarization of CUNY, which called the united-front protests under the slogans “CUNY Must Not Be a War College! War Criminal Petraeus, ROTC, Military Contracts and Military Recruiters: Out of CUNY!” Two days after the September 17 arrests, we arranged for one of the victimized demonstrators — the “CUNY Six” — to address the delegate assembly of the Professional Staff Congress (PSC), the CUNY faculty-staff union. It unanimously approved a resolution expressing the union’s “outrage at the violent and unprovoked actions by the NYPD” against the protesters and demanding that all charges against them be dropped.

The vendetta by CUNY security forces was far from over. One of the locations where Petraeus/ROTC protests were organized was the Morales-Shakur Community and Student Center at City College. This student center was born in 1989 amidst the protests over the administration’s campaign against open admission, and was repeatedly targeted by the right-wing press and the campus administration. On October 20, 2013, campus cops invaded the center, seizing students’ belongings, ripping down posters and locking down the entire building, the most important on campus, carrying out a racist eviction of the center. Two leftist students active in the Petraeus protests were then arrested for their role in protesting the raid. It was only after months of court appearances that all the activists targeted for these vindictive arrests were able to get out from under the threat of jail sentences.

A still-unclarified aspect of the City College crackdown is that top campus officials claimed the arrests there were decided not by the campus administration but by other CUNY authorities. So far, these authorities have not been identified. Who exactly they were — and what specific role CUNY’s security apparatus played in making these decisions — are important questions that student journalists, among others, would do well to pursue.

In the wake of the arrests of September and October 2013, the right to protest itself, quite literally, was targeted by the CUNY tops’ repressive campaign. In the name of guarding “order” on campus, they circulated a draft policy for regulating “expressive activity” (later changed to the equally Orwellian term “expressive conduct”). The directive was intended to destroy the most basic rights of students, faculty, and staff to assemble, demonstrate, and distribute such “materials” as leaflets and fliers. In the face of widespread opposition, the Board of Trustees has delayed any decision on the policy. But this deeply anti-democratic body clearly remains committed to banning student protest as part of its militarization campaign.

5 “CUNY and NYPD: Inside the Baruch Lobby Protest,” The Envoy, January 11-February 14, 2011.
6 See in-depth articles on Petraeus, ROTC, the September 17 police attack and related topics in Revolution, October 2013, as well as the video “Police Attack CUNY Protest Against War Criminal Petraeus,” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AUw7lO9XepM&feature=youtu.be
“Law and Order” Crusade on Campus

These days, students in social science courses are apt to learn that “socially constructed” relations between people and groups become “naturalized,” that is, come to be perceived as natural aspects of human life. The idea that university campuses should be mini-police states may seem like a quintessential expression of human nature to trustees and security marketers. Instead, like other oppressive relations and institutions, this one can best be understood in its social context and historical development. The increasing bipartisan militarization of U.S. capitalist society is reaching deeper into its universities, whose goals and procedures are made and remade to serve the needs of the ruling class. Imperialist war abroad, as we often note, means stepped-up repression “at home.”

Campus security in the U.S. is usually traced to the establishment of the two-officer Yale Campus Police Department in 1894 after one too many “town-gown” brawls. In the Depression of the 1930s, students on some of the few U.S. public colleges, notably City College, became radicalized in labor and anti-war struggles. CCNY faculty and staff members were targeted in a 1940-41 red purge, a predecessor of the McCarthy-era witch hunt. Most campuses, however, lily-white enclaves for the children of the bourgeoisie in those days, were much more likely to provide strikebreakers than pickets. Enforced in part by in loco parentis (campus authorities standing in for parents), the deadening conformity of the 1950s was supplemented by the cretin rituals of fraternity life. Serious and widespread police violence on campus came with the backlash against the student radicalization of the 1960s.

It was the black freedom movement that first broke through America’s hideous “Cold War consensus,” in which unquestioning anti-communism, racial segregation, the stifling of women, and homophobia as a given were the baseline of “normalcy.” On campus, Berkeley’s Free Speech Movement, which grew out of Civil Rights protests in 1964, was the first crack in the wall. Revulsion at the U.S. war on Indochina awakened entire new layers to political life. Then, with the rise of Students for a Democratic Society and the Columbia University occupation in 1968, the authorities thought all hell had broken loose. As student protest spread, the public colleges went into revolt: against racism and against the war in Vietnam. At City College, black and Puerto Rican students began the struggle that led to open admissions being won throughout the City University in 1969, followed by the protests that drove ROTC off campus.

In 1970, President Nixon announced that he would end student deferments from the war draft. This was a sign that the campuses were no longer the playgrounds for the rich. The campuses exploded in protest (while future “chickenhawk” warmakers Clinton, Bush, Cheney managed to avoid Vietnam). National Guard units became a common sight on the quads, demonstrators were beaten, jailed and sometimes shot. In May 1970, amid a wave of protests against Nixon’s invasion of Cambodia, students were gunned down at Kent State in Ohio and Jackson State in Mississippi. Nixon’s Department of Justice indicated that the repression that led to these murders should be systematized:

“The high incidence of organized campus dissent in the last several years has focused attention on measures to maintain the protection and security of campus property and personnel. The ability of internal security forces on campus to respond to disorder and the manner in which they would join in this effort with external law enforcement groups are points of concern among many institutions.”

With the aid of a new secretive Federal agency, called the “Law Enforcement Assistance Administration” (LEAA), the authorities now massively bolstered the police powers, prerogatives and equipment of campus security forces. The “citizen’s arrest power” by which private security personnel are permitted to hold persons those they detain was augmented, as formal police authority was granted to large numbers of campus cops, who were “sworn in as special police officers, constables or deputy

8 In *State and Revolution* (1917), Lenin classically defined the bourgeois state as “special bodies of armed men” with prisons and other repressive instruments in their control, whose purpose and function are to defend the rule and property of the exploiting class against the exploited. Louis Althusser, a 1960s house philosopher of the Stalinist French Communist Party (PCF), attempted to revise Lenin, by claiming that something called “ideological state apparatuses,” of which he said, universities were a part, were at the heart of the state. Althusser is at the moment an icon for those who have embarked on the ill-starred project of resuscitating Maoism at CUNY. They might want to investigate Althusser’s actual politics during “les événements” of May 1968, when French students seized those universities and 10 million workers occupied factories, raising the red flag in the heart of the industrialized “first world.” Althusser’s reformist PCF played the decisive role in selling out this potential revolution and saving French capitalism. Althusser puffed his pipe, remained silent, and checked himself into a sanatorium. (Graffiti on Paris walls asked, “Althusser, where were you?”) He later joined the PCF leadership in denouncing the students’ supposed “infantile” leftist.


sheriffs by the local law-enforcement head under a local ordinance."

The true outlook of the private security industry was revealed in a 1971 industry publication:

“If you take a job in campus security, you may expect to find all the ragtag band of prowlers and trouble-makers you knew in other places filtering into the campus to be the same nuisances they have always been wherever they appeared. There may well be sit-ins, destruction, and demonstrations in your future. Be aware that the borderline mental cases who generally lead these disruptive upheavals will show you no mercy.”

While some college functionaries displayed a “disproportionate concern for the rights ... of every malcontent in the neighborhood, student or not,” it stated, relief would come from “the realization that the local police department respects and appreciates what you are trying to do and is ready to help any time you ask.”

**Remaking Campus Security: Repression and More Repression**

Significant changes in the role of campus police agencies “resulted from the social upheavals of the 1960s, when the duties of campus law enforcement agencies first began to mirror those of municipal police departments,” an academic survey noted. Campus officers’ image was upgraded from “old, overweight, and interested only in issuing parking tickets” to being “law enforcement ‘professionals’”; their agencies became “an integral part of the fabric of American postsecondary education”; “increasingly autonomous” from other authorities, their involvement in making security policy continuously grew, as they developed “strong similarities to municipal police departments.” The mandate to “enforce student disciplinary rules” and “ensure campus order” fostered the trend of “equipping officers with the same nuisances they have always been wherever they appeared. There may well be sit-ins, destruction, and demonstrations in your future. Be aware that the borderline mental cases who generally lead these disruptive upheavals will show you no mercy.”

Over a relatively short period, “American institutes of higher education had greatly expanded their campus police departments in size and scope of authority and responsibilities,” noted another study, citing Department of Justice figures on 19 campus police agencies with at least 100 full-time employees at four-year college institutions. Most had taken on a broad swath of tasks from drug enforcement investigations to those of violent crimes. Moreover, a “significant majority of the campus law enforcement agencies with sworn arrest powers were authorized to carry a firearm.” The authors were particularly keen, however, to promote the study of proposals to expand campus security’s use of “conducted energy devices” – better known as tasers.

At the City University of New York, large-scale student protests against budget cuts in 1991 and a major tuition hike in 1995 led the Board of Trustees and administration to ramp up their in-house apparatus of repression. CUNY’s in-house force became one of the largest “law enforcement agencies” in New York and the largest campus police force in the country. Hiking the security budget by almost 50 percent, to $30 million in 1995, CUNY turned its security officers into sworn New York State “Peace” (law enforcement) officers, enhancing their powers to arrest and use physical force. Retired NYPD officers were brought in to establish an elaborate command hierarchy with military-style ranks (lieutenant, sergeant, corporal, specialist) under campus chiefs. A 30-year FBI veteran was appointed as the CUNY-wide Director of Public Safety. The elite SAFE (“Special Assistance for Events”) unit was created: a combined riot and red squad “that monitors student protests and keeps tabs on campus activists,” noted the Daily News in August 1995:

“[W]ith the exception of a single job fair, the squad has been deployed only for student demonstrations and trustee meetings that drew protesters. Members of the SAFE team, who are authorized to carry guns, have also followed students to an off-campus rally, according to internal memos.... And the chief of the elite team has

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helped compile and circulate lists of arrested activists, complete with addresses, Social Security numbers, grade-point averages and race.\textsuperscript{15}

The ramp-up of CUNY’s police regime was soon followed by the city’s K-12 school system transferring its safety department to the NYPD. School safety agents became NYC special patrol officers, with the legal status of New York State peace officers. Today, cops are ubiquitous in the public schools in New York and across the country, as are the metal detectors used to confiscate kids’ cell phones, music players, and other property.

The terminology of CUNY’s security apparatus is important to understanding its makeup. As described above, CUNY consolidated its proprietary (in-house) force by establishing a core of “sworn law enforcement/Peace Officers.” In addition, its public safety departments include campus security assistants (CSAs), and contract security officers. The two latter categories both consist of New York State licensed security guards. Peace Officers and CSAs are CUNY employees while contract officers are paid by private security companies.\textsuperscript{16} Composition of cop forces varies from campus to campus. The CUNY Graduate Center, for example, currently has “eight Peace Officers assigned to fixed posts and patrol duties,” plus fifteen CSAs and three contract officers, according to its annual security report. Queens College has 20 peace officers plus 25 CSAs, and an unspecified number of contract officers. The obligatory security reports of CCNY and Hunter College do not provide this breakdown in composition.\textsuperscript{17}

In 1999, CUNY student journalists publicized CUNY security records obtained under the Freedom of Information Act, detailing how the administration was “continuing the militarization of CUNY peace officers.” During the prior three years alone, that involved purchasing “in excess of 110,000 rounds of small arms ammunition,” including “9mm hollow point, .38 caliber Ny-Clad, and 12 gauge shotgun rounds,” as well as “7 Smith & Wesson .38 caliber pistols and 8 Glock 9mm semi-automatic pistols,” night sights, hundreds of ASP extending batons, “over 400 mace/pepper spray dispensers, body armors for SAFE teams, and federally approved riot helmets.” The City College student paper that helped publicize the story had been suspended six months earlier for exposing the installation of a surveillance camera disguised as a smoke detector outside CCNY’s Morales-Shakur Center.\textsuperscript{18} This gives a sense of the bloodthirstiness of the class that has appointed the CUNY trustees to suppress student and worker voices. It is the “default” position of U.S. imperialism toward those it regards as its subjects, and predates the USA Patriot Act and the openly declared “war on terror.”

“Rent-a-Cops”: Fellow Workers? Not on Your Life

As language reflects social relations, popular parlance has long referred to “regular cops” and “rent-a-cops.” The terms take note of the divisions of labor through which policing operations are performed. The different kinds of cops act together to repress workers, as every worker who has been involved in labor organizing or a strike knows. CSEW members have witnessed this in the broad range of campaigns we have participated in, including unionization drives at NYC greengrocer delis, restaurants and retail stores, the Stella d’Oro bakery strike in the Bronx (which was tragically defeated) and the successful Hot and Crusty workers organizing campaign in Manhattan.

Security guards are usually the bosses’ first line of “defense” against the most oppressed and exploited workers in the city. When it takes more than rent-a-cops alone to do the job, the “regular cops” are brought in. This pattern was vividly depicted in Ken Loach’s powerful film Bread and Roses (2000), based on the militant Justice for Janitors organizing campaign in Los Angeles. That the job of public cops

\textsuperscript{15} “CUNY Keeps Eye on Protests; Unit’s Gigs are Mainly at Demos,” \textit{Daily News}, 14 August 1995.

\textsuperscript{16} The licensing is done by the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services under the provisions of the “Private Investigators, Bail Enforcement Agents, Watch, Guard or Patrol Agencies and Security Guard Licensing Law,” which incorporates

\textsuperscript{17} The 2011 security report for QC stated it had no less than 55 contract security officers.

“CUNY is increasingly becoming Lockdown U. and these are part of the forces doing the locking down. At Hostos Community College, campus cops threw student leader Miguel Malo to the ground and arrested him for holding up a sign protesting cuts to bilingual programs; Miguel’s 2003 trial on frame-up assault charges became a cause celebre (one of his lawyers was Lynne Stewart). During the recent Hunter cafeteria workers’ struggle, campus security was repeatedly used by the administration against the cafeteria workers, leading spokeswomen for the cafeteria workers to denounce claims that security guards were fellow workers let alone on their side. During the New School occupation, campus security guards violently attacked sit-in participants and then worked with the NYPD to bust people. Those slammed up against walls and thrown to the ground included some who only minutes before had been claiming that the campus security guards were ‘our friends. (For those interested I co-authored a detailed account of these events.)”

“Nor is this specific to the U.S.; in university struggles from Mexico to Puerto Rico, campus security has done the same kind of thing. This is not accidental but due to the nature of the job, meaning that security officers (like the police) are not ‘other workers’ but forces hired to defend property and institutions of capitalist society, so repression is the job. It is shameful as well as dangerous to tell people that any kind of cops, security or rent-a-cops are fellow workers, which contradicts the hard-earned experience of the workers movement from time immemorial. Any self-respecting defender of labor and student rights should call for all cops of every kind off campus and out of the unions.”

The notorious Pinkerton agency, now part of Securitas.

and private ones is to serve the bosses, even to the point of murdering workers, is a fact that has been voiced in radical culture for a very long time. “This book ain’t got no songs in it that was wrote by deputy sheriffs,” proclaimed Woody Guthrie in a collection of labor and protest songs. “It ain’t got none wrote by company guards, nor cops, nor snitches, nor guys that set fire to the little shacks of the poor folks along the river bottoms.” To stick with the union, Woody’s “Union Maid” has to defy “goons and ginks and company finks” together with “the deputy sheriffs that made the raids.”

Yet decades of labor defeats brought by the union tops’ subordination to the Democratic Party have made basic realities of class struggle seem like curious relics of the past to many activists today. The supporters of Occupy Wall Street, for example, for a time maintained that the cops are part of “the 99%.” Many of these well-meaning liberals got a nasty lesson in the social reality which black people endure every day when the NYPD set upon largely white Occupy protesters and beat and maced them mercilessly.

In June 2011, then-leaders of the Adjunct Project at the CUNY Grad Center, one of whom had recently given a presentation on “Marxist perspectives” at the Left Forum, issued a call to attend a “very important rally” to “Stand in Solidarity with other CUNY workers.” It turned out that this event was called by Service Employees International Union Local 32BJ (SEIU) to “Support Security Officers at CUNY Campuses.” Seeking to increase their dues base, SEIU leaders had embarked on an organizing drive aimed at bringing some 300 contract security officers at eight CUNY campuses into the union. A CSEW activist, who had spoken against bringing campus guards into workers unions at a PSC delegate assembly, posted a response:

19 Guthrie was introducing his ballad “Tom Joad,” based on the migrant farmworker protagonist in Steinbeck’s The Grapes of Wrath; he explains that Joad “found out about the thugs and the firebugs and the guards and the deputies that guard the fields that the rich man says ‘are mine’ – ‘You keep off.’” Alan Lomax (comp.), Hard Hitting Songs for Hard-Hit People (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), 236.

Los Angeles, 1992: Cops attack immigrant building workers at Justice for Janitors rally. (Justice for Janitors History Project)

Further investigation showed that the contract security guards worked for guards worked for Securitas – the current name of the Pinkerton agency, the most notorious and murderous union-busting and strike-breaking outfit in American history! The CSEW member received no response from the Grad Center students who had posted the original call to “Support Security Officers.” However, others came forward to support the guards, saying that they make low wages and “have to put food on the table.” A claim was made that the guards were not defending capitalist property relations but just “checking IDs,” and besides were vested only with citizen’s arrest powers. Other arguments appealed to support the guards on the basis that many of these guards that CUNY hires to police its heavily black and Latino student body are themselves black and Latino.

Ruling classes have long recruited members of the very sectors they oppress and exploit, to guard their property and enforce their repressive rule. In fact, this is an age-old truth of class society from Babylon and the Pharaohs down to South Africa under the apartheid regime and the capitalist ANC today. In the U.S. in the 19th century and into the 20th, big-city police forces serving the Anglo-Protestant elite were staffed in large part by Irish Catholic immigrants and their descendants – though for many other jobs of higher status, the bosses said “no Irish need apply.” The ruling class was more than happy to have Irish cops run roughshod over black neighborhoods and crack the skulls of Irish longshoremen and coal miners.

After the ghetto rebellions of the 1960s, the American bourgeoisie made a deliberate (and insulting) move towards hiring black and Latino cops, prison guards, immigration officers, and security guards to repress the black and Latino masses. Notoriously, a black Chicago cop was assigned the job of murdering Black Panther Fred Hampton in his bed as he slept. Many of the prison guards who shake radical black journalist and former Black Panther Mumia Abu-Jamal and guard his cell in Pennsylvania are black and Latino, as are many of those who keep immigrants caged in concentration camps from Arizona and Texas to Tacoma, Queens and Brooklyn. As for the brutally racist NYPD, as of 2010, 53 percent of its patrol officers were black, Latino or Asian.\(^{21}\)

In Bread and Roses, director Ken Loach did not shy away from realities of class and race that characterize real-life struggles throughout the U.S. A Mexican-American supervisor is seen directing management’s reign of terror, in the form of firings, abuse, and intimidation, against workers fighting for their elementary human dignity. Some of the guards who remove fired immigrant, Latino and black workers from the premises are themselves black and Latino. Doing the dirty work for the white corporate higher-ups who pay their salaries (whether large or small) means doing it “against their own people” – that’s something that “just comes with the job.” For a cop (private or public) to keep their job, they must treat pretty much everyone as a potential perpetrator. Otherwise, they won’t stay cops for long.

As Marx pointed out, it is people’s “social being that determines their consciousness,” not the other way around. On a daily basis, security guards are on the lookout for possible rule-breakers, disturbers of order and “troublemakers” of all descriptions. The supposed offender can even be a special needs kid in a wheelchair, like Oakland High School student Francisco Martínez. In early June of this year, two African American security guards were caught on video throwing the 17-year-old sophomore, who has cerebral palsy, out of his wheelchair, striking him, kicking him in the head, dragging him into an elevator, piling on top of him, then striking him again repeatedly.\(^{22}\)


or unauthorized intrusion or entry, larceny, vandalism, abuse, arson or trespass on property...”

A book on the private security business notes that the security guard is “the infantryman of the private security army”; their authority is “granted them by their employer,” whether they belong to a proprietary security force or are contract guards. The contract guards are “mercenaries,” states the author, a former Secret Service agent; their “employer is the contract guard agency, but the authority emanates from the firm contracting for their services.” The guard’s authority is an expression the defense of private property:

“[T]he grantor of the authority can give no greater powers than those he himself possesses. His powers are those associated with ownership or leasehold of real estate or property. Because I have the right to my land and may evict a trespasser, I can delegate that right to my agent, servant, or employee, and may even contract with an outside firm for them to use their employees in my behalf.”

The protection of private property rights has, the author emphasizes, led to an “enormous” extension of the “system of private justice” involving “private security staffs” in the United States.

According to the New York Security Officer Training Manual, the first precept of the security officer is: “The employer comes first.” Another is this: “Security officers have the responsibility to not only report theft of property, but an equal duty to detect theft of time.” In other words: policing other employees for the boss, like “perps” from the general public, is a vital part of the job.

Tucson: Wackenhut guard “processing” immigrant detainee. Deportations have skyrocketed under Obama. (Photo: AP)

“Citizen’s Arrest” Means No Miranda Rights

Some of the security guard supporters stated, as noted above, that the guards can “only” make citizen’s arrests. What does this mean in reality? “Article 35, section 35.10 of the New York State Penal Law gives the security officer/private person the authority to use physical force to effect an arrest,” the guards’ training manual states. This authority is used almost exclusively by members of the security apparatus. “Security officers may arrest for felonies and misdemeanors,” it emphasizes, while observing that their classification as “private citizens” rather than government authorities makes it “obvious” – according to the bosses’ law – that they “do not have to give the Miranda warning.”

This point is of great importance, and is one reason behind the vast growth of the security industry, with its private jails and private “justice” system. The man or woman in the street has heard of “citizen’s arrests,” but who knows any normal person who has made one? To ask the question is to answer it. The author of Private Policing notes, however, that security personnel “routinely use their citizen’s right of arrest most of us would not consider using no matter how clearly the arrest would be classified as lawful.” How widely such powers are used is indicated in the finding of a British Retail Consortium survey: in 1998 in Britain, “789,000 customers were apprehended by staff working for retailers (the vast majority being security staff), of whom 476,000 were referred to the police.” As for rent-a-cops being “fellow workers,” the same survey found that in the same year, they apprehended 14,000 store employees, turning half of them over to the police.

“As agents of property owners,” private security personnel “possess considerable powers, and their authority, while on private property, more often than not exceeds that of conventional police.” Innumerable security-industry textbooks and training manuals make the same point. The manual Practical Knowledge for a Private Security Officer devotes 35 pages to the legal basis, authority and procedures for private security officers’ exercise of arrest powers. Specific procedures are explained in detail, while the author reminds trainees and it is emphasized, while observing that “private security is generally employed to augment public law enforcement. Private security’s loyalty and obligatory responsibility is to its employer and not to general society.”

Security guards do not have to read rights to (“Mirandize”) those whom they apprehend. The legal basis for this outrage is that formally, the guards are “private citizens” rather than members of governmental bodies. This doctrine is an extension of the U.S. Supreme Court’s ruling

in *Burdeau v. McDowell* (1921), that the Fourth Amendment does not apply in the case of arrests by “private” parties, since it “was intended as a restraint upon the activities of sovereign authority, and was not intended to be a limitation upon other than governmental agencies.” What was good in 1921 for the court of Jim Crow justice, which had enshrined “separate but equal” a quarter century earlier, still holds today.

Indeed, the point that in many circumstances, the “private” basis of their authority enhances security guards’ legal powers is one of the favorite topics in books produced for the ever-growing private security industry. One textbook notes that “because the private security officer acts on behalf of the person, business, or corporation that hires her or him, the basic right to protect those persons and property is transferred to the private security person.” The book further notes that “management ensures that anyone with authority to detain or arrest someone on the premises is generally trained in arrest procedures.”

Like police and prison guards, security guards are not fellow workers but the bosses’ agents of repression – “producers” only of repression for the owning class against the working class, poor and oppressed. Whether public or private, proprietary or contract, police and guards of all kinds seek “unionization” to improve and strengthen their position to “do their job” of repression, which in the racist USA, founded on slavery, falls most heavily on doubly and triply oppressed African American, Latino and immigrant poor and working people and youth.

**What Are Police and Security Guard “Unions”?**

A recent news item reporting “a setback for police unions” illustrates the role of bodies representing the job interests of capital’s repressive forces. “Judge Rejects Suit by Police, Upholds Anti-Proﬁling Law,” reads the headline (*New York Law Journal*, 20 June 2014). Since even the toothless “anti-proﬁling law” enacted last year in New York City was deemed unacceptable by the Patrolman’s Benevolent Association, the police “union” ﬁled suit against it. A state judge rejected the suit, noting that the law “does not prevent police ofﬁcers from continuing to stop, question and frisk” so long as race could not be shown to be “the determinative factor.” Nonetheless, PBA head Patrick Lynch denounced Judge Anil Singh for supposedly putting NYPD ofﬁcers “in legal crosshairs (sic) with every arrest they make.” For years, contracts negotiated by the PBA included the notorious “48-hour rule,” which required the city to wait two full days before questioning ofﬁcers involved in “police-related occurrences” – like shooting down black and Latino youth.

Nationwide attention was drawn to the conditions of prison hellholes throughout the country when California prison inmates launched a desperate hunger strike last year. The guards who sought to break it through systematic retal-

![Pelican Bay, California: Guards handcuff an inmate in the “Security Housing Unit.” (Photo: Adam Tanner/Reuters)](image)

*Pelican Bay, California: Guards handcuff an inmate in the “Security Housing Unit.” (Photo: Adam Tanner/Reuters)*

iation have a “union” to represent them on the job: the California Correctional Peace Officers’ Association. The CCPOA was a prominent force behind the state’s reinstatement of the death penalty, and helped finance Proposition 184, which established the “Three Strikes Law” in 1994, later playing a key role in spiking an attempt to reform it a decade later. Prisoner rights groups have widely cited a statement by an enthusiastic CCPOA member, about the great “opportunities” and “upward mobility” the “Three Strikes” law – sometimes described as the “Prison Guard Full Employment Act” – provided for members of this “union”:

“We’ve gone from 12 institutions to 28 in 12 years, and with ‘Three Strikes’ and the overcrowding we’re going to experience with that, we’re going to need to build at least three prisons a year for the next five years. Each one of those institutions will take approximately 1,000 employees.”

The CCPOA is a major contributor to the campaign coffers of Democratic politicians, and a deep-pockets backer of Governor Jerry Brown, in a state where 7 percent of the budget goes to prisons. An in-depth study states that the CCPOA’s power “explains how the misconduct of their members goes unchecked, and reported sexual assault, unreasonable use of tasers and pepper spray, hitting with flashlight and batons, punching and kicking, slurs and racial epithets, among others, go uninvestigated.”

As for security guards, how does the capitalist state itself define them? Take the National Labor Relations Act of 1935. Labor bureaucrats hail this FDR-era legislation,

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though it established much of the legal structure for the “outlawing of solidarity” that shackles workers today. The complex question of how the NLRA’s modification in 1947 affected security guards’ associations is beyond the scope of this article. We will simply quote the succinct definition provided in the modified act’s Section 9(b)(3): guard, it states, means “any individual employed as a guard to enforce against employees and other persons rules to protect property of the employer or to protect the safety of persons on the employer’s premises.”

One guard association cites Section 9(b)(3) to argue:

“This historic provision of the Law was enacted to protect building owners and security guards in the event of labor unrest, such as strikes, pickets, rallies, etc. The logic is simple. Security Guards have the special job of protecting property and the public. People and property need special attention during labor unrest. Would the general public and building owners really feel protected during a strike if the security guards were on the wrong side of the picket line? No! This is why the law feels that Guards should belong to GUARD UNIONS!”

This statement by a security guard “union” simply underscores what all supporters of workers’ struggles, and students of labor history, should know: strike-breaking and union-busting are central to the purpose of security guards. This has been true from the days when Allan Pinkerton was shooting down “Molly Maguires” to the docks of Longview, Washington today, where police who intervened to back up security guards enforcing a union-busting lockout accused picketing workers of smashing windows in a guard shack and supposedly holding six security guards “hostage.”

So what about SEIU Local 32BJ, the union that called the June 2011 “Support Security Officers” rally in front of the CUNY Grad Center? This is one of the largest unions in the city, representing many thousands of cleaning, maintenance and other “property service” workers at commercial and residential buildings. At the same time, unfortunately, the SEIU contract with the Realty Advisory Board covers security guards in many New York commercial buildings. Article 6.1 says that in the event of a strike, even by other members of Local 32BJ, “involving the customer’s property or operations, the employees [i.e. the guards] will remain on the job for protection of life, limb and property.” Section 6.2 states:

“The Union acknowledges that security officers’ duties may include the apprehension, identification and reporting of, and giving evidence against, any persons who perform or conduct themselves in violation of work rules or applicable laws while on the Employer’s or the customer’s premises, and that the performance of such duties shall not subject security officers to punishment, discipline or charges by the Union.”

Thus the agreement explicitly recognizes that the security guards will defend the bosses’ property during workers’ strikes, and that the guards’ duties include collecting evidence against, apprehending and helping fire and/or prosecute workers who may violate the employers’ work rules. No! Security guards are not “fellow workers,” and should not be in workers’ unions!

An important reference point for the Class Struggle Education Workers program is a historic campaign that a group of mainly Afro-Brazilian labor militants, then called Luta Metalúrgica (Metal Workers’ Struggle), waged in Brazil’s “Steel City” in 1996. Formed by leaders of mass steel workers’ strikes and plant occupations in the 1980s and early 1990s, the group—which later became the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil—led a struggle to expel municipal guardas from the Volta Redonda Municipal Workers Union, since police at all levels are not workers but “the armed fist of the bourgeoisie.”

In the face of repression unleashed against the Brazilian comrades by the “popular front” coalition running the city’s government, Mumia Abu-Jamal wrote from Death Row to support their struggle. His article “Police: Part of, or Enemies of, Labor?” (31 March 1996) was translated into Portuguese and distributed in thousands of copies. Addressing the arguments of apologists for bringing police into the unions, he posed the issue with characteristic clarity:

“Central to the...conflict is a question that now has global implications – what is the role of the police? Are they simply workers, like glass blowers, garbage collectors, or clerks? Or are they agents of the wealthy and propertied classes – those who rule?”

31 See Joe Burns, Reviving the Strike (Brooklyn: Ig Publishing, 2011); while the author’s outlook significantly differs from our own, his chapter on the “Outlawing of Solidarity (47-70) provides a very useful summary.


“It is tempting to go with former question, for do they not work, like others, for pay?

“Only when one looks at the nature of that work, from the standpoint of history and current events, does the latter point score.

“Throughout history, police have protected the status quo....”

For a U.S. audience familiar with how police “beat, bloodied and arrested” civil rights activists and “neutralized” those who today are honored veterans of that struggle,” Mumia stressed the link to Brazil, where police “have been engineers of repression, from the crushing of popular and labor unions in the past, to the ruthless, shopkeeper-contracted slaughter of Brazilian street children.”

Based on the experience of this struggle for “cops out of the unions,” the Brazilian comrades formed the Comitê de Luta Classista (Class Struggle Caucus), sister organization of the CSEW, which at the time of writing is playing a leading role in the strike of Rio de Janeiro education workers, which is closely linked to struggles against the violent repression of workers, youth, slum dwellers and social movement activists for protesting at the World Cup.

The revival and transformation of the labor movement is long overdue. Where the CSEW differs most fundamentally from run-of-the-mill union opposition groups is that we insist that this much-discussed and urgently needed rebirth can occur only through a systematic break with the politics, parties and institutions of the capitalist class, first and foremost its repressive apparatus. This is the import of our program’s demand: “Police and military recruiters out of the schools. No cops, prison or security guards in the unions.”

The terrifying expansion of the United States’ mass incarceration system; its role in the “new Jim Crow”; the proliferation of for-profit prisons and immigrant-detention centers; the rampages of Blackwater mercenaries from New Orleans to Baghdad – these are a few of the reasons why the “privatization” of large swathes of capitalism’s police/security apparatus has drawn increasing attention. Students at CUNY need only flip over their blue books to see which “correctional facility” they were made in to get a glimpse of how pervasive it is.

The story is a complex one in the sense that policing arose as a private endeavor, consolidated with the rise of public corps of officers in blue, yet still – even before privatization became the state religion from the Reagan/Thatcher years on – always shared tasks and functions with capital’s private armies of guards, mercenaries and strikebreakers. It is a simple one in the sense that these bodies, whether public or “for profit,” all exist to defend the profit system, which requires the services of its repression professionals to survive.

“It is sometimes easy for Americans to forget,” a textbook for security-industry employees observes, “that publicly supported police agencies are a fairly recent creation.” As the “success of the Industrial Revolution marked affirmation of capitalism in the West,” the need arose for special bodies to protect it: “business precedes private security; protection of business interests has been the central need for private security,” whose functions came to be shared with public police.35

The words are dry but the reality is soaked in blood. Many works on modern police history locate its starting point in the U.S. with Boston’s creation of a paid public force in 1838, following the example set by Sir Robert Peel’s “bobbies” in London a decade earlier. But American policing goes back much further, to the private “night watches” emerging in Massachusetts at the end of the 17th century and the daytime “ward” patrols established by merchants and settlers, who often used employees or bond servants to guard their property. However, the origins of the U.S. police system lie largely in the growth of slave-based plantation agriculture, as a defining feature of American capitalism’s genesis. As another security-industry text puts it:

“The southern colonies and their successor states, with their plantation systems, had special security problems connected with the capital investment in slavery. It was important to confine the movement of these slaves because this investment could indeed ‘walk away.’ The South was also haunted by the specter of slave revolts similar to those that had occurred in the Caribbean islands... These patrols, and their leaders, were later given official or quasi-official status by deputation.”36

A landmark in this brutal history was reached with the creation of a uniformed, armed urban force in 1783. Charleston, South Carolina created this paramilitary city guard with the central objective of controlling its large urban slave population. Other Southern cities later followed suit. As for New York City, it was only in 1845 that a force of Day and Night Police was established, with close to a thousand officers patrolling by wards.37

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37 This history is explored in the chapter on “The Origins of American Policing” in Kristian Williams’ valuable study, Our
The 1877 labor upheaval that shook the United States led to an upswell of support from businessmen to the “national guard movement,” notably for the construction of armories (like the one next door to Hunter College) for storing weapons and ammunition. Between 1877 and 1892, these guardsmen were used in no less than 33 labor conflicts and 14 riots. As a history of the Pinkertons notes: “Another response, especially during the peaceful phases of a strike, was the greater use of private detective agencies. Of course, a possible strategy might be to use the private watchman to precipitate violence hence bringing in the National Guard or police to break the strike.”

A Synonym for Strikebreaking

If you look up “Pinkerton” at thefreedictionary.com, here’s what you get: “Pin-ker-ton, Allan 1819-1884. Scottish-born American detective. His agency was notorious for breaking strikes and disrupting labor efforts to unionize.”

The security industry pays homage to its pioneer, in one manual and textbook after another. A typical one states: “The modern U.S. private security owes much of its origins to Allan Pinkerton,” who “worked for a short time as a deputy sheriff in Cook County, Illinois, and was then appointed the first detective of the Chicago Police Department.” In the early 1850s he established the Pinkerton Detective Agency. The Pinkertons made their reputation serving the railroad barons, then working as firemen for the coal barons against “Molly Maguires” in the 1870s. Ruling-class fears that the example of the Paris Commune could cross the Atlantic led to a lucrative sideline in “communist”-hunting.

The popular ballad “Father Was Killed by the Pinkerton Men” immortalized their bloody attacks against the workers during the 1892 strike at Andrew Carnegie’s Homestead steel complex. When strikers mobilized to defend the workers against an attack on the steel complex, 300 Pinkertons, they forced the strikers to retreat in humiliation. While their reputation in robber-baron circles had lost some of its luster, the Pinkertons continued to serve their masters in the Pullman strike (1894), the Ludlow Massacre (1914), and innumerable other battles in the class war. Dashiell Hammett’s novel Red Harvest (1929) was inspired in part by his experience, as a Pinkerton operative, of turning down as offer of $5,000 to kill the famous Industrial Workers of the World organizer Frank Little as part of the crackdown on labor radicals during WWI. In August, 1917, Little (“half Indian, half white, all IWW”) was hanged from a train trestle in Butte, Montana, where he was leading a copper strike. The New York Times (2 August 1917) gloried in the lynching of this “agitator and strike leader” who had “referred to the United States soldiers as ‘scabs in uniform’” when they were used for strikebreaking, and “took a leading part in recent labor troubles in Arizona,” “protesting against the deportation of I.W.W. members from Bisbee” and telling the governor: “I don’t give a d--- what your country is fighting for; I am fighting for the solidarity of labor.”

The Pinkertons continued to be a top name in the strikebreaking business — as late as 1992 they made headlines for their role in Canada’s Yellowknife mine strike — although competition grew in the 1920s and 30s from outfits like Waddell-Mahon, Berghoff Brothers and Baldwin-Felts, whose gun thugs invaded Colorado and West Virginia, massacring miners as immortalized in John Sayles’ 1987 film Matewan; and the union-busting goon squads of GM and Henry Ford, whose anti-Semitic publications and avid support to fascism got him decorated by Hitler. For their part, nativist/fascist groups like the KKK and Silver Shirts combined strikebreaking with lynching. Private guards joined police on “Bloody Thursday” during the 1934 dock strike that gave rise to the ILWU, while the same year in Minneapolis the Trotskyist-led Teamsters won the day at the Battle of Deputys Run.”

In 1999, the Pinkerton firm was acquired by Securitas, “the largest protective services company in Europe.” According to its website, Securitas “acquired another legendary, American private security firm, Burns International” the following year. Working together was nothing new for Pinkerton and Burns: almost ninety years previously, Louisiana lumber companies employed them to create “formidable mercenary armies” to “suppress union organization and break strikes,” Stephen Norwood notes in his study, Strikebreaking and Intimidation (2002):

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Book by Allan Pinkerton, published year after 1877 labor upheaval.


Pinkertons escort scabs, Buchtel, OH, 1884. (Library of Congress)
Dacus took refuge at union headquarters with several white unionists, who determined to protect him. The union men were vastly outnumbered by a company posse that surrounded the headquarters and shot four of the white unionists dead; Dacus managed to escape.”

Infamous as a KKK stronghold in subsequent years, in 1965 Bogalusa became known as the birthplace of the heroic Deacons for Defense, who faced down the Klan through armed black self-defense.41

As noted in Part 2 of this article, Securitas is the company that provided the contract guards at the CUNY Graduate Center when the controversy over the call for “solidarity with security officers” there occurred three years ago.

A Growth Industry

With reds driven from the unions by the McCarthyite witch hunts and the anti-labor arsenal strengthened successively by Taft-Hartley, Landrum-Griffin, New York’s Taylor Law and similar measures, the courts and police acquired new instruments of repression. In accounting for what they universally regard as the sorry state of unions today, labor historians and activists alike hark back to Reagan’s smashing of the air traffic controllers’ strike in 1981, as the AFL-CIO hierarchs stood by.

Together with waves of plant closings in heavily unionized industries, the PATCO debacle set the stage for savage union-busting and strikebreaking at Greyhound, Hormel, Phelps-Dodge and so many other places. Throughout, the union leaders’ servile loyalty to the Democratic Party guaranteed they would play by the bosses’ rules, which meant the workers were defeated. As in previous periods, mercenary forces of scab-herders and security guards of various descriptions divided the strikebreaking duties with public forces of order in those battles.

Security became one of the few growth industries, with the undoubted advantage that high unemployment in other sectors helped provide more “dangerous” people for capitalism’s security apparatus to control. A 1992 feature on violence and criminal activity by private guards, Time magazine noted with reference to security: “Few industries have expanded as rapidly. The number of security guards has grown since 1980 to nearly twice the size of the U.S. public law-enforcement community. Today there are 10,000 security companies in America,” with the pioneering Pinkertons growing “by voraciously gobbling up smaller security firms.”42

Private security’s role against the workers movement also grew proportionally, as employers used them not only to help destroy existing labor organizations but to head off the formation of new ones, especially among the most vulnerable groups of workers. In a typical example close to

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home (CSEW members participated in the campaign), constant surveillance and relentless harassment by security guards was key to the defeat of organizing attempts by Latino and West African workers at Jack’s 99 Cent Store in midtown Manhattan. Not long afterwards, another perfectly normal case of security guards “just doing their job” wound up with the government’s own National Labor Relations Board giving a litany of “DHL’s security guards called the police to investigate” union organizers, their “surveillance of employees while they were handbilling” in favor of unionization, and other actions which contributed to the union losing a representation election.  

While private companies contract great numbers of security guards, a parallel phenomenon is governments’ contracting-out or privatization of public police functions. By the late 1980s the phenomenon was drawing enough attention that a report published by the U.S. Justice Department noted: “Nearly as much money is now paid by governments to private security companies as is spent for public law enforcement by the federal and state governments combined.”  

The growth of security-guard companies overlapped the rapid expansion of prisons, many of them run by firms like the Corrections Corporation of America. The mass-incarceration industry was fueled in part by the “war on drugs,” announced by Nixon in 1971, then dramatically escalated in a bipartisan crusade of racist repression under Reagan and Bush I, Clinton, Bush II and Obama. The “immigration crackdown,” in which deportations have reached record highs under Obama, has fueled a boom in private immigrant detention centers. The mass penning and torment of “illegal” humans is highly profitable big business. When a potential investor asked the head of one company (later acquired by GEO Group) whether the economic crisis might lead to a fall in the demand for immigrant detention, he replied: “We do not believe we will see a decline in the need for detention beds particularly in an economy with rising unemployment...”  

We have looked at a few of the ways in which the public and private sectors of capitalism’s security/repression apparatus share tasks and functions, in line with the requirements and interests of the ruling class. As an academic study of this relation noted at the turn of the millennium:

“[I]t should be noted that the general trend...extends to forms of ‘corporatization’ or ‘self-provision’ of security by public sector organizations. Virtually every government department, and other government-based service such as universities and hospitals, has some form of in-house or managed contract security to guard property and people, and to detect and prevent fraud and other crimes.... [T]he private sector appears firmly established as the dominant provider of security and policing services currently in the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia, if not elsewhere.”  

The brutal reality behind these neutral phrases includes the vast network of private jails that security officers run for stores and other businesses. As it sheds some powerful light on a number of issues addressed in this article, we will end by taking a look at what goes on in the basement of Macy’s. Walking distance from the City University’s prestigious Ph.D. departments, it is no academic

New York Times (2 August 1917) glories in the lynching of Frank Little. When working as a Pinkerton, Dashiell Hammett was offered $5,000 to do the job.

43 DHL Express, Inc., 355 NLRB No. 144 (2010).
“Shop and Frisk”: Handcuffs, Cells and Bullets

That a private justice system of arrest, detention and punishment on a massive scale is bread and butter for the “foot soldiers” of the private security army is a daily fact of life in the Herald Square business district just blocks away from CUNY’s Graduate Center. A 2003 New York Times report on the private jails at Macy’s and other area department stores noted: “Last year, more than 12,000 people moved through detention rooms in 105 of Macy’s stores, including more than 1,900 at the Manhattan store, in Herald Square,” one of the city’s most popular shopping areas.

“The operation is legally authorized, and, retailers say, necessary: private police fill the void left by public police too burdened to chase small-time thieves.”

“Shoplifting suspects caught and detained are taken to ‘Room 140,’ which features a long steel bench bolted to the linoleum floor. A dozen handcuffs hang off the bench from chains. In two holding cells, roughly 5 feet long by 5 feet wide, wooden benches bear the etchings of former detainees. ‘Not worth it,’ reads one....

“Legal experts say that retailers are held to a standard somewhere between that of the police and that of citizens making an arrest — a standard known as merchants’ privileges, which allow stores around the nation to detain people on suspicion of shoplifting without police involvement.”

The article observed that some retail chains “have less elaborate detention areas, using storage rooms or offices instead of jails.” However, “aggressive policing is a daily staple of the retail industry, with most major stores employing some version” of the procedures Macy’s uses.47

Another article, on a suit charging Macy’s with “bias against minority shoppers,” gave vivid details on arrests and detentions carried out by security guards. One victim described how “guards led her to a holding cell, conducted a pat-down search of her body and handcuffed her to a bench for over an hour”; one guard “continuously ridiculed” her, while ignoring her pleas to be allowed to retrieve her 9-year-old daughter. The guard “later boasted that Macy’s would be thrilled ‘because we caught seven of them today’,” according to the suit. Two days later, the Times reported on another victim: “A suspected shoplifter apparently tried to commit suicide inside a cell operated by security personnel at Macy's in Manhattan.”48

Lest anyone imagine that a spate of bad press and a lawsuit filed a decade ago might have ended the practice, in Fall 2013 the private jail hit the Daily News front page when HBO “Treme” star Rob Brown said “he was ‘paraded’ through Macy's Herald Square in handcuffs and detained” there “after being racially profiled and accused of using a fake [credit] card to buy his mother a $1,350 watch.” “Don’t be black while shopping at #Macy’s Police might roll on u,” tweeted the irate actor, who sued the store and the police department for racial profiling. Brown’s arrest came just days after an African American student from CUNY’s City Tech campus filed a racial-profiling suit against the NYPD and high-end retailer Barneys. Shortly thereafter, yet another customer filed a new suit after being “handcuffed and thrown into a jail cell at [Macy’s] flagship store.”49

The CUNY Grad Center building used to be the B. Altman’s Department Store. A little searching would doubtless reveal where that store had its own special holding cell. It would be interesting to know if the same room is designated for such purposes today — like the special room on the 14th floor of Baruch College where CUNY cops held student protesters in November 2011 before taking them to the local precinct.

Like handcuffing and jailing “suspects,” beatings and shootings are carried out not only by the regular police but by those working the private sector too. In some cases they are one and the same. In December 2012, an off-duty North Houston cop moonlighting as a Walmart security guard shot 27-year-old African American mother Shelley Ffrey dead, in the store’s parking lot after a “loss prevention worker” (sic) accused her of shoplifting. Noting that two young children

were in the car when Frey was shot, the press added: “The fatal shooting comes less than two weeks after an alleged shoplifter died after being assaulted by security guards at a Lithonia, Georgia Walmart store.”

Rent-a-cop violence is an international phenomenon. In Brazil, after a black worker was brutally beaten by security guards at a Lojas Americanas (American Stores) outlet, an Afro-Brazilian rights organization led a May Day march calling for the occupation of one of the company’s stores in São Paulo, braving repression by the Military Police. The Educafro group linked the beating to similar incidents at stores throughout the country, including the killing of an Afro-Brazilian bank customer “suspected of being a thief” in Rio, the “locking up of three black children in private [store] jails” in São Paulo, and the brutalization of a black university worker by supermarket guards in the same city, in a case eventually found to involve “torture motivated by racial discrimination.”

For revolutionaries, there is a surreal quality to having to demonstrate, with chapter, verse and examples from the history of class struggle, the very basic point that security guards, like their brethren staffing the police and prisons, are professional repressors of the working people and have no place in the labor movement. Yet as the masthead of this newsletter proclaims, our task is to “Educate – Agitate – Organize.” That includes helping to bring the hard-won lessons of this history to new generations of class-struggle activists. A good way to sum up is with this passage from Victor Serge’s 1926 classic on what revolutionaries need to know about capitalism’s repressive apparatus:

“Another factor must be taken into account: the existence of private police forces.... In the United States, the participation of the private police in the conflicts between labor and capital has grown fearfully. The offices of famous private detectives provide the capitalists with discreet informers, expert provocateurs, riflemen, guards, foremen and also totally corrupt ‘trade union militants.’ The Pinkertons, Burns and Thiels detective agencies have 100 head offices.... Their annual budget comes to $65 million. They have set up industrial espionage, factory-floor espionage, espionage in the workshop, the shipyards, offices, and wherever there are workers employed.... An analogous system, exposed by Upton Sinclair, operates in the universities and schools of the great democracy whose praises are sung by Walt Whitman.”

It is up to us to put that in the past. To do so means bringing to fruition the last point in the CSEW program: “For a class-struggle workers party to fight for a workers government,” because ending capitalist repression means doing away with the capitalist system.

– by S.J., 26 June 2014

A Note on Education and Repression

The issues of education, class and repression are deeply entangled in the history of the United States as a society born from chattel slavery. Already afraid of the consequences if slaves learned to read and write, the master class was seized by panic when Toussaint Louverture and other “Black Jacobins” led Haiti’s social revolution, uprooting both slavery and colonial rule. In February 1799, Thomas Jefferson wrote Aaron Burr to express his alarm that the U.S. had not made it illegal to “admit Toussaint’s subjects” to the Southern states, where they could have “free ingress & intercourse with their black brethren in these states”; he sent a similar warning to James Madison. Three years later, he wrote the U.S. ambassador to Britain: “The course of things in the neighboring islands of the West Indies appears to have given a considerable impulse to the minds of the slaves in different parts of the U.S. A great disposition to insurgency has manifested itself among them, which, in one instance, in the state of Virginia, broke out into actual insurrection.”

As part of the slaveowners’ backlash, prohibitions against slave education were bolstered in many parts of the South, including, of course, Jefferson’s own state of Virginia. In 1819, the Revised Code of the State of Virginia specified: “That all meetings or assemblages of slaves, or free negroes or mulattoes mixing or associating with such slaves at any meeting house or houses, &c., in the night; or at any SCHOOL OR SCHOOLS for teaching them READING OR WRITING, either in the day or night, under whatsoever pretext, shall be deemed and considered an UNLAWFUL ASSEMBLY; and any justice of a county, &c., wherein such assemblage shall be...may issue his warrant, directed to any sworn officer or officers, authorizing him or them to enter the house or houses where such unlawful assemblages &c., may be, for the purpose of apprehending or dispersing such slaves, and to inflict corporal punishment on the offender or offenders....”

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51 “Ato da Educafro de Primeiro de Maio,” Afrokut on line, 29 April 2011; “Polícia Militar reprime manifestantes de movimento negro,” Causa Operária on line, 2 May 2011.
CSEW: Who we are and what we stand for...

Class Struggle Education Workers was formed in September 2008 by activists in two New York City education unions: the United Federation of Teachers (UFT), representing public primary and secondary educational personnel, and the Professional Staff Congress (PSC), which represents faculty and staff at the City University of New York. We also seek to involve campus and school administrative staff and maintenance workers who are in the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) as well as other unionized and non-unionized workers. Those initiating the group played leading roles in fights against merit pay and in defense of “excessed” teachers in the NYC schools, in opposition to the “two-tier” labor system at CUNY, in defense of immigrant students and in solidarity with striking teachers in Mexico and Puerto Rico. The felt need was for a grouping to help provide a clear orientation and leadership in the struggle to defend and transform public education in the interests of working people and the oppressed. This intersects almost every crucial social and political issue of the day and ultimately means bringing down the rule of capital. As this requires a thorough-going break from the entire framework of “business unionism” and the outlook of the union bureaucracy, general calls for more militancy and union democracy alone only lead to a dead end. Instead, the Class Struggle Education Workers is based on a class-struggle program, approved at our founding meeting (26 September 2008) and presented below.

Class Struggle Education Workers
Program

We have formed Class Struggle Education Workers (CSEW) as part of a broader fight for a revitalization and transformation of the labor movement into an instrument for the emancipation of the working class and the oppressed rather than, as it is at present, an instrument for the disciplining of labor in the interests of capital. The subservience of organized labor goes beyond the PSC, UFT and AFSCME, and we look forward to a class-struggle tendency encompassing militants in a number of unions. We support the basic positions expressed in the Internationalist pamphlets Stop CUNY’s Anti-Immigrant War Purge and Marxism and the Battle over Education. We stand for:

1) Free public education from kindergarten through graduate school. Abolish corporate-dominated Boards of Trustees and mayoral control of the schools: students, teachers and workers (together with parents at primary and secondary schools) should democratically control schools and universities.

2) Stop education privatization and making the City University of New York into “Wal-Mart U”! For militant action against deepening inequality at CUNY and throughout the school system. Abolish the two-tier academic labor system that pays adjunct and other contingent education workers poverty wages. Job security, parity and full health coverage for adjuncts and all “part-timers,” including graduate students: equal pay for equal work. Unite against the drive to gut public higher education and turn it into a “platform” for making profits.

3) Defend and transform public education in the interests of working people and the oppressed. Oppose capitalist corporatization. Cancel all student debt. Living stipend and free housing for students. No to “charter schools” as an opening wedge to privatization. Down with “merit pay” in any form. In the UFT: Full-time positions for all teachers “excessed” or “reorganized” out of their jobs (ATRs). Defend tenure, restore seniority, abolish “rubber rooms” that penalize teachers subject to unjust accusations.

4) Oppose resegregation of schools: separate is not equal. Stop discrimination and racist attacks against black, Latino, Asian and immigrant students. Fight budget cuts, tuition hikes, exclusionary tests and all anti-working-class, anti-minority measures. Restore open admissions, no tuition. Down with the anti-education “No Child Left Behind” act. Stop anti-immigrant “war purges” (like the one CUNY launched in 2001) against undocumented students and workers. Full citizenship rights for all immigrants.

5) Mobilize the power of labor together with minorities, immigrants and students in an all-out fight to smash the Taylor Law. Keep bosses’ courts out of the unions. Police and military recruiters out of the schools. No cops, prison or security guards in the unions. For a single union of all university workers. Oust the sellout bureaucrats, for a class-struggle leadership.

6) Parental leave for all. Free childcare on campus, available around the clock for students and employees. Full reproductive rights, including free abortion on demand and full availability of contraceptives; no to reactionary campaigns against sex education.

7) Defend the rights of labor, minorities, immigrants, women, gays and lesbians. Make PSC defense of Mumia real – mobilize workers’ power for his freedom. Solidarity with teachers and all workers in Mexico, Puerto Rico and elsewhere.

8) End union support to capitalist politicians (Democrats, Republicans, Greens, et al.). For workers’ strikes against the war – Defeat U.S. imperialism. Oppose U.S. war threats against Iran, Cuba, China, North Korea. For a class-struggle workers party to fight for a workers government.

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