



# SPEAK OUT NOW



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*The unjust institutions which work so much misery and suffering to the masses have their root in governments, and owe their whole existence to the power derived from government...We cannot help but believe that were every law, every title deed, every court, and every police officer or soldier abolished tomorrow with one sweep, we would be better off than now.* – Lucy Parsons (1853-1942) was a revolutionary activist and anarchist from the 1880s till her death in 1942. She was married to Haymarket Martyr, Albert Parsons.

## Baltimore – Right to Rebel

On April 12, Freddie Gray was chased down by three cops for looking at an officer. He was thrown in a police van and when he arrived at the station, his spinal chord was severed and he had three fractured vertebrae and a crushed voice box. He fell into a coma and died a week later. Finally, after weeks of protest, six cops have been charged with murder.

It wasn't simply the facts around this killing that caused the authorities to issue the charges. There is nothing more convincing in the murder of Freddie Gray than in the case of Eric Garner, Michael Brown, Tamir Rice or the countless others killed by police. This past March, the police killed 111 people, ten more than last year – some reports estimate over 1000 killings by police per year (about 70 times higher than anywhere else in the world). In over 90 percent of cases the police are never even charged, and when they are, they almost always get off. According to the Wall Street Journal, over a seven-year period, with hundreds of homicides by police, only 41 officers were even charged. A recent study shows that in 2012, the police, security guards, and vigilantes executed more than 313 black people – one every 28 hours. Nearly two times a week, a white cop killed a black male during a seven-year period ending in 2012.

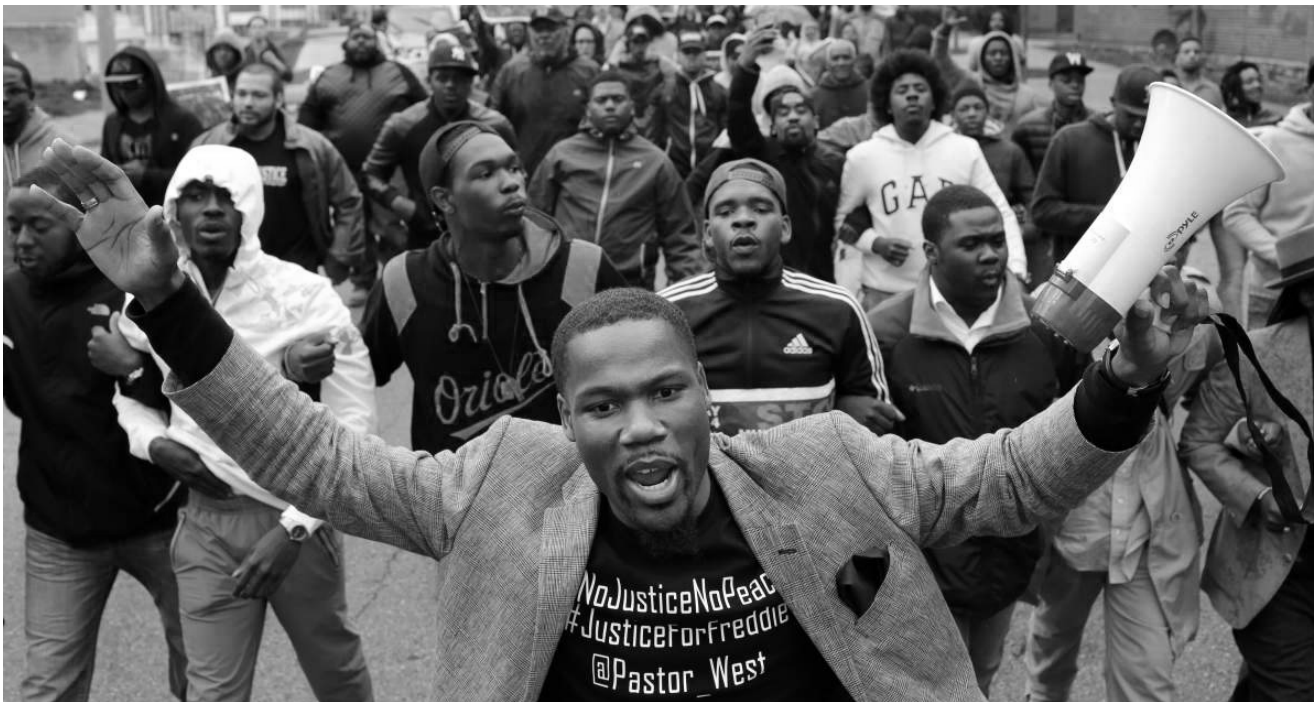
### Power in the Streets

The only reason this case is different is because of the response of the people of Baltimore, who went into the street, refusing to allow Gray's murder to be covered up. And people around the country began to take to the streets in support. But this is just a first step toward a possible conviction. Only in the wake of this anger spilling over into protests across the country, did the politicians decide to issue this indictment. This is their pathetic attempt to prove that their system works. They want the people of Baltimore to stay home and leave Gray's murder in the hands of the courts. But it is the activity in the streets that brought the indictments and it will only be continued activity that will keep the pressure on – cops are rarely convicted in trial.

### A Symptom of Economic Decline

Even if these six cops are convicted, it won't change much for the victims of police brutality all over the country. Perhaps the officials will be a little more careful about allowing the police to murder people so openly. But it will do nothing about the problems of poverty, unemployment, homelessness, and underfunded, crowded schools.

Baltimore could be dozens of cities in the country – Detroit or Flint, Michigan; Camden or Newark, New Jersey; Buffalo, New York; Cincinnati, Ohio; East Oakland or



Richmond or South Los Angeles. Much of Baltimore is in decay. As the economy of the country shifted away from industrial production, the investments of those who owned and controlled the steel mills, shipyards, auto factories and other industries moved elsewhere. Today Baltimore is one of the poorest cities in the country. It is the 26th largest city with a population of 622,000, which is 64 percent black. Over 23 percent of the people live below the official poverty level, and 39 percent of working-age residents are unemployed.

### Living in the Disaster Zone

But in Freddie Gray's neighborhood it is a disaster zone – over 52 percent unemployed, over one third of families living in poverty, and more than half of all households earning less than \$25,000 a year. Abandoned lots and dilapidated houses are all over. More than 25 percent of all buildings in the neighborhood stand empty.

Prison is the dumping ground for the masses of unemployed. One out of three Maryland residents in state prison is from Baltimore. Gray's neighborhood is the "highest incarceration community" in Baltimore, with three out of every 100 adults in state correctional facilities, and 25 percent of juveniles between the ages of 10-17 were sent to juvenile facilities over a four year period. Maryland spends

\$17 million annually to incarcerate 458 people from this small neighborhood with 9,189 people living in it. Those who live in Freddie Gray's neighborhood are twice as likely to be killed than any other neighborhood in Baltimore.

Under these conditions, harassment from the police is a daily affair. Since 2011, the city of Baltimore has settled or lost an average of more than twenty police brutality cases a year. The city paid out \$5.7 million and spent \$5.8 million more on related legal fees. This year, the city's budget was more than doubled, to \$4.2 million, in anticipation of future cases – even though most cases never even make it to court.

### We Are Right to Rebel!

The politicians at all levels have presided over the decimation of cities like Baltimore and are well aware of this reality and the life of the people who live in them. They know what their police forces do. And they have nothing to propose to actually deal with these conditions. In Baltimore this brutal system has exposed itself again. And there is no reason we should continue to live under this oppression and degradation. This is a criminal system that has looted and stolen our lives. People are right to continue to rebel, and to continue to organize until we get rid of this system and build a society where we can all live like human beings.

## The Police – Maintaining A Racist Order

After seeing so many young black men and women shot and killed by police, thousands across the U.S. have begun to protest. And politicians at every level, including presidential candidate Hillary Clinton, are calling for reform of the justice system, and more police accountability. But these proposals don't get to the root of the problem – the police themselves.

Police have not always existed. The modern police – permanent and salaried – were put in place in the mid-nineteenth century as a way to control working people. In the U.S. especially, the police were instilled with racism because their first job was to keep immigrant workers and black people in line. Before the 19th century, cities did not have police forces as we know them. The daily conflicts and problems of communities were settled by people themselves or through a system of elected constables and sheriffs. No city had a permanent salaried police force. The closest thing to a permanent police force was the slave patrols in the South whose job was to patrol the roads in search of escaped slaves.



Police were introduced as industry expanded. After the Civil War, mills and factories spread across the U.S., connected by the intercontinental railroad. The workers were mostly immigrants, the first from Germany and Ireland, later immigrants arriving from Eastern and Southern Europe, and Asia. Others were poor white and black people who immigrated from the South. These workers started to organize in the 1860s. From 1867 to 1877 workers revolted against terrible wages, bad housing, and overwork. They formed unions, led strikes, and began to challenge wage slavery. In 1877 a strike in the railroads spread from coast to coast, involving hundreds of thousands of workers. Even locally elected sheriffs and constables often sided with workers. The ruling class was terrified by these revolts. The wealthy elite began to demand a permanent police force that could reliably protect and serve the wealthy.

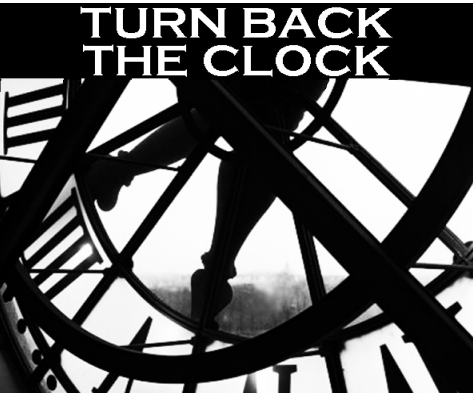
Racism was used to keep the new system of policing in effect. Many immigrant workers were hired to become the new standing police forces, trained to police other immigrants. The stereotype of the Irish cop comes from when Irish people were hired as police and used against other working class communities. Racism was used to divide and conquer the working class. And black people were put at the bottom, always the target of the worst racism. The racism of the police is not an accident – racism is necessary to the system of policing in the U.S.

In the decades since the 19th century, the racist violence of the police has sparked off revolts. Some of the biggest riots in the U.S. were caused by police violence against black people. In 1967 the police murder of a black worker in a club in Detroit led to a city-wide rebellion. In 1992 in Los Angeles, the police beating of Rodney King began nearly a week of rebellion. The face of the police has changed dramatically as more black and minority people have been hired. But that hasn't changed the nature of the police. Three of the six officers responsible for the murder of Freddie Gray were black. When it comes to the police, the first and most important color is the blue of their uniforms.

After every revolt, calls are made to reform the police. But the police are put in place to defend a system. They are like an occupying army, which keeps some order day to day, but it is always an order imposed by the needs of the wealthy elite. The racism of the police is a means to divide and conquer, and maintain that order.

Police are a relatively new invention. If workers organize to take responsibility for the problems of our community and our society, there is no reason to tolerate the police.






## Albert Parsons: Fighter For Workers’ Revolution

Albert Parsons, a leader of the fight for the eight hour day, was arrested for the murders of seven policemen on May 4th 1886 and executed on November 11, 1887. Six years later the Illinois governor publicly acknowledged that Parsons and the seven other convicted workers were entirely innocent of these charges.

Albert Parsons was born in 1848 to a poor white family of Texas ranchers. After the Civil War he published a newspaper advocating civil rights for black people while helping to register former slaves to organize politically.



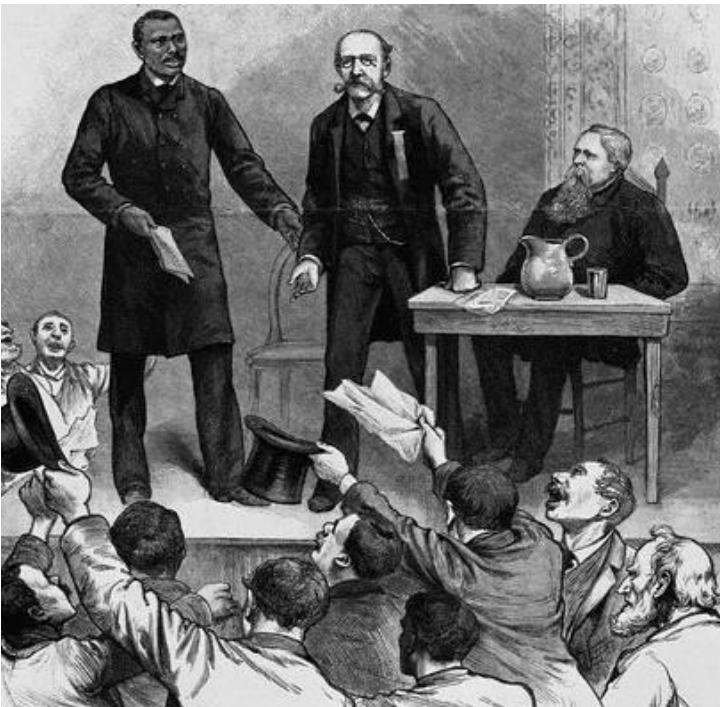
Parsons and his wife Lucy, a woman of mixed race, were eventually forced to leave Texas and settle in Chicago. He worked as a typesetter, became active in workers’ struggles, and joined the Socialist Party. During the Railroad strike of 1877, he organized mass demonstrations of support, and was blacklisted and denounced as a “dangerous Red agitator” by the upper class “Citizens Committee.”

Parsons became an influential leader in the workers’ movement in Chicago, joining the Knights of Labor. In 1884 he became editor of *The Alarm*, a revolutionary workers’ newspaper. He and other revolutionaries called themselves anarchists because they stood for revolutionary struggle.

In 1886 he was active in organizing for the eight hour day. With Lucy Parsons, they led a mass march of 80,000 on May 1st. Three days later, a provocateur threw a bomb into a mass of police at a rally in Haymarket Square where Parsons had spoken. The elite of Chicago wanted to crush the workers’ movement. False evidence was accepted, and a big factory owner offered a bonus to jurors for a guilty verdict, which they delivered. And the court sentenced seven men to die. Albert Parsons was hanged for his convictions.

Albert Parsons devoted his life to the struggles of the working class. He was a talented and capable leader who believed we can get rid of capitalism. That is why the system murdered him and that is why we should remember and honor his history.

# Knights Of Labor: An Injury To One Is The Concern Of All



The 1880s were hard times for workers in the U.S., who worked in dirty, dangerous conditions, up to 16 hours per day. To fight back, workers created new forms of organization, the most important being a union called the Knights of Labor. It was the first organization in the U.S. to organize all workers, skilled and unskilled, men and women, regardless of race or religion, immigrant and native alike.

In the second half of the 19th century, the U.S. economy alternated between booms and recessions. Corporate profits were high while workers were hired and fired as needed. The profits of the companies fueled the development of large-scale industry and monopolies like railroads, steel plants, the oil industry and food processing. These companies introduced new technology which destroyed jobs. Workers were under attack and began to organize against it.

The Knights of Labor was founded in 1870, organized on the principle that “an injury to one is the concern of all.” Without the unity of the whole working class, the Knights believed no group of workers could have the power to eventually “abolish as rapidly as possible the

wages system, substituting cooperation.” The Knights believed that widespread organization of both worker and consumer cooperatives would replace capitalism with a “Cooperative Commonwealth.”

The Knights were a truly grass roots movement of workers all over the country. The main organization was the District Assembly composed of workers from a trade or industry. The District assemblies coordinated to work together on common struggles. Committed to equality, the Knights organized multi-racial strikes all over, from Longshoremen in New Orleans to sugar plantations in Louisiana. In Richmond, Virginia, white delegates to a Knights of Labor convention refused to stay in hotels that would not serve black delegates.

In 1883, the U.S. was struck by a deep economic depression, with massive layoffs and wage cuts. The Knights fought back with strikes and mass demonstrations. Two major strikes at Southern Pacific Railroad forced the company to cancel wage cuts and rehire workers fired for organizing workers on the railroads. These victories resulted in a wave of organizing in most industries. From 1884 to 1886 Knights membership grew from 50,000 to 700,000.


In this period, workers worked over ten hours per day. The Knights organized for the eight hour day with no cut in pay. They called for nationwide strikes on May Day, 1886. Hundreds of thousands of workers, men and women, joined the movement before May 1st. But meanwhile the bosses were gearing up to crush the Knights, and they knew they had the support of the government to do so.

The Knights of Labor came under attack when their leaders in Chicago were framed for throwing a bomb, killing seven policemen. Newspapers and politicians in Chicago accused the Knights of seeking a violent revolution. Without any evidence against them, the national head of the Knights of Labor, Terrance Powderly, still refused to defend them. Demoralized by these events, the eight hour movement collapsed under police and political pressure. This led to the end of the Knights of Labor. But their experience and militant tradition was the basis for struggles to come.

Today workers face many of the same attacks which spurred the formation of the Knights of Labor in the 1880s. In our conflict with the bosses, we will need to build organizations founded on the principals of solidarity and equality which inspired the courageous activism of the Knights of labor. Their slogan remains as true today as it was over one hundred years ago: “An injury to one is the concern of all.”

## California’s Drought: A Wasteful System

Because of this extreme drought, California has been hit with a massive water shortage, as most of its water sources are at record low levels. The message from the politicians has been that individuals are to blame for massive amounts of water wasting. In March, Governor Brown issued an emergency water bill to reduce city water use by 25 percent. All of these reductions are useful, but they will make no impact on the water shortage in the state. Household water use only accounts for less than eight percent of total water use – not enough to make a dent in the water shortage.



The vast majority of water use in California is in the agricultural industry, which uses about 80 percent of the state’s water. In Governor Brown’s bill, agricultural water use is not reduced at all. But California has the most productive agriculture in the U.S., supplying over thirty percent of the country’s vegetables and sixty percent of the country’s fruits and nuts. California is also the largest dairy producing state, and among the top five in other animal agriculture. About 47 percent of all water use in California goes to the meat and dairy industry. The total profits from agricultural industries is over \$30 billion per year.

If the drought is likely to continue and the amount of water going to agriculture is not going to be reduced, then where will all of the water come from? The emergency bill proposes funding to assist the construction of 15 desalinization plants along the coast from the San Francisco Bay to San Diego. Desalinization is an extremely expensive

method of converting salt-water to drinking water. If implemented, it will significantly increase the cost of water to households. The process creates massive amounts of a salty brine residue that gets dumped back into the ocean. Researchers warn that desalinization plants pose severe threats to marine life and change the biology of the ocean near the facilities. This is a desperate measure that will take years to complete, and it simply forces ordinary people to pay for the water corporations waste, further harming ocean life in the process.

California’s water sources of aquifers, wells, lakes, rivers and streams are running dry not simply because of this current drought. But in order for California’s massive agribusiness to make its money, it needs huge amounts of water. California’s water supply has been depleted only because it has been pumped to these massive agricultural companies so they can make billions of dollars every year. The majority of California’s agriculture is grown in the most severe drought areas, in desert-like conditions.

Water for much of the agricultural industry is paid for by state and federal subsidies. Many farms get so much water pumped to them that they even sell it back for a profit to local water companies. In some towns in the central valley, water for households has been cut off completely, either because there just isn’t enough water, or because it has become too expensive. In one town, Porterville, most residents have had to resort to buying bottled water for household use.

But agriculture isn’t the whole story. The oil industry is estimated to require two million gallons of water per day. And in the process of hydraulic fracturing (fracking), used to get at deposits of oil and natural gas trapped underground, every single fracking well requires about eight to ten million gallons of water just to become operational.

The real problem with water use in California lies at the heart of this economic system. Under capitalism, corporations treat vital resources as raw materials for profit. When everything is produced for a profit, waste is just part of the process. An estimated half of the water used for agriculture is wasted, and millions of tons of food per year are destroyed either because it rots on the shelves or it was discarded to keep prices from going too low.

The drought is a symptom of a deeper problem and no band-aid solutions will be able to change this. We need a system designed to meet human need, not corporate greed.

### Where We Stand

The world we live in today is increasingly ruled by prejudice and fear, under a system of widespread violence and war, where exploitation and oppression are the rule, with the many dominated by the few. The name of this system is capitalism.

### The Force For Change Exists Today

Everywhere, working people’s labor makes society run. Working people have the power to bring this system to a halt and bring about the changes needed. Like slavery, feudalism and other systems that enriched the minority at the expense of the majority, capitalism’s removal is long over due. The time for socialism has come.

### We Stand For Socialism

- A world based on peaceful collaboration and international cooperation of working class people -- not the exploiters who rule today.
- The common ownership and sharing of the world’s resources and productive capacity.

- An egalitarian and democratic government, organized and controlled from the bottom up.
- Protection of the world’s ecological systems, putting science to work to sustain life, not destroy it.
- A society where human relations are based on respect, equality and dignity of all peoples, not racism, sexism or homophobia.

### Who We Are

Speak Out Now is a revolutionary socialist group. We believe the international working class is the social force that can transform society and create a new world. But to do so, revolutionary organizations must be built in the working class. For this reason our group aims its activity primarily at workplaces, where struggles have the most potential to transform the world. Our newsletters are a tool to begin this work. What a handful of people decide today can determine our future. Join us to work for a better future – that is both necessary and possible.

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