The background of the entire page is an abstract, painterly illustration. It features a dark, almost black, sky-like upper portion. Below this, there are large, blocky, geometric shapes in shades of brown, orange, and red, resembling ancient stone structures or ruins. In the foreground, there are numerous stylized, elongated human figures in similar warm tones, some appearing to be standing or walking. The overall style is reminiscent of a woodcut or a heavily textured oil painting, with a strong sense of depth and a warm, dramatic lighting. The text is overlaid on the top portion of this image.

NOTHING IS HARD
IN THIS WORLD IF
YOU DARE TO SCALE
THE HEIGHTS

BY THE

KITES EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

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A series of outrages and the protests and rebellions that followed them have laid bare to a new generation, to white people willing to listen, and to the whole world a cold but potentially liberating truth: white supremacy and the oppression of Black people are fundamental to the foundations and functioning of the United States, and the rulers of the US, no matter what they as individuals think or feel, cannot go a day without inflicting brutality on Black people. These brutalities will only end when the system that needs and perpetuates them, together with the class that rules that system and those who enforce it, are forcibly overthrown and destroyed.

The government response to Hurricane Katrina that resulted in the loss of countless Black lives and the destruction of Black neighborhoods in New Orleans. The Jena 6. The racist vigilante murder of Trayvon Martin. The epidemic of police murders of Black people whose victims include Michael Brown, Freddie Gray, Tamir Rice, Philando Castile, Breonna Taylor, and now George Floyd. The youth at the forefront of the most powerful rebellion in 50 years in the US grew up watching the horrific images of these and many other outrages. Despite two terms of the first Black president. Despite federal investigations into police practices, the implementation of body cameras, implicit bias training, and other bullshit police reforms that have changed nothing. Despite the election of numerous progressive politicians to city governments promising to remedy injustice who would then turn to implement draconian curfews and repression in response to a righteous rebellion. Add to all this the miserable failure of the bourgeois state to meet the health needs of the people during the COVID-19 pandemic and the many unnecessary deaths on the system's hands as a result, and the tinder was laid out for an explosion of resistance.

What started in Minneapolis and included the beautiful sight of that city's third police precinct burning to the ground quickly spread like wildfire to virtually every city, large and small, across the US, far exceeding the previous inspiring examples of Ferguson in 2014 and Baltimore in 2015. The defiance of these rebellions—especially of

the proletarian youth at the forefront of them—in the face of vicious police repression is an exciting display of mass combativity rarely seen in the US. The rebellions have already achieved great results: criminal charges filed against murdering and brutal police, disrupting the smooth functioning of “law and order,” repolarizing society in a way that has forced everyone to reckon with the oppression of Black people, and exposing the way that every elected official in any position of they’re actual power, whether blatant reactionaries like Trump or progressive mayors like de Blasio, Lightfoot, Garcetti, or Frey, supports and presides over the brutal police and repression that are used to stamp out rebellion. The question we always ask is: what will come out of this? How do we go from mass rebellion to a mass revolutionary movement? How can mass combativity now lay the ground for mass a**** combat in the future?

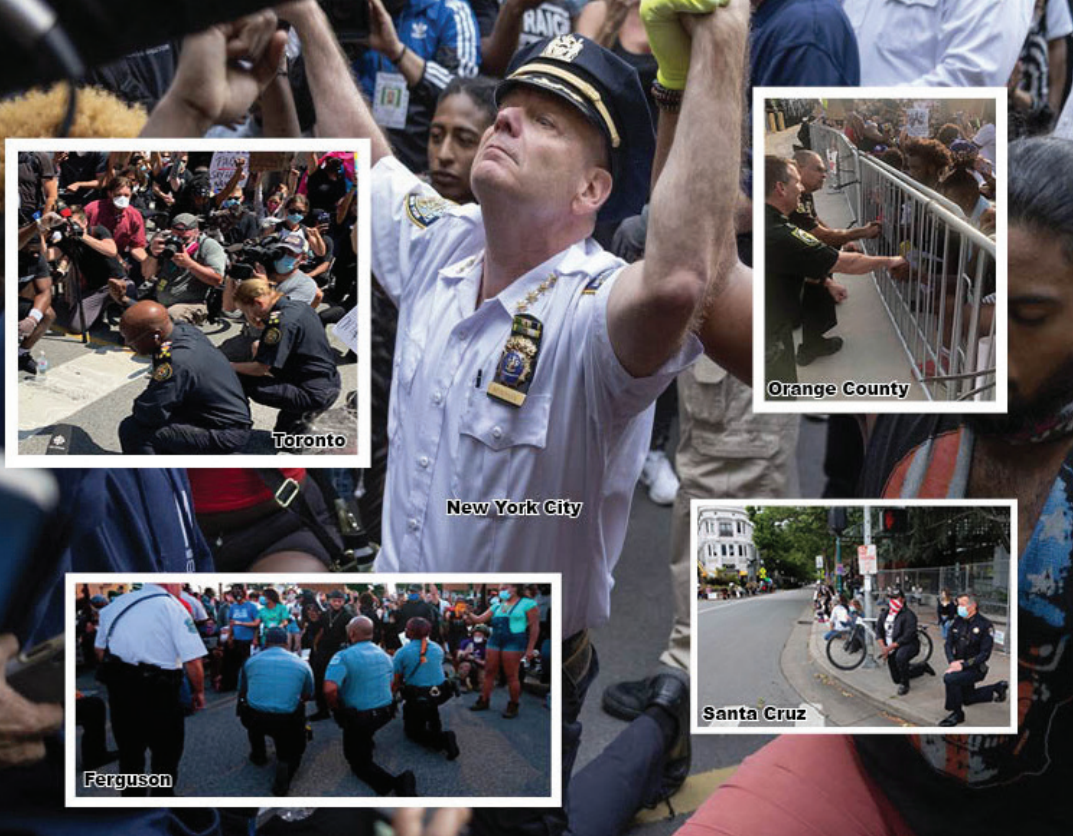
For days, the rebellions succeeded in getting beyond the control of city governments, police, and all those claiming the mantle of justice while instructing people not to go beyond the limits of the

The “progressive” Minneapolis mayor, Jacob Frey, took a walk of shame after being booed and chanted out of a June 6 protest as a “traitor” for his position on policing. (Photo Credit: Stephen Maturén/Getty Images)



acceptable channels of dissent. These rebellions exposed the irrelevance of the multitude of same-old Leftist organizations, postmodernist activists, non profit organizations, and all manner of other opportunists. In the coming weeks and months, the ruling class and a variety of bootlickers, opportunists, and progressive politicians will be working to glue the social order back together with a variety of tactics, from “good protester, bad protester” narratives to promises of police reform to electoral schemes. And of course, they have and will continue to try to brutally repress rebellion out of existence, including with lengthy prison terms for the most audacious and defiant. Those of us who understand that no fundamental change can come about from this system have a responsibility to defend those facing prison time, to support and spread any new waves of rebellion, and to expose the bankruptcy of all the reforms being offered as solutions and all the attempts to suppress the rebel spirit with the “right ways” to protest.

On a deeper level, we have a responsibility to build the organized forces for revolution, seizing on the favorable conditions created through struggle to recruit revolutionary cadre and develop widespread consciousness of the need for revolution. For the rebellions have also exposed the fact that no serious and sizable revolutionary organization exists within the US capable of providing leadership during a nationwide rebellion and through the twists and turns of the struggle that will follow it, as well as exponentially expanding the organized forces for revolution during this moment. To give a concrete example: no revolutionary organization is in a position to send dozens of trained cadre to Minneapolis this summer and conduct widespread social investigation in the neighborhoods that went up in the flames of resistance, recruit rebel youth into communist youth organization, and leave behind powerful mass revolutionary organization in proletarian neighborhoods. In sum, the rebellions are great; the state of the subjective forces for revolution in the US is pathetic. It is this contradiction we need to work urgently to resolve. And the people and organizations behind *kites* do not think of ourselves as being outside of this problem.



Adding further insult to injury, police across North America play at being woke, “taking a knee” as they struggle to quell the continent-wide rebellion sparked by the murder of George Floyd—who, we cannot forget, died under the crushing weight of a pig’s knee.

Mao explained the process of rebellion and the development of revolutionary consciousness in this way: first people fight back, then they seek out philosophy. As the rebels who took history into their own hands seek out philosophy, what will they find? Radical-sounding but empty rhetoric, such as the fantasy of abolishing police and prisons without the revolutionary military defeat and destruction of the bourgeoisie’s state power. The pragmatic logic behind electoral schemes to get progressive district attorneys and city council members elected who never wind up achieving anything more than the most paltry reforms. Postmodernist identity politics that insist on viewing the world from your identity out and treat identities as commodities to be traded on the nonprofit activist organization job market. (If they go to college), the endless perpetuation of ever more

nonsensical postmodernist jargon that is completely out of touch with the material realities of oppression and oppressed people. The stale strategies of Leftist organizations who have been doing the same thing for decades. The posturing of dogmatic idiots calling themselves communists, Maoists, etc.

Revolutionary philosophy, strategy, and politics are difficult to come by in North America today. While the member organizations and individuals behind *kites* cultivate class struggle and mass combativity in their own regions, our collective contribution through *kites* will be to continue to address questions of revolutionary strategy, analyze the unfolding crises of capitalism-imperialism, and offer summations of resistance and revolutionary struggles that we must learn from. In this issue, we follow this opening editorial, written shortly after the outbreak of rebellions in the wake of the murder of George Floyd by police, with a short intervention from our Editorial Committee into the current movement against police brutality and the oppression of Black people, entitled “Defund, Abolish...but what about Overthrow?” In it, we compare and contrast current calls to “defund” or “abolish” the police with a communist understanding of their role and the need to overthrow the system they enforce. “Manifesto of the Organization of Communist Revolutionaries (US)” offers a searing indictment of US capitalism-imperialism, an inspiring and materialist vision of a communist future, an examination of the challenges and contradictions of proletarian dictatorship and the socialist transition to communism, and bold initial strategic thinking on how to develop the subjective forces for revolution that would stand a chance of overthrowing US capitalism-imperialism through revolutionary civil war. “Theses on capitalist crisis and class war” by José San Miguel outlines a concentrated analysis of the existential threats to humanity posed by the capitalist crisis of overaccumulation, the dynamic role of proletarian revolution and socialist states in shaping the outcome of previous crises, and the challenges before the forces of communist revolution today, from resurgent fascism to the bourgeoisie’s flexible *permanent regime of preventive counterrevolution*. We believe these “Theses” sharply pose many of the most crucial

questions and challenges before revolutionaries today. We conclude this issue with “Things Done Changed,” part two of Kenny Lake’s four-part series *The Specter That Still Haunts: Locating a Revolutionary Class within Contemporary Capitalism-Imperialism*, in which Lake analyzes how the ascendance of finance capital, the development of global cities and export processing zones, and the growth of slums, migration, and resource extraction impact who the proletariat is today and how it can be organized for revolution. We look forward to being in dialogue with others attempting to dig into the challenges of building a revolutionary movement and communist organization as well as connecting revolutionary theory with all those hungry for it in the wake of the rebellions.

That last point about connecting revolutionary theory with rebel youth is especially important if we do not wish to see a repeat of what happened after the previous rebellions. Let’s briefly recap: Powerful rebellions by Black proletarians in response to police killings, in Ferguson in 2014 and Baltimore in 2015, punctuated and in-

Darren Seals was a leader and organizer of the Ferguson protests in the summer of 2014 that were set off by the police murder of Michael Brown. Seals, who was an autoworker and a musician, was shot and his car set ablaze in what most assume was an assassination. At least a half dozen other prominent figures in the Ferguson uprising have been killed in murders if not by “suicide” or “overdose” which many deem suspicious.



spired the exponential expansion of growing protests against police and vigilante killings of Black people, as well as forcing widespread debate on the systematic oppression of Black people. In the wake of these rebellions, the voices that got media attention, funding, and leadership claims were by and large careerist nonprofit sector activists, while Black proletarian organizers with roots in the neighborhoods most under the gun of police violence were at best ignored and at worst assassinated, as in the case of Darren Seals in Ferguson. The bourgeois political establishment was somewhat successful at channeling the resistance into electoral schemes, faith in federal government intervention, and reforms that never got to the root of the problem. Performative wokeness on social media often overshadowed real resistance. Lots of mediocre PhD dissertations about the Black Lives Matter movement were written by grad students eager to show off their social justice credentials and ability to trade in postmodernist jargon. And for the most part, the many activists generated by the protests preferred the safety of their woke social cliques to the challenges of going to the people most affected by police brutality, learning from and integrating with them, and developing mass organizations and revolutionary consciousness among the people.

The mass rebellions that began the summer of 2020 are an urgently needed rupture with this state of affairs. While powerful nationwide rebellions are not the same thing as the revolutionary overthrow of bourgeois rule, they do give more than a hint that revolution is possible in the heart of US imperialism. For they demonstrated that phalanxes of militarized police used to beating and murdering Black people with impunity could get knocked on their asses, literally and figuratively, when people stand up to them, and even the deployment of National Guard troops could not easily re-establish order. They showed that the audacity, audacity, and more audacity, of the youth refusing to back down and willing to fight the police can catch on like wildfire and inspire others all across the country to join in. They proved the existence of a social base for revolution, and that when people on the bottom of society move in powerful ways, all

other classes are forced to respond and take a side. And they brought out cracks and fissures within the ruling class and revealed its inability to maintain social order when faced with a critical mass of people in open rebellion.

While the particular militancy of this moment will not maintain itself indefinitely, the spark for these rebellions—the oppression of Black people—is something the US ruling class cannot put out. This is because from slavery to Jim Crow in the South to ghettos up North to the “War on Drugs,” mass incarceration, and the casting off of large numbers of Black people into unemployment as a permanent “surplus population,” the US ruling class has depended on the exploitation of Black People, or on discarding them when they can no longer be profitably exploited. And the social cohesion of the US has rested on keeping the masses of Black people in a subordinate position in all spheres of society, which can only be maintained with the utmost violence and brutality from police and prisons.

The rebellions have revealed this cold truth and created favorable new conditions for revolutionary organizing. But communist cadre will not emerge spontaneously from these flames, so it is incumbent on all of us to find ways to connect with the rebel youth casting off the well-worn ruts of established ways of dissent. Our journal, *kites*, enters the fray with the weapon of communist theory. On the ground, we hope those who dream of going from rebellion to revolution will find ways to connect with the masses, learn from them and their inspiring example, build organization among them, and develop themselves and others as communist cadre figuring out how to rise to the challenges ahead.

To end with these relevant words from Mao:

How should we judge whether a youth is a revolutionary? How can we tell? There can only be one criterion, namely, whether or not he is willing to integrate himself with the broad masses of workers and peasants and does so in practice. If he is willing to do so and actually does so, he is a revolutionary; otherwise he is a non-revolutionary or a

counter-revolutionary. If today he integrates himself with the masses of workers and peasants, then today he is a revolutionary; if tomorrow he ceases to do so or turns round to oppress the common people, then he becomes a non-revolutionary of counter-revolutionary.

George Floyd never chose to be a symbol for the struggle against police brutality, but millions of people chose George Floyd. Floyd's death bears the heavy weight of oppression faced by an entire generation of Black people in America, which itself bears the weight of four centuries of oppression that precede it.

