

Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power

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The latest historical analysis from Socialist Worker's Party national secretary Barnes (*Capitalism's World Disorder*) boldly, if dubiously, asserts that the masses are about to seize power-and not (as conservative forces would posit) in accordance with progressives like President Obama, but in opposition. In Barnes's view, the current American overclass continues to exploit the working class (especially the working poor), having changed only its face: the new bourgeoisie, including Obama, is an "enlightened meritocracy" comprised "of all colors and hues" that, while "cadging" the wealth created by capitalists exploiting producers, "fear at some point being pushed back to the working classes," making a divide-and-conquer strategy all the more important. Barnes argues that Malcolm X was, at the time of his assassination, on the threshold of becoming a socialist, a stretch even considering Barnes's evidence (such as a particular 1965 interview). Still, Barnes's perspective is eye-opening: over the past 30 years, the economic position of the working class in America has been steadily eroding, and the usual suspects-NAFTA, China, and other forces of global trade-cannot be fought with strikes or picket lines. Unfortunately, Barnes's humorless, doctrinaire approach won't do much to inspire American workers; perhaps that's why he needs Malcolm X. (*Mar.*)