

Introduction to Detroit Memo to WWP Interim Central Committee Members

The Detroit comrades who resigned from Workers World Party on July 15, 2018, are making public our leadership's May 24 memo in response to WWP First Secretary Larry Holmes' May 14 document originally entitled "We must review our understanding of the working class and our political and organizational strategy toward it," which was subsequently published by Workers World newspaper on July 18 with the title "Can we meet the challenges facing the working class including identity politics?" (The introductory paragraph asserted "An important issue under discussion inside Workers World Party, which resulted in members of the WWP Detroit branch resigning on July 14 [sic], is over the issue of identity politics." However, such a political and ideological discussion, which WWP Detroit members would have welcomed, never happened to our knowledge.)

Holmes [stated](#): "As important as the economic-based struggles of our class are, the political struggles against war or in solidarity with the Palestinian struggle or the people of Puerto Rico and against the capitalist system itself are no less important than the economic ones. **Ultimately, the political struggles are far more important.**" (Our emphasis)

Holmes incorrectly dichotomized political and economic struggles, which Detroit comrades have never done. We disagree fundamentally with the assertion that "political struggles are far more important" than the "economic-based struggles" of the working class insofar as communists are concerned. In fact, in this era of monopoly capitalism it is precisely in these struggles that we directly confront finance capital which is behind the war on the workers and oppressed worldwide and reach the masses with our anti-capitalist program. We believe Holmes' assertion reflects an ideological deterioration that is the essence of his document, which covers a number of various thoughts and ideas.

This viewpoint was taken to its extreme by a grouping of "several young and new comrades" inside WWP's New York City branch in a memo they submitted to the party May 25 in response to our document. They attempted to diminish the Detroit branch for fighting mass foreclosures, evictions, utility and water shutoffs.

These comrades showed disdain for the poorest and most oppressed of the working class in a manner shockingly unbecoming of any true communist. Their entire document demonstrated the prevailing viewpoint within Workers World Party and especially among its six-member Secretariat. For example:

“No one would argue that oppressed people do not require food, jobs, housing, and water. What we take issue with is what we perceive to be a narrowing of the struggles against oppression to these so-called ‘economic demands’.

“Observe the following quote:

“Every time there is an eviction or water shutoff in a city like Detroit or Chicago it is a monument to white supremacy that must be torn down.’

“While this is true, nowhere in this document are racist statues mentioned, which represent another, albeit non-economical, monument to white supremacy. We agree that evictions and water shutoffs need to be stopped, but we also need to remove racist statues, street names, and sports mascots that reinforce white supremacy.

“We ask the Detroit ICC delegation, should their program be accepted [note: no program of any kind was offered by us for consideration]: Where does Durham pulling down a Confederate statue fit into this program? ...

“The narrowing of the struggle against oppression recurs throughout the Detroit ICC Memo, not just in what is said but in what is not said.”

The suggestion that instead of fighting for the survival of our class in Detroit—a majority-African-American city which is the epicenter for austerity within the U.S. and that has experienced over 100,000 home foreclosures and 100,000 water shutoffs in the past 10 years—we should focus instead on tearing down racist statues and getting streets renamed, is indefensible by a communist in our opinion.

The Detroit branch played a unique role in the left in combatting emergency management and the subsequent municipal bankruptcy which replaced Black elected officials with the direct rule of Wall Street and the banks. Our record speaks for itself, as did many community and political leaders who spoke up upon hearing of our departure from WWP, saluting our many years of leadership and struggle and wishing us well as we continue to work together in the many battles to come.

The Detroit branch also takes the lead in our city in the anti-imperialist struggle and in defending the DPRK, Cuba, Yemen, Palestine, Syria and other countries against U.S.-led imperialist military aggression and

destabilization, including hosting two conferences, unique within the left, on U.S. imperialist designs on Africa as demonstrated by the creation and expansion of AFRICOM. We have been arrested fighting the KKK and have been staunch participants in every struggle against women's and LGBTQ+ oppression.

Holmes and the leadership of WWP generally have shown an unwillingness or inability to work inside real working-class coalitions involved in real struggles. Instead, they falsely claim Detroit comrades do not understand the changed character of the working class today and that we don't care enough about racism, sexism, or anti-LGBTQ+ oppression; that we are "socially conservative" and "retrograde" regarding gender oppression and expression; that we are "uncivil" and "uncomradely" and other nonsense.

The former WWP Detroit comrades to whom they address these claims are youth and older comrades, African-American, white, Arab, Asian, Latinx and LGBTQ comrades, and women comrades.

The national meeting which Holmes referenced was not a leadership meeting devoted to a discussion of the working class today, but instead was open to all party members and candidates and consisted primarily of hour after hour of concerted vilification of Detroit comrades including calls for our expulsion by comrades we have never met.

We anticipated this would happen and thus did not attend. Following this meeting we were immediately removed from the Interim Central Committee and all leadership positions.

We are releasing this "[Memo from the Detroit ICC Members](#)" **[insert hyperlink and delete this bracket]** in order to put into context Holmes' document and help clarify the position of former WWP members in Detroit. It doesn't cover everything and is not meant to be a definitive or comprehensive political document. We are omitting the last section which addressed internal organizational matters.

We urge all revolutionaries who are serious about bringing a communist perspective to the working-class struggle to join with us toward the building of a genuine communist party in the United States.