

Support Oakland teachers! For a general strike to defend education!

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Three thousand teachers in Oakland who went on strike Thursday are the latest battalion of educators in the United States to take a stand against the corporate war on teachers and public schools. This struggle deserves the active support of all workers and young people. What is at stake is the very fate of public education.

The teachers' demands for living wages, smaller class sizes and a halt to school closures, budget cuts and school privatization are the same demands that have driven hundreds of thousands of teachers to strike last year in West Virginia, Oklahoma and Arizona, and this year in Los Angeles, Denver and West Virginia again.

But these struggles have been betrayed by the teacher unions, which isolated each strike, leaving teachers fragmented and vulnerable to the united efforts by enemies of public education.

On the eve of the Oakland strike, the unions shut down the second walkout of 33,000 West Virginia educators, cutting another rotten deal with the state's billionaire governor. As for the Oakland Education Association (OEA) and the California Teachers Association (CTA), they are telling teachers to look to the Democrats, who are no less enemies of teachers and public education than the Republicans.

In Los Angeles last month, the unions shut down a powerful strike, giving teachers only a few hours to review and vote on a deal. This has paved the way for the school district to escalate its attack on public education, with Los Angeles school superintendent Austin Beutner announcing a plan this week to break up the district in order to facilitate the expansion of charter schools.

It is time to draw a line in the sand in Oakland! The call must go out to every workplace in the Bay Area,

across the state, the US and internationally: "Oakland teachers must not fight this decisive battle alone!"

The *WSWS Teacher Newsletter* calls for the formation of rank-and-file committees in every school, workplace and community, independent of the unions and big-business parties. These committees should unite teachers with workers in the factories, docks, warehouses, offices, retail locations and public services to prepare a general strike to defend public education.

The struggle of teachers cannot be subordinated to the maneuvers of the unions, which are controlled by wealthy executives that are determined to prevent a united struggle.

All workers and young people are confronting falling living standards, impossibly high housing, health care and education costs, and a political system that is oblivious to their concerns because both parties are controlled by the financial oligarchy that is looting society.

If workers are unified, they have enormous strength, and a general strike by those who produce society's wealth would bring the giant corporations, banks and entire economy to a halt.

Workers have powerful allies not only in the United States. The past year has seen an upsurge of class struggle all over the world, from France and Germany, to Mexico, Morocco and China. The fight to unify these global struggles cannot be carried out through the nationalist unions.

The struggle for fully funded public education is above all a political struggle—that is, it is a question of which class controls the society. The Democrats and Republicans insist there is no money for education, even as they squander trillions on Wall Street bailouts, corporate tax cuts, endless wars and anti-immigrant attacks.

In California, it is Democrats like Jerry Brown, Gavin Newsom and Libby Schaaf who have spearheaded the attack on public education. Oakland school officials are now threatening to close 24 schools—or a third of the district’s schools—even as they expand the number of for-profit charter schools, which drain \$57 million a year from traditional public schools.

The miserable state of public education in California, which is 43rd in the nation in per pupil spending, underscores the need for struggle against capitalism and the horrific levels of social inequality it creates. The state’s 141 billionaires play in their private jets, yachts and sports cars, while working-class children are packed into classrooms like animals and their teachers go broke buying them pencils and other supplies.

Trump and his son are railing against socialism and denouncing “loser teachers.” That is because the entire ruling class sees public education as an unacceptable drain on their fortunes and wants to cash in on the multitrillion-dollar “education market.” As far as they are concerned, only the sons and daughters of the wealthy should have quality education, while working-class youth are condemned to ignorance, poverty wage jobs, prison and war.

Enough is enough! The Oakland teachers are taking a stand for the whole working class, and every worker has a stake in the outcome of this struggle. Build rank-and-file committees to take the conduct of the struggle out of the hands of the unions and prepare a general strike against austerity and inequality, and to defend the rights of all workers and young people.



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