

NEWS & LETTERS

THEORY / PRACTICE

"Human power is its own end" —Karl Marx

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John Alan/Allen Willis

Allen Willis/John Alan—who would have been 95 on June 10 this year—died quietly on Feb. 23 in Oakland, California. The near-century of his life was filled with thoughts and experiences of Black life in America.



One of his earliest recollections was as a three-year-old witnessing the 1919 race riots, seeing Black men being attacked and beaten by out-of-control whites. One of his last recorded interviews was on Nov. 17, 2008, concerning his thoughts on the election of Barack Obama as the first African-American

U.S. president, about which Alan had concluded, "...no great change ever comes from Congress or the White House. It comes from the people's struggle for freedom...." The transcript of that interview by Mel Vapur of the East Bay Media Center was printed in our February-March 2009 "Black/Red View" column. While Alan was well-known as a distinguished filmmaker—having been called "the dean of African-American filmmakers" in the Bay Area film community, and "one of the unknown geniuses of the documentary film" in the world at large—he was known best to the friends and readers of *News & Letters* as the author of the "Black/Red View" column that appeared in every issue from 1970 through to today, under the pen name of John Alan.

Alan's death was a great loss to us all. While he was a revolutionary activist and writer since his youth in Washington, D.C., it was Raya Dunayevskaya's

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WORKSHOPTALKS

Rank-and-file workers will have their say

by Htun Lin

All eyes are on the massive worker protests in Madison, Wisconsin, against Governor Scott Walker's attempt to totally bust public sector unions by stripping them of collective bargaining rights. Many pundits say this is a power grab to hurt Democrats, but the demonstrations have brought out something much deeper that speaks to all workers.

As one teacher said at a Wisconsin labor rally, "For me, it's not about the wages and benefits. I'm here because we workers need to have a say in what we do." That expresses the gulf in thought between us workers and them—I don't just mean the Tea Party Republican politicians or company management.

"Them" includes union bosses and even leftists who have their own master plan. They usually are fixated on collective property or on a different form of remuneration like equality of wages.

In my shop, the bosses don't have to try to bust the union. They are happy with the union. The union is doing everything the bosses want. Here it's called a "Labor Management Partnership" (LMP). Our union reps are now called "LMP Liaisons." When our Chief Steward speaks, it's about "merit pay," calling it "performance-based bonus."

The union's concern is attendance and cost

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Revolutions in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya shake world order

by Gerry Emmett

The revolutionary movement that began in Tunisia in December, when 26-year-old street vendor Mohammed Bouazizi burned himself to death in protest at the confiscation of his unlicensed vegetable cart, has shaken the world. The overthrow of dictators Ben Ali of Tunisia and Mubarak of Egypt has inspired new hopes from Beijing to Wisconsin. The new human relations manifest in Cairo's Tahrir Square became central, within weeks, to discussions of youth, labor, and other movements around the world.

Across the Maghreb and Middle East there have been demonstrations and uprisings, from Bahrain to Algeria to Morocco, Sudan to Yemen to Iran. The revolts have included some of the lowest and deepest layers of the oppressed people in the region and, as a result, have seen the ruling classes of the world tremble, and scramble to catch up. Revolutionaries have been stirred to the marrow of our bones.

In Tunisia, protests coalesced around the General Union of Tunisian Workers (UGTT) and beyond this, councils were spontaneously formed to manage daily life within the rebellion. As a resident of Kasserin described: "After the withdrawal of the special forces, the city could turn and function without the presence of the state apparatus, which had also fled... We have been in a situation of permanent, open general strike for 15 days... It's the local committee, which is basically a strike committee, that makes all the decisions... During the most difficult days, the bakeries distributed bread for free and we all took to the street to chase off Ben Ali's police."

Since Ben Ali fled Jan. 14, mass demonstrations have continued calling for the uprooting of all traces of his rule. His successor, Mohammed Ghannouchi, was forced out of office Feb. 27.

TAHRIR SQUARE—A NEW SOCIETY?

In Egypt, the current movement built upon years of profound labor unrest. This was apparent in the youth of the April 6th Movement who played such

a large role in initiating the Jan. 25 protests across Egypt. They initially came together in 2008 in support of textile workers in Muhalla al-Kubra who had called for a national general strike. That strike was initiated by working women, which gives a sense of just how deep the passion was that this movement unleashed. As one man said this year, "This isn't about cutting some branches. This is about tearing up the tree by the roots."



Women in Tahrir Square in Cairo, Egypt, demand the fall of the Mubarak regime.

Across the region, the rebellions are fueled by economic crises—unemployment, lack of food and housing—but also represent a clearly articulated desire for a new way of living. The demonstrations have been organized by youth, who make up a huge percentage of the population. They include women, who are also determined to take control of their own destinies. Women, who are evident everywhere in the struggle in Tunisia and

Egypt, and men as well are determined to stop religious fundamentalists from hijacking their revolution as was done in Iran 1979. Crowds in Tahrir Square chanted, "No to the [Muslim] Brotherhood, no to the parties. Revolution of the youth."

Indeed, something new was being created in Tahrir Square. It was a form of direct democracy, that reached beyond merely formal freedom to genuinely new human relationships. Working class demands run through the whole time from Jan. 25, when those who called the first march on Tahrir Square recruited protesters in poor neighborhoods by focusing on issues like the minimum wage; through Jan. 30, when the Federation of Egyptian Trade Unions was created by several independent unions (a recent development themselves) and other workers' organizations, and called for a general strike; to Feb. 8-11, when a nationwide strike wave helped force the army into acceding to the demand for Mubarak's removal.

Women, too, were present in a new way. They were present as active and equal, as thinkers, fighters and debaters. As Salma El Tarzi, a 33-year-old filmmaker, said, "I was one of many women, young and old, there. We were as active as the men. Some acted as nurses

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Wisconsin at front line of class war

Madison, Wisc.—Day after day, tens of thousands of people—and over 100,000 on Feb. 26—have taken to the streets around the Wisconsin State Capitol building. They filled the Capitol rotunda with protest signs and rallies for over a week. As you walk towards the Capitol you can hear loud chanting and drum playing spilling out of the building and into the streets to protest Governor Walker's "budget repair bill."

All agree that this is an anti-union, anti-labor bill that takes away collective bargaining rights. Its goal is to break public sector unions. It will reduce wages, benefits and pensions. It's a blatant attempt to destroy the livelihoods of working people. As one protester told me, "This bill is simply intolerable and inhuman."

Governor Walker alleges that dismantling public sector collective bargaining rights is made necessary by a \$3.6 billion deficit in the next budget, which many are calling false. He says it's also due to a \$137 million shortfall this year. This is after the Fiscal Bureau told legislators that the state would end the year with a surplus of \$121.4 million.

The \$137 million deficit Walker uses as an excuse to crush collective bargaining is a result of tax cuts and incentives for special interest groups that helped fund his campaign, all of which Walker pushed through since taking office. Walker also says, falsely, that the

alternative to unionbusting is kicking 200,000 children off Medicaid.

Teachers, janitors, firefighters, construction workers, union and non-union workers, young and old, have gathered here in an unprecedented show of support against this anti-union, anti-labor bill. At the University of Wisconsin a mile away, students and professors walked out of classes and marched to the Capitol to join the protesters.

The Senate Democrats walked out to the cheers of the protesters and fled the state rather than stay and vote on the bill. Wisconsin doctors came to the Capitol and offered to write physician's notes for teachers so they could call in sick and attend the protest. The huge outpouring has included support rallies all over the country (see p. 9). Supporters from other countries around the world like Iran, Egypt and Sweden have been calling a local pizza place near the Capitol and sending pizzas to the protesters. People have been camping out overnight in the Capitol rotunda.

To show his support, Madison Mayor Dave Cieslewicz proposed that Madison's unionized workers have their collective bargaining contracts extended through the end of 2012 in order "to ensure that all employees can continue to receive current pension and health benefits for the next two years." He did this

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Women's freedom & Marx's dialectic

by Terry Moon

The contemporary nature of Marxist-Humanism is evident when one views the theory and practice of women's liberation. Today that involves both an unprecedented attack on women's rights—especially reproductive rights—now taking place in the U.S., and women's creative activism in the revolutionary developments in the Middle East, where they are fighting repressive regimes from Egypt to Iran, and, at one and the same time, refusing to let women's freedom be sidelined.

That a vantage point is needed for today's struggles of women is clear, be that in the developing or developed lands. In Congo women are fighting their annihilation and a brutality that may not have been seen in the world before. In Haiti rape is again becoming endemic and the world seems helpless to stop the spread of cholera—not because the means to do so are not known, but because the will to do so is not there. In the U.S., the recent election brought into office those determined to end not only abortion rights but access to birth control. And the U.S. Senate recently refused to pass the Paycheck Fairness Act, thus denying once again the necessary legal tools to fight for equal pay.

How does theory speak to this reality and the new vantage point needed? This is illuminated by contrast-

WOMAN AS REASON

ing two different approaches to the Marxian dialectic: one, an essay by well-known feminist Marxist theorist Professor Nancy Hartsock, "Marxist Feminist Dialectics for the Twenty-first Century"; the other by the revolutionary author and philosopher Raya Dunayevskaya, "Marx's 'New Humanism' and the Dialectics of Women's Liberation in Primitive and Modern Societies."

Hartsock aims to explore what the "dialectical understanding of the world contained" in Marxism "can provide in the way of resources for contemporary analysis." Her title is compelling because it promises to look at Marx's dialectic and even names something "Marxist Feminist Dialectics," and proclaims that it is "for the Twenty-first Century." But when one jams Hartsock's essay against Dunayevskaya's, their differences are more important than what they may have in common.

DIFFERENT VIEWS OF THE DIALECTIC

What Hartsock means by dialectics is that: "...one must replace the idea that the world is composed of 'things' with that of the importance of 'process.' In addition, Marx's dialectical method holds that things do not 'exist' outside of or prior to the process, flows, and relations that create, sustain, or undermine them."¹

The problem isn't that it is wrong, so much as that it is abstract and incomplete. Hartsock's essay doesn't fill out this definition or tell us how this concept of dialectics can help women's liberation today. Rather, in reading Marx, not in and for himself, but to show how his work fits into her project, she sees three contributions: 1. Marx "enable[d] an alternative to the Enlightenment account of what it is to count as truth or knowledge"; 2. He gives her a "more nuanced and socially embedded understanding of subjectivity and agency than...liberal theory or...post-structuralism";

1. Nancy Hartsock, "Marxist Feminist Dialectics for the 21st Century," from Bertell Ollman and Tony Bagnall Smith, *Dialectics for the New Century* (Palgrave Macmillan, April 2008), p. 225. NH in subsequent references.

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Egyptian women define the struggle

For Egyptian women the oppression of the last decades was extreme. They could not report the harassment they experienced to anyone, and men face no consequences when they harass. Public spaces became very problematic for women: their very presence on the street was an opportunity for men to show their "manhood" by harassing them.

Despite a history of Egyptian women's struggle which began long before the 21st Century, it was a huge breakthrough in 2008, when women workers were recognized as the most militant of the textile workers in the strike in Muhalla al-Kubra. In the midst of the fight, many barriers women face were broken down, for example, women spent nights in occupied factories, a "public space," where there were unrelated men. The usual harassment did not occur.

That women came to Tahrir Square and participated in the protest was a testament to the power of the movement and to women's determination to create a total break with the past in everyday relations. Women were not just present, but leading the protests, defending this new reality as they fought Mubarak's goons.

The change in man/woman relations is not automatic. Women, including journalist Lara Logan, were sexually assaulted in Tahrir Square on Feb. 11, in the midst of the celebration of Mubarak's ouster. At that time, Tahrir Square was flooded with people who had not been part of the occupation. Logan was rescued by a group of women, but it shows that the struggle to realize freedom does not stop.

The future of the Egyptian revolution will be measured by self-determination in daily life, not just a parliamentary democracy. This shows the meaning for today of Marx's singling out the man/woman relation as the most fundamental in his philosophy of revolution in permanence.

—Urszula

Triangle fire centennial



March 25, 2011, marks the centennial of the Triangle Waist Company factory fire where 149 workers, most of them young Jewish immigrant women, jumped to their death from a ten-story building. The fire doors were locked to keep the women from stealing a bit of cloth or thread; the building had no fire escapes, and fire ladders at the time only reached to the third story.

What makes this anniversary vital to remember is that women are still dying in burning sweatshops around the world, including the U.S. The latest is Bangladesh, where over 20 died, some of whom, like the Triangle girls, jumped ten stories to their death.

WOMENWORLDWIDE

by Artemis

In Ivory Coast, troops loyal to Laurent Gbagbo gunned down eight women as they marched peacefully against his rule chanting, "We want peace!" He sent tanks against the women, who had held several all-women marches. As one woman said, "We're marching because we're tired. We can't sleep. We are not able to eat. And our husbands are not working..." Like Qaddafi, Gbagbo is willing to foment a civil war to hold on to power after he lost the recent election.

* * *

Egyptian feminists Nawal El Saadawi of the Egyptian Women's Union and Hoda Badran of the Alliance for Arab Women want to ensure that women's issues and participation in society do not get swept aside as they have in previous revolutions. They also state that former first lady Suzanne Mubarak held back feminism and stifled debate on controversial issues by consolidating all activism under her own group, the National Council of Women.

* * *

The Afghan Women's Network (a network of feminist and human rights organizations in Afghanistan) and Amnesty International are calling on Afghanistan's government to end its plan to seize control of the country's activist-run women's shelters. The shelters, where women and girls can escape from violent families and forced marriages, would have new rules including handing victims over to abusive families who demand them back and giving them virginity tests.

* * *

UK Uncut is a feminist British organization protesting government cuts to public services, which disproportionately affect women, as well as exposing the role of banks in causing the economic crisis. Recently, the group has been demonstrating inside banks and bringing their children to protest cuts to childcare services.

Vicious attacks on women's healthcare

During February, the Republican Party has led the largest legislative attack on women's reproductive rights and health in recent history. The U.S. House of Representatives has passed several bills that, if passed by the Senate and signed by the President, would have a devastating impact on women's health as well as abortion rights. One would make permanent the Hyde Amendment, which bans federal Medicaid funding for abortion. It would pressure insurance companies to drop abortion coverage by making it an economic liability. Another bill would allow healthcare providers to refuse to provide abortions **even to save a woman's life**. Another would deny Title X funding to Planned Parenthood and any organization providing abortions, even though this funding is never used to pay for abortions in the first place. If made into law, it would gut Planned Parenthood's ability to provide poor women with birth control and other basic healthcare services such as tests for cancer. Speaker of the House

Walk for Choice 2011

Chicago—Feb. 26 was International Walk for Choice day, made urgent in the U.S. by the inhuman legislation pending in Congress (see article this page). Besides Chicago, Walks—really demonstrations—were held from coast to coast in more than 50 cities, from Los Angeles, San Diego, and Santa Cruz in California, to New York City; from Olympia, Washington, to Washington, D.C.; in the South including Nashville, Austin and Dallas; in the Midwest including Youngstown, Ohio, Detroit and Grand Rapids, Mich.; there were even Walks in Anchorage and Fairbanks in Alaska.

Nationwide, it was planned as a "walk," so as not to have to bother with legal permits. We met in downtown Chicago's Daley Center Plaza just a block from the "Stand with Wisconsin" pro-union rally. It was cold and snowy, yet spirits were hopeful and fun. About 50 anti-choicers showed up with yellow balloons with "LIFE" on them; our choice color was orange.

The Walks for Choice were planned in three weeks. Had we more time, many more would have attended. Around the country were some great signs: "STOP the war on reproductive rights (and all other wars)," one showed a broken egg and said "These are not chickens," another "Look at your life, Look at your choices. Now stay out of MINE," and two signs carried by women who marched together spoke for many. The first woman's sign read, "I stand for: free health care, sex education, young & scared teens everywhere." Her companion's sign read, "Stand with Planned Parenthood."

What marked these demonstrations is that they were planned and attended by young women. Whoever said the Women's Liberation Movement was dying should have been in Chicago where young women—and men—ran the event and hundreds participated.

—Sue and Terry

Rep. John Boehner hopes to reintroduce the global gag rule—a rule directly responsible for hundreds of women's deaths in other countries.

State legislatures have also introduced a large number of anti-abortion bills this month. The Texas state Senate passed a bill forcing women to have a sonogram and wait 24 hours before having an abortion. After public uproar, the South Dakota state House shelved a bill expanding the definition of justifiable homicide to include killing to save the life of an "unborn child." However, the Nebraska state legislature has now taken up a similar bill. The Kansas House passed a parental consent bill as well as one prohibiting abortion after a fetus supposedly develops the ability to feel pain, even though scientists dispute that this develops as early as the religious right claims. The Iowa House has introduced a "justifiable homicide" bill, and one stating that "personhood" begins at conception. The Georgia House introduced a bill calling for the investigation of "unsupervised" miscarriages. Virginia is set to pass a law requiring abortion clinics to meet the standards of hospitals. Requirements such as widening hallways, not required of any other type of clinic, would shut down reproductive health clinics that provide other types of healthcare as well as abortion.

WOMEN FIGHT BACK!

Pro-choice advocates have been fighting the religious right's attempts to discredit Planned Parenthood and reproductive rights in general. In the U.S. House, Rep. Mike Pence, who introduced the bill to restrict Title X, read a passage from a book purporting to describe a second-trimester abortion. Rep. Jackie Speier responded with why her own second-trimester abortion was necessary. Rep. Gwen Moore responded to Rep. Paul Broun's assertions that Planned Parenthood is racist by stating that, as a Black woman who had a child at "the ripe old age of 18," she was well aware of the right's "utter contempt" for poor women and poor children.

Media Matters, a watchdog group that debunks right-wing propaganda, discredited Lila Rose's group Live Action. Rose made a series of undercover videos at Planned Parenthood. Media Matters pointed out that Rose's films were misleadingly edited and that she lied about Planned Parenthood employees not alerting the authorities when her actors posed as child sex traffickers.

The protests of reproductive justice organizations SisterSong and the Trust Black Women Partnership led to the removal of a billboard in New York City which claimed that abortion was Black "genocide." Public outrage led to removing part of one U.S. House bill that limited the rape exception to only "forcible" rape. Many demonstrations have been held across the country supporting Planned Parenthood and reproductive rights (see article this page). The religious right lies when it claims that it has the public's support, and the public is showing that we have the ability to defeat this sexist, racist, and classist attack.

—Adele

Solidarity with Mexican miners

Chicago—Black, Latino and Anglo workers here showed solidarity with workers in Mexico on Feb. 19, the fifth anniversary of the Pasta de Conchos mine disaster in Mexico. Over 100 people came out, mostly steelworkers, joined by Jobs with Justice, Arise Chicago Worker Center, and News and Letters.

In recent years the National Union of Mine, Metal, Steel and Related Workers of the Mexican Republic, or "Los Mineros," has reached out to workers in other countries, including the United Steelworkers, for support in their struggles against bosses backed by a repressive state. Rallies took place in several U.S. cities and in at least 30 countries.

Workers at the Pasta de Conchos coal mine in the state of Coahuila, Mexico, had warned of dangerous conditions for months before the Feb. 19, 2006, explosion that killed 65 miners. The bodies of 63 are still entombed in the mine. We picketed in front of the Mexican consulate here, many of us carrying signs with names of those killed. Speakers told of the exploitative wages and conditions Mexican workers face, and the violent repression when they organize and fight back.

Since 2007, Los Mineros Section 65 has been on strike at the copper mine in Cananea, Mexico, against the same mine owner, Grupo Mexico, over dangerous conditions and contract violations. Last year, 3,000 federal and 500 state police occupied the Cananea mine, driving workers out of the mine, then gassing those who took refuge in the union hall.

They allowed the company to send scabs into the mine until a judge granted an injunction against it. After this, 1,100 miners' wives formed the Women's Support Committee. (See "Labor's battlefronts," April-May 2008 *N&L*.)

All protesters were asked to sign a letter to the Mexican Consul General that contained four demands:

- Hold employer and government officials accountable for the Pasta de Conchos mine explosion that killed 65 miners on Feb. 19, 2006;
- Abolish systematic violations of workers' freedom of association, including employer-dominated "protection contracts" and interference in union elections;
- End the use of force—by the state or private parties—to repress workers' legitimate demands for democratic unions, better wages and working

WORKSHOPTALKS

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controls. If you get sick and go over the sick day quota, you will get written up and disciplinary action will be taken. During the hearing, it's the union rep who tells you that you went over the quota. They tell us if we don't go along with the program we can find work somewhere else. They tell us we don't have a choice, we have to help the boss keep costs down.

At LMP "unit-based team" meetings, they tell us to look forward to the coming bonus, so long as we keep sick days and on-the-job injuries down, trimming Workers Compensation costs. The company is swimming in excess profit. Workers are not surprised. We've worked under their speed-up through short-staffing over the last decade of corporate restructuring.

A number of my peers have lost their jobs in recent months. The company is saving more money by firing people at will. Often, when my peers are charged with a trumped-up violation, the union rep and management have already met and decided their fate.

When we ask the rep to file a grievance, they don't want to. One of my friends went to four different shop stewards to file a grievance. They all turned her down. They said the Chief Steward already told them he's "handled it."

SEIU and its sister unions don't have to worry about their own survival. Like our company's bottom line, SEIU's membership roster is growing every day. We have bargaining rights, but I'm not sure you can call it collective bargaining.

Every time a new contract is due, they tell us "99% of you voted to ratify" the new contract. But most of us don't remember voting. Some of us didn't even get to hear what was in the package being offered. A lot of us feel, if it's take it or leave it year after year, why even bother?

In the U.S. today, only 7% of the workforce in the private sector are even unionized. For too long, union bosses have congratulated themselves on getting us workers great wages and benefits.

Nobody gives us anything. We work for it. We produce all the value, contrary to the capitalists taking credit. Union bosses think their survival depends on capital's survival. They're trapped in that kind of thinking. But they also try to drill into the heads of us rank and file that our survival too depends on capitalism.

They have it all wrong. We know better. It's capitalism's survival that depends on us! We know that an alternative to all the recurrent crises and miseries under capitalism begins with us.

conditions, and good health and safety conditions;

- End the campaign of political persecution against the Mexican Miners' Union and the Mexican Electrical Workers' Union.

One speaker, Luis from Arise Chicago, brought history to life by telling how the strike of miners at Cananea in 1906 helped bring on the Mexican Revolution, then linked it to the origins of May Day in Chicago. Around the world, May Day is known as an international revolutionary workers' day. Why not in Chicago? He suggested we could reconnect with this important history today in creating real international labor solidarity. As many demonstrators were saying, an injury to one is an injury to all!

—Franklin Dmitryev

Nurses demand safety



*Editor's note: On Jan. 19, after months of inaction regarding the murder of Donna Gross at Napa State Hospital (see "Losing nurses and patients for profit," Jan.-Feb. *N&L*), the workers held a rally. Below we print excerpts from the talks.*

Napa, Calif.—As graduating medical students we took an Oath of Hippocrates, with a special obligation not to do harm. Now I am asking the state of California to do the same for the workers of Napa State Hospital. We want a safe environment, we want safety now!

This past October we watched two tragedies unfold with very different outcomes. One was the 33 Chilean miners who were trapped underground. The Chilean government worked 24/7 to get those guys out. Here we have the Department of Mental Health (DMH). After years of ignoring warnings from all the staff—doctors as well as nurses and psych techs—about the increasing violence, the Napa State Hospital and the DMH has had an anemic response to the murder of Donna Gross and the savage beating of George Anderson.

Most of you have heard the statistics: 200 attacks on staff in 2009, 700 patient assaults—they are vulnerable as well—1,580 crimes in 2009, 224 instances of staff missing work. But stats alone cannot portray the fear, pain and disillusion of these workers.

—Dr. Stuart Bussey

Our sister Donna was murdered tragically. But it was nothing we did not expect. We all knew that one day we would come to work and hear that one of us had been hurt, injured or killed. For years we've been asking for adequate staffing. I get calls from staff pleading: we should have seven staff, but we only have five.

During the day we are supposed to be staffed eight to one: there are 40 individuals in a unit, and five staff are assigned. But it takes two staff to escort an individual to a clinic. When even one person goes to dinner, as law requires, there are two staff with 39 individuals! It is not safe for the staff and it is not safe for the patients.

At night, you only get three staff for 45 patients. If there is a crisis on another unit, the number may go down to two, or even one. We have pointed out to the DMH and to Napa State Hospital these unsafe issues, and they have turned a deaf ear.

We have the same goals and interests as the family members of the patients here. For the last several months, since Donna had been killed, this place has been in a lockdown. It is pretty hard to have a therapeutic environment when you're in a lockdown.

It is difficult to give care when you fear for your own life and safety. Just this week, some patients plotted and carried out beating up their roommate. How can we, as staff, protect those vulnerable individuals, when we become targets ourselves when we try?

I am asking, we are demanding, standing up for safety. We want it now!

—Donna's co-workers

Corporate assaults on workers and women

As the national assault against the working class in the U.S. increases, most openly evidenced by the orchestrated attacks aimed at destroying public employees' unions, workers and their unions are

EDITORIAL

challenging these vicious attacks. The most blatant attack, by Republican Gov. Scott Walker of

Wisconsin—who introduced legislation to eliminate the right of public worker unions to bargain collectively—has unleashed a national storm of protest, not only from union members, but from the entire population. Women, students, civil rights organizations, religious leaders have been galvanized into action by this attempt to destroy a right won after decades of struggle.

Nor is Gov. Walker alone. Legislation to eliminate or restrict collective bargaining rights of public employees has been introduced in at least 18 other states, most notably Ohio and Indiana, where similar massive protests are ongoing. The GOP governors of these states claim that labor restrictions are necessary to balance the billions in state budget deficits. The deficits are real, but are used as a smokescreen to attack labor.

These anti-labor measures would gain only a small amount of what states need to meet their fiscal crises, which were not caused by unions or public employees. The banks and Wall Street have recovered nicely, thanks to government bailouts over the last two years, and are paying out billions in bonuses to their executives.

ALL UNION PRINCIPLES UNDERMINED

Meanwhile, corporations relentlessly pursued their cherished goal: to destroy the idea of unionism, which was based on the principles and practice of brother and sisterhood—an injury to one is an injury to all, equality for all and solidarity against a management workers knew to be their exploitative enemy and determined to exercise dictatorial control over them. Every one of these union principles has been undermined with two-tier wage agreements, loss of seniority rights, elimination of job classifications and acceptance of automation that resulted in massive layoffs.

Education is another union battlefield, as well as another key component of Republicans' reactionary agenda, along with limitless, vicious attacks on women's rights (see "Vicious attacks on women's healthcare," p. 2). Teachers face loss of tenure and reduction in pay and benefits, and school vouchers for children for charter schools threaten the very existence of public education. Teachers face harassment at work and are retained or fired by students' test scores rather than overall educational achievement (see "Teachers' real value," p. 9).

There is a growing militancy among teachers in this severe education crisis. In Chicago, the old union leadership, marked by cronyism and concessionary attitudes, was replaced by a rank-and-file caucus which promises to change the culture of the union to accurately represent the needs of the teachers.

Union bureaucrats have contributed much to the negative attitude to unions, due in large part to capitalist media that emphasizes corporate interests over those of workers. Corporations, not just the Koch brothers, spend huge sums for public relations, lobbyists and lawyers with access to newspaper reporters, columnists and commentators like Rush Limbaugh, and Glenn Beck and Bill O'Reilly of Fox News. Workers and their unions do not have resources to match those billions.

UNION LEADERS PLAYING CATCH-UP

The present mass national outrage against the attacks on public employees has stirred up some union leaders, who are trying to catch up with this outpouring of protests, and are forming various coalitions among themselves and sympathetic community organizations to oppose these attacks. And the burgeoning protests have had an effect, as some reactionary governors have withdrawn or moderated the worst of their draconian legislation and permit collective bargaining.

Much more is needed. While the outcome of the confrontations in Wisconsin and elsewhere is still in doubt, many protesters, and especially union members in cities across Wisconsin, have been inspired by the revolts in Egypt and the Middle East. The clear revolutionary impact on the protesters here is seen in slogans on posters like "Mubarak Walker" and chants that "Cairo is right here!"

This mass protest has the potential of becoming much more than it is today, and was dramatically expressed in a protester's sign declaring "There is a new world."



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FROM THE WRITINGS OF RAYA DUNAYEVSKAYA

Editor's note: The first International Women's Day was observed 100 years ago in March 1911. This year also marks the 32nd anniversary of the historic demonstration in Tehran, Iran, on International Women's Day, March 8, 1979. On that day, women and supporters braved Islamic Guards and thugs allied with the new government headed by Ayatollah Khomeini. The marchers demanded that the revolution, forged by the masses, continue and include freedom for women. As a philosophical contribution to furthering the revolution, Iranian Marxist-Humanists translated and published several writings by Raya Dunayevskaya. Two of her writings from that time are excerpted here.

The first selection is from her 1980 pamphlet, 25 Years of Marxist-Humanism in the U.S.: A History of Worldwide Revolutionary Developments. The second is a letter to her colleagues in News and Letters Committees in 1979, reprinted in her book, Women's Liberation and the Dialectic of Revolution: Reaching for the Future. Both are available from News and Letters—see page 7.

Sept. 5, 1980

Nothing short of a shift in global powers climaxed the period 1977-79, from the reverberations of post-Mao China, through the Black Consciousness Movement in South Africa and the Latin American revolts, to the struggles of the Iranian masses against the Shah, which assumed such mass proportion as to develop into outright revolution.

At its very beginning I had been working on a new book, the topic of which has three subjects. One is Rosa Luxemburg; the second is the relationship of Women's Liberation in her time and ours; and the third is Marx's philosophy of revolution, which had gained a new dimension with the first transcription of Marx's *Ethnological Notebooks*.¹ I no sooner had reached the first chapter on Rosa Luxemburg, which deals with the turning point in her life—the 1905-07 Russian-Polish Revolution—than all sorts of new facts about its extension into Persia illuminated the Iranian struggles of 1978. At the same time, Marx's *Ethnological Notebooks* cast new illumination on the philosophy of Women's Liberation as it extended Marx's own 1844 analysis of the Man/Woman relationship to his 1881-82 analyses of the possibility of revolutions occurring in backward countries.

The overthrow of the Shah, and with it the undermining of U.S.

imperialism's dominance of the Gulf region, not only opened a dramatic shift in global power, but for the first time moved the question of the Middle East from oil to one of social revolution. What was most outstanding was that the greatest, most powerful and sustained mobilizations for months on end, including a general strike of oil workers, preceded the three-day insurrection of Feb. 9-12, 1979, which did indeed initiate a whole new epoch in world relations.

EVERY SEGMENT OF THE POPULATION had been totally involved in ridding Iran of its twin nemeses—the Shah and U.S. imperialism—and it seemed to be the eve of the greatest revolution since 1917. The workers who had been out on general strike refused to turn over their guns even when the Ayatollah Khomeini commanded it. All sorts of spontaneous organizations arose, by no means limited to former guerrilla groups. Quite the contrary. There were *shoras* [councils or soviets], there were workers' councils, there were *anjomans* [associations]. And in all of them youth were dominant.

There was no end to the freedom of the press and the great attraction for the student youth of new Marxist translations. The most eagerly sought-after of the Marxist groups were those who were independent of any state power. The most persistent fighters for self-determination were also the most organized, and were not only the Kurds but also the Arabs. Because they were all part of the mass revolutionary outburst which overthrew the Shah, they felt confident in continuing the fight for genuine self-determination.

Finally, and by no means least, the Women's Liberation Movement aimed at opening up a new chapter for the revolution. They were involved for five days, beginning on International Women's Day, March

1. Lawrence Krader transcribed Marx's Notebooks, which were published in 1972 under the title, *The Ethnological Notebooks of Karl Marx*, by Van Gorcum, Assen.

International Women's Day and Iran

8, 1979, in continuous marches under the slogan, "We made the revolution for freedom and got unfreedom."

AYATOLLAH KHOMEINI NO SOONER found himself in total power than contradictions began tearing the newly liberated nation apart. The emergent retrogression was analyzed in the March 1979 *Political-Philosophic Letter*, "Iran: Unfoldment of, and Contradictions in, Revolution."² This critique was translated and published in Farsi, as were my writings on Women's Liberation in a pamphlet entitled *Woman as Reason and Force of Revolution*, which also included an article on women by Rosa Luxemburg and Ding Ling's *Thoughts on March 8*.³ The introduction to the series of essays was written by an Iranian Marxist-Humanist woman, Neda.

All through 1979 and indeed a good part of 1980 there was hardly an issue of *N&L* which did not have either eyewitness reports on the Iranian Revolution, letters from Iran, special articles on both the women's revolution and the fundamentalist Islamic betrayal of it, as well as serious articles on what type of organization, what type of *shoras*, what kind of relationships of religion to revolution....

Rosa Luxemburg, *Women's Liberation*, and Marx's *Philosophy of Revolution* greatly illuminated the events of 1979 and 1980. History had paid little attention to the 1905 Russian Revolution's extension to Persia referred to earlier, though especially the women's *anjoman* was a true historic first. Suddenly, however, another element of that revolution in Persia—its first constitution—became a focal point for the 1979 Iranian Revolution. But what the Islamic fundamentalists meant by it and what the young revolutionaries related to, were absolute opposites.

The Left revolutionaries were studying and trying to practice the dialectics of the 1905-07 Russian Revolution, Luxemburg's analysis of the General Strike as both political and economic and thus bringing on the revolution, the call for women's liberation included in Luxemburg's manifestos, and above all, the focus on the spontaneity of the masses who were actually more revolutionary than the leaders. What the study also showed was the possibility of a revolution bursting out in a technologically backward country ahead of one that was not only technologically advanced, but one that had a great mass Social Democratic party.⁴

March 10, 1979

Dear Friends:
On my way to the talk in celebration of International Women's Day, that I was to give at Wayne State University on "Rosa Luxemburg and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution," came the news of the most magnificent international event: tens of thousands of Iranian women were demonstrating against Khomeini, shouting, "We fought for freedom and got unfreedom!" Naturally, I began the talk with an homage to those Iranian women's liberationists who had, with this act, initiated the second chapter of the Iranian Revolution. Thus, my very first sentence stressed the *todayness* that this mass outpouring had placed on our topic, though it was to begin with rolling back the clock to 62 years ago, when the Russian working women transformed International Women's

2. The letter, "Iran: Unfoldment of, and Contradiction in, Revolution," is also included in *Women's Liberation and the Dialectics of Revolution*. The Political-Philosophic Letters mentioned on this page are part of the *Selected Writings on the Middle East* by Raya Dunayevskaya; see Appeal on opposite page.—Editor

3. Ding Ling was a Chinese revolutionary whose 1942 *Thoughts on March 8* criticized the cruel sexism within Mao's Communist Party, including its leadership. She was later purged.

4. Interestingly enough, there was also a new interest in and new translations of Luxemburg's writings. We published the first translation ever of her *Theory and Practice*, by David Wolff [Available from News and Letters].

Day into the first of the five days that toppled the centuries-old Tsarist Empire.

The point was not only to single out great revolutionary acts, but to demonstrate that even in the first Russian Revolution of 1905, a great theoretician, Rosa Luxemburg, was as "shortchanged" about her thoughts as were the Russian working women, *en masse*, who were later to be played down as allegedly "unconscious" about their historic act which began the second Russian Revolution. Toward that end, I read from the still-unpublished speech of Rosa at the famous 1907 Congress of all Russian Marxist tendencies, which pointed to the fact that 1905 was but the first of a series of 20th-century revolutions....⁵

I SPENT THE FOLLOWING DAY, March 9, talking with an Iranian male revolutionary, developing ideas not only of the revolution but how we must be prepared for the **counter-revolution** that is sure to arise in Iran as Khomeini holds on to power and gathers not only men but some women to consent to turning back the clock to Islam's reactionary viewpoint on women—and by no means only on the

question of dress; and I singled out the historic points in the development of the Russian Revolution, which moved from the February events through Lenin's April Theses to Kornilov's July counter-revolution, and only after many laborious and bloody months arrived finally at October. In a word, we were discussing my next *Political-Philosophic Letter* on the Iranian Revolution.⁶

March 10 was still a newer day when, but half an hour before the Iranian's plane left, I came up with the idea of translating into Farsi Ding Ling's *Thoughts on March 8*. The publication would carry also the following message of solidarity with the Iranian women of today, stretching back to 1908 on native grounds:

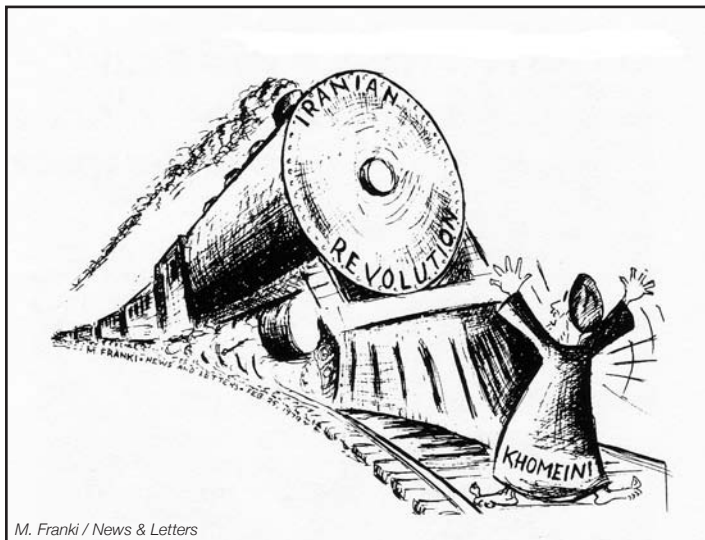
"In Spring 1908—when the 1906 Constitutional Revolution everyone is talking about today was still alive, and a women's *anjoman* was still most active, especially in Tehran—New York garment workers declared March 8 to be Women's Day. The following year, in support of the locked-out Triangle Shirtwaist makers, the mass outpouring became known as the 'Uprising of the 20,000'; that so inspired the German working women's movement that its leader, Clara Zetkin, proposed to the Marxist International that March 8 become an International Women's Day. Today, you—the daring women of Iran—have opened a new chapter in the Iranian Revolution of 1979. In homage to you, and to express our solidarity with your ongoing revolution, we are here translating the thoughts of still another opponent of the status quo, this time in China—Ding Ling, who opposed both Stalin and Mao (who purged the great writer), as she expressed herself creatively in *Thoughts on March 8*."

The friend who volunteered to do the translation felt that, indeed, the simple act of translation would thus express a totally new Man/Woman relationship....

Yours, Raya

5. Luxemburg's speech and a discussion of women in the 1905 Russian Revolution can be found in Dunayevskaya's *Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991).—Editor

6. Dunayevskaya's Dec. 17, 1979, *Political-Philosophic Letter*, "Not So Random Thoughts on: What Is Philosophy? What Is Revolution? 1789-1793; 1848-1850; 1914-1919; 1979," includes a dialectical view of the different stages revolutions pass through, whether Russia 1917 or Iran 1979. It was excerpted in the Oct. 2001 *N&L*. Gen. Lavr Kornilov led the July 1917 counter-revolution in Russia.—Editor



Cartoon first published in the March 1979 issue of *News & Letters*



Jan. 29 demonstration by Iranian activists in front of the Tribune Building in Chicago to demand freedom and democracy for the people of Iran. They then joined the demonstration to support the struggle for liberty and self-determination in Egypt.



Political-Philosophic Letters on Iran: Revolution and Counter-Revolution

Eight essays by Raya Dunayevskaya

Available for \$5 plus \$2 postage (in U.S.) from News & Letters, 228 S. Wabash, Suite 230, Chicago, IL 60604.

Women's freedom & Marx's dialectic

continued from p. 2

3. Marx gives her "criteria for what can count as better, or privileged, knowledges" (NH, p. 225). The rest of her essay goes into what her ideas are about—standpoint theory, for example—and what are the bits and pieces she has taken from Marx to buttress her arguments.

Hartsock uses the word "process" in her definition, but Dunayevskaya makes it concrete by telling us what "process" is to Marx in her work *Philosophy and Revolution*: "...the dialectic as a continuous process of self-development, a process of development through contradiction, through alienation, through double negation...It is the development of mankind's history from bondage to freedom."² And it is the development of thought along with it. This concept of dialectics helps us look at struggle, at history, in an entirely different way because one comprehends that it is through the struggle that we transcend the present and that the struggle in life is unseparated from thought, "that the dialectic reveals 'transcendence as an objective movement'" (*P&R*, p. 9).

WOMEN IN MARX'S CAPITAL

Dunayevskaya's essay traces that concept of the dialectic in what she calls a great "innovation in *Capital*" which "bears directly on the subject of women's liberation." It is, she writes, the chapter Marx added very late in the writing of *Capital* on "The Working Day." Dunayevskaya continues:

"That is the dialectic of Marx's seeing, not merely the statistics he had amassed, but the live men and women reshaping history. Nowhere is this more true than concerning the so-called 'Woman Question.' Having turned away from further arguments with theoreticians to follow instead the happenings at the point of production and their political ramifications on the historic scene, Marx came up with the second great innovation in *Capital*—his chapter on 'The Working Day.'"³

Why is it that no feminist theoretician seems to see what is in that chapter on "The Working Day": that Marx is not only talking about men? Not only were women working in the factories, but women and children were replacing men as cheaper labor. Marx certainly took them up, a fact Dunayevskaya makes sure to bring directly into this essay. She drives the point home by declaring that "...Marx devoted that much space to women in the process of production and arrived at very new conclusions on new forms of revolt." Because Marx saw that the dialectic meant self-development through contradiction, what live women and men experienced in fighting the inhuman factory conditions, and that transcendence comes about only through human striving, he concluded from looking at the struggle on the factory floor, "that the simple worker's question, When does my day begin and when does it end? was a greater philosophy of freedom than was the bourgeois Declaration of the Rights of Man..." (*WLDR*, p. 197).

This essay alone debunks not only Nancy Hartsock's "problems with Marx's own theories," but the problem many feminists have with Marx: 1. "class understood...as a relation among men, is the only division that counts"; 2. "workers' wives and their labor are presumed"; 3. "homosocial birth images mark the analysis..." 4. women are "profoundly absent from Marx's account of the extraction of surplus value"; 5. he's a product of his time (NH, p. 224).

Nothing could be further from the truth except, of course, that everyone is a "product of their time." But it would behoove us to try to see how Marx transcended his. What Hartsock reveals is that she falls solidly into the critique that Dunayevskaya made of "not only bourgeois feminists but of socialist feminists," that is that they, "above all, have helped those men who have tried to reduce Marx to a single discipline, be that as economist, philosopher, anthropologist, or 'political strategist.'"⁴ Furthermore, she seems to have learned her Marxism not from Marx so much as from post-Marx Marxists, as she quotes more or less approvingly everyone from Lukacs to Fredric Jameson, to Bertell Ollman to the Stalinist, Althusser.

How thoroughly the dialectic became

2. Raya Dunayevskaya, *Philosophy and Revolution: From Hegel to Sartre, and from Marx to Mao* (New York: Lexington Books, 2003), p. 10. *P&R* in subsequent references.
3. Raya Dunayevskaya, *Women's Liberation and the Dialectics of Revolution: Reaching for the Future*, "Marx's 'New Humanism' and the Dialectics of Women's Liberation in Primitive and Modern Societies" (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1996), p. 196. *WLDR* in subsequent references.
4. Raya Dunayevskaya, *Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1991), p. 104. *RLWLMPR* in subsequent references.

Dunayevskaya's method of thought can be seen in what she made explicit from Marx's *Ethnological Notebooks*, also taken up in this essay. Marx's notebooks on Lewis Henry Morgan's *Ancient Society* are some of his most neglected writings. That Dunayevskaya was able to see so much in them, indeed "new moments," could not have been easy. She was able to "hear him think"—through what he underlined, put quotes around, and sometimes commented on.

TRANSITIONS AND WOMEN'S LIBERATION

As a women's liberationist, what fascinated me about Dunayevskaya's discussion of Marx's *Ethnological Notebooks* was her emphasis on transitions:

"Nothing less than the vital question of transitions is at stake in the difference between Marx's and Engels's views. Marx was showing that it is during the transition period that you see the duality emerging to reveal the beginning of antagonisms, whereas Engels always seems to have antagonisms only at the end, as if class society came in very nearly full blown after the communal form was destroyed and private property was established. Moreover, for Marx the dialectical development from one stage to another is related to new revolutionary upsurges, whereas Engels sees it as a unilateral progression" (*RLWLMPR*, p. 180).

There is no greater transition than a revolution, and while the U.S. Women's Liberation Movement did not transform production relations, it was

born, grew, and developed in revolutionary times and has certainly changed the world. Revolution is being played out right now in the Middle East as women are fighting in the streets together with the men to topple dictators, and at the same time trying to realize their freedom as women. Everyone is aware that the situation could go towards more freedom for women, or the opposite, which is why Marx's concept of revolution in permanence speaks so profoundly to our times.

Women have a double fight: against society and its culture, and against the limitations of the movements that are supposed to be about freedom. In every movement, women have had to fight to show that their struggle for freedom was not a diversion from the movement but a contribution. Nowhere was this clearer than in the Iranian Revolution of 1979, when women tried to deepen that revolution, only to be met by many in the left with beatings, gunfire and the lie that their struggle revealed them as "agents of imperialism." That was a transition point that could have gone either way, and all of Iranian society is now living the consequences of the fact that the majority of the Iranian Left not only refused to fight for Iranian women's freedom, but demanded that they step back.

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HOW DEEP REVOLUTION MUST BECOME

What is involved in transitions is as well the question of how deep and total revolution has to become. That is why, I think, Dunayevskaya ties the two together in this essay:

"The new moments he [Marx] was experiencing as he intensified his studies of pre-capitalist society, on women, on the primitive commune, on the peasantry, illuminate Marx's works as a totality. Thus it isn't a question of a mere return to the concept of women which he first expressed in the 1844 Manuscripts, nor, as some anthropologists would have it, simply a move from a philosophic to an empiric anthropology. Rather, as a revolutionary, Marx's hostility to capitalism's colonialism was intensifying to such a degree that his emphasis was on how deep must be its uprooting" (p. 202).

This kind of dialectic, a dialectic of revolution that springs from the whole history of thought and of humanity's struggle for freedom, is what can give direction to a movement, an organization or an individual. Thus we know that we cannot support the so-called "insurgency" in Iraq or Afghanistan, a force that would destroy women's autonomy wherever they find it. We knew in 1979 that the Iranian women must have our greatest solidarity, and we know that right now is the time to raise women's freedom in Tunisia, Libya, Yemen, Palestine and Egypt as women fight side by side with men to create a new, free Middle East.

Dunayevskaya was always looking for new revolutionary beginnings. As we face a world whose determination to move towards fascism is being challenged by new freedom movements—especially in the Middle East—we realize that our age too is in transition, and it too can go either towards fascism or to humanity's desire, a new human society. Theory and philosophy are indispensable in this endeavor.



Terry Moon/News & Letters
Women marching in Chicago at a demonstration in support of the uprisings in Egypt and Tunisia Jan. 29.

We need your help

As the revolutions that began this year in Tunisia and Egypt spread throughout the Middle East and North Africa, they were recognized by masses of men, women and youth throughout the world, not as "far off events," but as a new moment struggling to be born everywhere.

That moment has enveloped the massive protests in Wisconsin trying to keep the union movement from being destroyed, the revolts of European workers resisting austerity, and the decades-long movements in Latin America trying to break free from a capitalist path of "development." Revolution is being recognized not only as possible, but as the needed pathway out of the endless crises gripping every country—from economic crises to climate change to the many wars being fought or threatened.

NEVER WAS THERE a greater need for a unique revolutionary journal like *News & Letters*, where the voices of revolt are recorded in every issue unseparated from the articulation of a philosophy of revolution that lets them be heard louder and more clearly because they disclose the future in the present. From our beginning in 1955, *N&L* has been dedicated, both as paper and organizationally, to working out a new *unity* of theory and practice.

To that end, this year we are working to issue a new edition of *Selected Writings on the Middle East* by Raya Dunayevskaya, the founder of Marxist-Humanism, which shows how philosophy has been a force of revolution as in the Iranian Revolution of 1979. It reveals how learning the lessons of history means not making the same mistakes and being philosophically prepared for new and unexpected problems.

AT THE SAME TIME, we are determined to keep publishing *News & Letters*. The ever-increasing number of newspapers that have failed in the last decade is testimony to the overwhelming costs involved; yet the importance of continuing their publication is attested by our prisoner readers who make sure every issue is circulated widely throughout the prison system. Keeping the paper in print, however, entails considerable expense on top of our regular ever-increasing bills for office rent and postage.

As we have from our beginning, we are turning to you, our readers, to help us continue. We cannot do it without your contributions—financial, as well as in your ideas, your letters, articles, and bringing us new friends and readers.

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By John Alan

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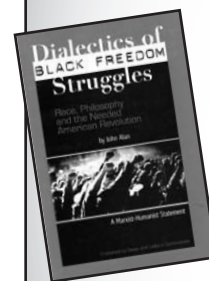
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THE MIDDLE EAST EXPLODES: WHAT HAPPENS AFTER?

The Middle East events are bringing lots of people to talk about 1979 as well as the 2009 movements in Iran. I appreciated Raha's essay in the Jan.-Feb. issue, "Philosophy and Iran's revolution: Where to now?" because it raises the question of what could go wrong right now in Egypt.

**David
Bay Area**

At first I thought the Lead in the Jan.-Feb. issue, "European revolts confront economic and political crises," was so much on Europe that it had become passe. But then a friend pointed out that the conclusion on overcoming alienated labor is appropriate in Egypt too. Most important is that, despite some on the Left who were proposing that Mubarak's ouster was a CIA plot, a whole new world is opened up, where the old dualities look ridiculous, like "anti-imperialism." All those self-limiting discussions changed overnight when people had new social connections on the street.

**Ron
Bay Area**

There are moments in history in which the impossible becomes unavoidable. Like the dissolution of the Soviet Union just before its fall, the changes sweeping the Middle East were unimaginable to most a month ago. But people power has a logic and timeline all its own. While many of us may never step foot in the Middle East, the hopes of its people are interwoven with ours and those of the world. In moments like these, it is inspiring to know that our solidarity, in hope and action, can play a small part in big change.

To help Avaaz send phones, tiny video cameras, and portable radio transmitters to activists in the Middle East so they can broadcast live video feeds even during internet and phone blackouts, send donations to Avaaz Foundation, 857 Broadway, 3rd floor, New York, NY 10003, or go to avaaz.org.

**Stephanie, David, Alice, Morgan, Ricken,
Rewan, Maria Paz and the Avaaz team
New York City**

Given the most recent events unfolding in the Arab World, particularly in Egypt, the relevance of Raya Dunayevskaya's work on "Dialectics of Philosophy and Organization" becomes clear. In a short 18-day period—Jan. 25 to Feb. 11—the spontaneous eruption of the various sections of Egyptian civil society was able to end the 30-year reign of dictator Hosni Mubarak. The question that now looms large is, what happens the day after the Revolution?

Rubén Dri's introduction to the Spanish edition of Raya Dunayevskaya's *The Power of Negativity* recognizes that "a fundamental theoretical assumption for any revolutionary political project is that reality moves dialectically." As in Argentina in 2000, now in Egypt the

revolt against oppression by workers, teachers, housewives and students contains great potentialities that could only be translated into new politics if it were interpreted dialectically. Thus, what force will arise in Egypt that is capable of performing the task of translating the spontaneous movement, its potentialities, into a political force?

**Prisoner
California**

Because of the mass movements, from Tunisia to Egypt and across North Africa and in the Middle East and Wisconsin-Ohio-Indiana, Karl Marx's words "Human power is its own end" are alive today.

**Basho
California**

The current uprisings throughout the Middle East make it critical to discuss the ideas and actions that will help these new revolutions develop toward the new human society we all want. It brought to my mind the lines from Hegel that Raya Dunayevskaya quoted in her *Philosophy and Revolution*: "When individuals and nations have once got in their heads the concept of full-blown liberty, there is nothing like it in its uncontrollable strength, just because it is the very essence of mind, and that as its very actuality."

**Susan
New York**

I am thinking a lot of Raya these days, with a new February Revolution sweeping around the world. I'm glad *N&L* has survived. It is an intellectual "tearmann" [sanctuary] for me, as we say in Gaelic. *Beannacht*.

**Séamas Cain
Minnesota**

Bahrain is an oppressed nation which suffers from lack of freedom and a non-declared apartheid. The monarchy, which was brought into power by Britain 200 years ago, belongs to minority Sunnis who rule a majority Shiite country. This minority group is a very good ally of the U.S. and hosts the U.S. Navy in the Persian Gulf, so the U.S. government doesn't exert any pressure on the ruling family to change their behavior. Because the majority are Shiites, the Arab countries of the Persian Gulf which are Sunni officially declared their support of the ruling family of Bahrain. The Bahrainian people are locally and internationally strangled.

**Mohammad
New York**

STOP EXECUTIONS IN IRAN

The Islamic Republic of Iran has sentenced Houtan Kian, the lawyer of Iran stoning case Sakineh Mohammadi Ashtiani, to death by hanging. Kian was arrested in October 2010 along with

demonstrating how the use of hollow phrases designed to serve as the foundations of society can be twisted and tortured.

So instead of making general phrases about labor and society, we must turn to "proving concretely how in present capitalist society the material, etc., conditions have at last been created which enable and compel the workers to lift this social curse."

Why have no other post-Marx Marxists dealt seriously with Marx's *Critique* as Lenin and Dunayevskaya did? The *Critique* is roughly 136 years old, and yet in our present-day society its overall relevance is profoundly clear.

Wherever we look at the world—Europe, the Arab world, Afrika, etc.—the material conditions of capital relations have created the conditions for the international working class to lift the social curse.

**Faruq
Crescent City, Calif.**

READERS' VIEWS

Sajjad Ghaderzadeh, Ashtiani's son, and two German journalists during an interview. Whilst the latter three have been released, Kian faces imminent execution. Ashtiani's death sentence has also been confirmed. Only strong international pressure will save them and the many others awaiting their death in the execution capital of the world.

Please send copies of any protest letters, actions and emails, and acts of solidarity to iransolidaritynow@gmail.com. For useful contact details for protest letters, go to: <http://iransolidarity.blogspot.com/2011/03/call-to-save-life-of-lawyer-houtan-kian.html>.

**Mina Ahadi, International Committees
against Stoning and Execution;
Patty Debonitas, Iran Solidarity;
Maryam Namazie, One Law for All**

WISCONSIN

It doesn't seem like that long ago when some people had illusions about the class nature of the Tea Parties. Not anymore. Here's some of what TPer's have said online about the protests in Madison: "All labor unions were Communist collectivist inspired and have taken their toll on America. The NLRA was passed in 1935 and signed by a President who had an administration full of Communist Jews"; "If the n*****r police chief won't do his job, bring in the National Guard with mace and tear-gas to oust these union thug commie radicals"; and, for the trifecta, "Everybody knows that Hippies don't work so why are they supporting those union pukes?"

**Union supporter
Illinois**

At the Chicago solidarity rally with Wisconsin workers, one of the speakers reminded us how people died fighting for the right to organize. It's something I know, but given what is going on, and the determination of the reactionary right to destroy unions, it took on more poignancy. That we still need the right to bargain, strike and organize is clear if one just remembers the Massey Coal Company mine disaster a year ago April, or the explosion of the oil rig that set off the spill in the Gulf of Mexico—both were caused by management cutting corners to get out production; both showed a shocking disregard for workers' lives. The right to strike and bargain is about life and death.

**Women's Liberationist
Chicago**

I went to Madison and saw a real good protest about unions. When I saw that many people demanding that all these governors stop their attacks on the union, I felt this enormous protest was powerful because it took in the power of every person fighting for what they believed. We're going to direct our power to make those governors treat us with honor and respect and give us back our freedom. Our demands are to respect us; to not lie to the nation; to stop evictions; to freeze jobless people's loans until they get jobs; to not cut the budget for public housing, clinics, food stamps, welfare and Section Eight.

**Latina Worker
Chicago**

SENIORS SPEAK UP

Republicans and their allies want to eliminate Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid, using the excuse of dealing with the deficit. The right wing does

not care about the average citizen. They have no idea what it is like to struggle to pay rent, buy food, etc.

The Republicans opposed the original Social Security and Medicare programs. They still do. As I have told Senator Durbin's office, seniors vote in high numbers. I said that if he takes part in Social Security cuts, I will help defeat him in the next election.

The Republicans' attempts to cut Social Security and other safety-net programs are part of their contempt for the average American, whether senior, union member or worker. They have special contempt for low-income minorities and women.

We need to change our society to one that respects the average person no matter what their income level, age, gender, race, or religion.

**Mark
Chicago**

CHINESE DRAGON?

During the Depression, the FBI, with the cooperation of the Japanese-American Citizens League, gathered the names of teachers and heads of organizations two or three years before Pearl Harbor. Anti-Japanese messages were projected in the mass media. I'm now hearing more and more anti-Chinese statements on the radio. China is a major competitor to U.S. capitalism today, as Japan was in the 1930s. It's today's economic climate that creates the antagonism.

**Japanese-American
Los Angeles**

U.S. capitalists are not going to point to "Free Trade" policies as a reason for today's crisis, they're going to blame China. It's easier to foment hatred against foreigners than to look for the cause of the economic crisis. The labor unions are again asking teachers to make concessions, but no one asks why the economy suddenly collapsed. Why not go after those who brought on the disaster?

**Teacher
Los Angeles**

FOR SUZE ROTOLO

So sad to learn of the passing of Suze Rotolo (1943-2011). She was more than the young woman with Bob Dylan on the *Freewheelin'* album cover. Through her involvement in the late 1950s in the Congress On Racial Equality, she had a lot to do with inspiring his important civil rights movement oriented songs. And she kept active right on into the new millennium, as one of the satirical Billionaires for Bush. Her memoir *A Freewheelin' Time* is an interesting portrayal of the growth of part of the 1960s New Left out of what her parents' CP-oriented "Old Left" was, and out of what it wasn't, too—it opens with an early 1960s cafe discussion of what the word freedom really means that captures what it was like to be young and idealistic, then, or now.

**Tim Finnigan
Midwest**

YOUTH AGAINST BULLYING

It's encouraging to hear of continuing efforts by youth to stop bullying! Such an example is a music video put out by kids attending Long Branch Middle School in New Jersey, "Bullying We'll Stop It." Thanks to those kids, and to Enrique Iglesias who supported them. You should check it out: [http://wacptv.ning.com/video/bullying-well-stop-it-official?xg_source=activity!](http://wacptv.ning.com/video/bullying-well-stop-it-official?xg_source=activity)

**Sexual Humanist
originally from Japan**

MARX'S CRITIQUE OF THE GOTHA PROGRAM FOR THE PRESENT DAY

Marx begins his *Critique of the Gotha Program* by clarifying the conception of "labor as the source of all wealth and culture" stating, "Labor is not the source of all wealth. Nature is just as much the source of use-values as labor, which itself is only the manifestation of a force of nature, human labor power." This point of clarity became necessary because there exists a distinction as to what defines a social program.

The way bourgeois phrases are used gives meaning to conditions. The bourgeoisie, because of its class position as the owners of property, falsely ascribed supernatural creative power to labor. The person who owns no property but his/her labor power is subject to being reduced to a slave to the owners of the material conditions of labor. Thus, it is only with permission that s/he is able to work, and by extension, able to live.

Throughout the *Critique* Marx is

MANY ISSUES, ONE FIGHT

I was late to the Walk for Choice because my bus picked up a lot of people to attend the multiple rally actions in downtown Chicago on Feb. 26. My bus driver blew her horn in support of the pro-union rally where I got off the bus. She said that the mayor-elect, Rahm Emanuel, is anti-union and wondered if people knew that.

**Bus rider
Chicago**

My friends and I finally hooked up with the 500-strong Walk for Choice rally which started downtown at Chicago's Daley Center Plaza. There was no permit for the march, so we were split up and my group went across the street to the pro-union rally and our slogan was "Pro-union, pro-choice." One man said that they were two different issues, but most of the people agreed that it was the same fight.

I was disappointed that I saw no coverage of the Walk on any news stations. When I googled the pro-choice rally in Chicago, I got the one that occurred at the downtown Chicago Federal Building on Feb. 25, which about 50 people attended, but not a word about the much larger event on the 26th. Friends commented that women's issues are not considered as important as others. How can we change this? There was also no coverage on the national news even though the Walk for Choice was nationwide.

**Sue
Chicago**

John Tierney wrote a disingenuous article in the Feb. 8 *New York Times*, "Social Scientist Sees Bias Within," where he claimed that "assumption that female scientists faced discrimination and various forms of unconscious bias" has been "repeatedly contradicted," citing the recent study by Stephen J. Ceci and Wendy M. Williams, "Understanding current causes of women's underrepresentation in science."

The new study, however, was no defense of Larry Summers' ridiculous thesis that men were better at science than women. On the contrary, they

argue that, when looked at across the whole population, formal discrimination is not as significant as it once was, but discrimination remains. They advocated shifting from battling formal discrimination to work/family balance problems that discourage women from certain careers. Tierney's twisting of science is out of place in an article that pretends to be discussing the distortion of science to suit one's values. Rather than a critique of that practice, his article is an example of it.

**Terry Moon
Chicago**

TEACHER 'MERIT'

New York City Mayor Bloomberg's hypocrisy on the subject of teacher "merit" is shown in his top-down "business model." Saving money and having power over teachers seem to be his prime considerations. By getting rid of seniority, he can keep lower-paid, albeit inexperienced, teachers.

Instead of providing more resources and help to schools that were "failing," he opened privately run charters and selective academies that take space and resources away from traditional schools. Although the mayor claims that his policies resulted in higher student achievement scores, recent state-wide tests show no significant progress. This is part of a national policy (both Democrat and Republican) to privatize the entire public sector and destroy public sector unions.

**Retired UFT Member
New York**

The reader who praised New Jersey Governor Chris Christie for signing anti-bullying legislation, unlike many New Jerseyans, found something good about him. Unfortunately, the rest of his agenda puts him into consideration as a Republican Presidential candidate. He is right there with Wisconsin, Indiana

and Ohio in efforts to break teachers' unions. He cancelled a construction project to build a rail tunnel between New York and New Jersey, a project which would have provided jobs and mitigated automobile traffic and pollution in the region. I think Christie is the state's First Bully; he just doesn't want competition!

**Native of
New Jersey**

TODAY'S MANY CRISES

The world food crisis, which was dire in 2008 and then subsided temporarily, is getting worse again. It was one of the factors in Tunisia's revolution, along with recent revolts in Algeria. The pause in the food crisis was partly from better weather. But weather catastrophes are increasingly common as the climate warms, including a string of disasters in the past several months: drought in Russia; floods in Pakistan, northern Europe, the U.S., and Australia; and dry conditions in Latin America.

Added to other factors such as the continued diversion of cropland to biofuel production instead of food, this is very likely to bring the food crisis of three years ago roaring back. Far from being able to solve the problem, capitalism is driving us in the wrong direction.

**Franklin Dmitryev
Chicago**

The New York Times is covering the issue of Marcellus Shale horizontal hydrofracturing wastewater in unprecedented fashion. Their coverage documents a 2008 drinking water crisis that affected more than 850,000 residents along the Monongahela River near Pittsburgh. Municipal treatment plants were accepting up to 40% of their influent as natural gas drilling wastewater even though they were not equipped to handle that type of waste. The water became unpotable. A 70-mile stretch of the river was impacted.

You can view a video explaining some of these issues at: <http://toxicstargeting.com/MarcellusShale/videos/nyt-alert>

**Walter Hang
New York**

FROM BEHIND PRISON BARS



I have been reading *N&L* for six years and it is the most enjoyable publication I've ever read. I always enjoy the articles

by Raya Dunayevskaya or Marx.

All the sections are informative and put forth a point of view that cannot be found in publications such as *The USA Today* or *The New York Times*, and won't be shown on broadcasts like CNN. I've studied Marx and other 18th and 19th century philosophers for years and find that Raya's essays always bring a new light to the greats.

**Prisoner
Florida**

Revolutionary greetings. I like *N&L* because it focuses on the plight of all the oppressed, including Lesbians, homosexual males, Bis, and Transgenders. *N&L* reminds me that the struggle for freedom and justice is far from over.

N&L feeds the mind and inspires all brothers and sisters to yank off the chains responsible for any criminal or colonial mindsets so they can begin the process of re-educating themselves and start doing the work of the civilized. I leave as I came—in revolutionary human solidarity. The struggle continues.

**Prisoner
Boscobel, Wisc.**

Socialism is frowned upon due to miseducation, misunderstanding and ignorance. It can be conquered by proper use of educational tools—which this newspaper represents; the much-needed information to fill the void.

**Prisoner
Huntington, Penn.**

Your paper provides a more interesting angle on world events not discussed on TV news. If people don't see all angles, they will become American media zombies, and very misinformed.

**Prisoner
Crescent City, Calif.**

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BLACK/REDAVIEW

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insistence that his thoughts had to be written to be shared by all, that brought that Black/Red View column into existence, after the extraordinary Black/Red Conference that was sponsored by News and Letters Committees in 1969. What was extraordinary was not only that the 59 participants represented Black and white as well as Mexican-American activists in the freedom movement—young and old, workers and students, women and men, members of varied organizations—but that they discussed for six full hours almost every question raised in the Black community at that moment.



Uszula Wislanka/N&L

What was made front and center was the way that discussion helped Raya Dunayevskaya to complete her book *Philosophy and Revolution*, published in 1973. As expressed by Charles Denby, author of *Indignant Heart: A Black Worker's Journal*, in his welcome to that Conference, "This is the first time such a conference will have a chance to discuss with each other as well as with Marxist-Humanists who lend the red coloring, not only for the sake of color, but for the sake of philosophy, a philosophy of liberation." It was that quality of Black/Red that John Alan had presented in his column ever since 1970.

MANY PATHS CROSSED in John Alan's life. He had been born in Washington, D.C. to a Black mother and a German father, and as a child had attended the Lucretia Mott Quaker-Abolitionist elementary school, which he recalled as decorated with murals of a Black Civil War regiment. As a youth, in the 1930s, he formulated his political and cultural roots with the many Washington, D.C., intellectuals and artists, like Langston Hughes, and was attracted to socialist views during the Depression by attending forums where socialist ideas were debated. It was at one such meeting organized by Raya Dunayevskaya that he was drawn to her ideas because she kept inviting Black intellectuals from Howard University as speakers.

Searching for a job during the Depression took him to Chicago, where he crossed paths with writers like Richard Wright. He plunged into the lively forums in Hyde Park and the struggles against restrictive covenants that barred African-Americans from living in "white" neighborhoods. It was during those actions that he met Lillian Bender, the woman who was his wife for over 50 years until her death. After World War II they moved to San Francisco, where Alan's achievements as a renowned filmmaker brought him many awards. The most notable achievement that demands our attention was his filming of the historic "The Other America" speech by Martin Luther King at Stanford University on April 14, 1967. It was one of the first speeches where he came out against the Vietnam War.

WHETHER IT WAS Alan's work on catching that moment, or his recording of East Oakland youth reciting their poetry as "Can You Hear Me?" or of Bobby Seale in the San Francisco jail caught powerfully in "Stagger Lee," all can be seen as other expressions of what became concretized in the title of his *News & Letters* column, "Black/Red View." That was also what characterized his contribution to the pamphlet he co-authored, *Frantz Fanon, Soueto, and American Black Thought*. Most important of all his achievements in that regard is the book he authored in 2003 as *Dialectics of Black Freedom Struggles: Race, Philosophy, and the Needed American Revolution* (see ad page 5). A memorial meeting for Allen John Willis (John Alan) will be held at the Niebyl-Proctor Library, 6501 Telegraph Ave, Oakland, Calif., Saturday, April 2, at 1:00 p.m.

We are proud to list him as a National Editorial Board Member Emeritus in the masthead of *News & Letters*. We mourn his passing and greatly honor his life.

—Olga Domanski

Free Diego Garcia! Chagos for the Chagossians!

Port Louis, Mauritius—The Oct. 30-Nov. 2 LALIT International Conference to "Free Diego" was timed so right and politically so spot on that it seems to have been a catalyst. An instant effect was that during our conference, the prime minister announced Nov. 3 would be "Chagos Day" and commemorated every year. Also during the conference, the UK's Marine Protected Area came into force. This was Britain's perfidious way of claiming sovereignty over Chagos and preventing Chagossians from returning. It provoked the Mauritian state, with the prime minister calling the British "hypocrites, liars and cheats."

WikiLeaks published cables that are clear proof that both the UK and U.S. saw the whole "marine protected area" maneuver as a cynical ploy to keep Chagossians and Mauritians away from the military base.

The Mauritian government started a legal action. For the first time since the 1965 illegal theft and occupation of the islands by the British and U.S., Mauritius acted on the Chagos issue. Dr. Arvin Boollell, Minister of

The Iranian marathon to freedom

After nearly 14 months of apparent "quiescence," once again Iranian cities erupted into street demonstrations, shocking the powers that be who had imagined, in their false consciousness, that the movement is all but dead!

Thus on Feb. 14 hundreds of thousands in cities throughout Iran came out to express their solidarity with the Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions in the only meaningful way possible: mass opposition against our own despotic rulers. Clearly, the revolutionary transformations engulfing the entire Middle East served as an impetus to re-energize Iranian people, especially the women and the youth.

Because Iran's equivalent of the "Day of Rage" was announced in advance, the riot police, the Basij and the Guards were out in full force. In anticipation of mass occupation of city squares, as in Egypt's Tahrir Square, these security forces were stationed in all major squares. Using tear gas, batons and even live ammunition, they went on the offensive to prevent the people from coalescing in any one location. After hours of street battles, two people lay dead, hundreds were arrested, and thousands beaten and injured.

One must bear in mind the awful might of Iran's ruthless security apparatus to fully appreciate the resilience, the bravery and the determination of the masses and their creativity in the way they mobilized themselves without any access to traditional media, even as the state's cyber army shut down the internet, disrupted SMS, and sent text messages *en masse* calling off the demonstrations.

Unmistakable in the demands and creative slogans of demonstrators was the call for outright revolution. By naming Iran's Ali Khamenei as the next tyrant to go after Tunisia's Ben Ali and Egypt's Mubarak, **they brought forth a new stage in Iran's popular revolt for freedom.** Faded in the background now is Ahmadinejad as a mere caretaker president, as well as initial demands for counting their votes after the mock elections of 2009.

As I wrote in the January-February 2010 *N&L* (see "Iran: Ashura revolt shakes regime"), **the 'Ashura' uprisings of Dec. 27, 2009, signified a turning point because on that day the masses found, once more, the Spirit of Revolution**, thereby surprising even themselves! Its ruthless and bloody suppression only managed to drive it "underground."

Thus the "interlude" between then and now, far

from pacifying the opposition, or displaying fear of the state's shameless rule by the sword, proved to be a period of collective recollection during which society discovered a new content for itself. What appeared as society's "retreat" behind that turning point, was in truth the moment when its thinking spirit was engaged in creating for itself a new revolutionary point of departure.

As Karl Marx defined it so magnificently: "proletarian revolutions constantly criticize themselves in their own course, return to the apparently accomplished in order to begin anew... they recoil from the indefinite colossalness of their own goal, until a situation is created which makes all turning back impossible, and the conditions themselves call out: **Hic Rhodus, hic Salta!**"

The new Iranian Revolution is thoroughgoing; it is not a sprint but a marathon!

—Raha

Down with the dictator!



About 100 people huddled together in icy San Francisco wind in Union Square Feb. 25 in solidarity with the "Day of Rage" protest in Iran. The Day of Rage was inspired by and in solidarity with the Egyptian protesters and the wave of protests by North African and Middle Eastern peoples. Over a year after the Iranian uprising of 2009 was crushed by the brutal Islamic Republic's forces, people rose up and showed they were still willing to struggle and put their lives on the line. We chanted: "Down with the dictator!" and "First Mubarak, then Ben Ali, Seyed Ali it's your turn!" Many slogans connected the struggle in these places with Iran's people. The same hope shone in faces in San Francisco again, that people in Iran will be free someday.

—Nazanin Afarin

Torturer Jon Burge's reign of terror

Editor's note: Mark Clements spent 28 years in prison for a crime he did not commit. He was one of many tortured under former Chicago Police Commander Jon Burge's reign of terror. Clements is now Chairman of the Wrongful Convictions Committee of the Chicago Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression. The following is excerpted from a talk he gave to News and Letters Committees on Feb. 7.

Chicago—It's amazing to me that prosecutors are just starting to acknowledge torture victims as crime victims. Yet no solution has been reached for 23 men who are still incarcerated who claim to have been tortured. Every Burge victim has the same rights as a crime victim. Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan wants to sue Burge but not to compensate us as crime victims. This prolongs the fight and is very tiresome.

I reviewed some of the cases and there is torture in all of them. One of these young men, who has been incarcerated since 1977, was raped with a foreign object.

Today, Madigan filed a law suit about the tortures. Her office serves as the special prosecutor in at least seven of those cases. I don't understand why she hasn't waived her opposition to automatic hearings for the 23 men. People need to know where these cases stand. Allowing these cases to be heard in open court would provide a full and fair opportunity to know the evidence.

All of the men who were tortured were targeted because of the community from which they came. These men were deemed guilty before they ever had a trial.

Burge's sentence is only four and a half years. This is an insult. He was facing 45 years. Yet somehow, behind closed doors and through magic, the number of years went down and down. He had only two years, but the judge doubled it. Before we call a victory, we need to examine the situation.

Burge still gets his pension. This is a further insult. Jon Burge victimized and tortured children. What really disturbs me is the lack of interest in this issue. We need to put a stop to this, not just because it's African Americans, but because it violates human rights.

Why was the Chicago Police Department able to get away with these tortures? Black cops were shaking down drug dealers and gang-bangers and white cops knew it. Black cops knew white cops were torturing African Americans. Both groups had something on each other, so they couldn't tell on each other.

What is so tripped out about these Burge tortures is that with all the evidence we have, the system is still fighting these cases. This is a system that we call fair. When it wrongs you, you have to fight like a dog to be compensated. And then you go through hardships. Some of these men are homeless. The government knows about it and doesn't care. It's another form of imprisoning them.

Without heat on the government, they pay tax dollars for a prison system that does not work. How can a specialist on prisons not have a solution or a plan or an agenda to rehabilitate inmates?

Sitting in prison you suffer everyday of your life. I was a kid when I entered the system, and I used to hear this death row inmate all the time. He would say that he would be happy when they whack him, meaning kill him. I thought he was crazy. But he was sitting in misery each and every day so he wanted to be eliminated.

On March 16, Burge will hopefully be placed in prison and not this hospital that the judge has recommended, and we will be having a demonstration in front of 26th and California at 11:00 AM. It is a demonstration against all prosecutors who had anything to do with the Burge cases. We need to figure out a way to put some heat on these prosecutors. Those prisoners are in a hopeless situation. I know because I talk to them all the time. That is my job. But if we don't help these guys, they are going to die in prison.

We the people can change things. But if we don't fight, they won't be changed.

Greetings from all at LALIT in Mauritius,
—Ragini Kistnasamy and Lindsey Collen
(Excerpts from a letter to N&L)

Wisconsin at front line of class war

continued from p. 1

before the unionbusting budget repair bill passed the state House on Friday.

Here is how one protester sees the situation: "We have a bunch of our members here from Laborers Local 319 in Marseilles, Ill., to show support and solidarity for all the workers here in Wisconsin. What's going on is a tragedy, and we are committed to doing whatever we can to help these folks out. If the bill doesn't get killed here, we are all in trouble. It's a direct threat against organized labor. It will decide whether unions will exist or not.

"We are here for the future of our children. These kids aren't going to have any opportunities if they break our backs and we can't have collective bargaining. We will be finished. We will lose a lot of benefits. This is corporate America and big business, along with the Republican Party. They got their people in place now and they figure this is the perfect opportunity to strike against us. They say it's about balancing the budget, but it's really about breaking up the unions.

"This is our livelihood they are trying to take away. They want everyone out there working for just \$10 an hour. These people have no idea what it is that our families sacrifice and suffer every day, just to pay our bills. We're construction workers and it's seasonal work, so we know what it is like to be jobless. We go through it every year.

"Kids are getting out of high school, out of college, and there are no jobs. It's time working-class people rise up. We've got the power in this country if we exercise it. We need strong leadership and guidance and you see

Teachers' real value

New York—Politicians are clamoring to get rid of the tenure system for K12 public school teachers. They claim tenure makes it impossible to fire teachers, even those known to have abused students. The real motivation is financial: tenured teachers earning maximum salaries and benefits "cost" districts more than recent hires.

Many people assume that senior teachers do not have to prove "merit" and that "last in-first out" should not determine who is laid off. New York City teachers have to take both written and oral tests to get a license. They are required to take overly extensive and expensive college courses during their entire teaching career. Teachers can be observed by their principals and supervisors at least six times a year for three years before getting tenure.

Tenured teachers continue to be observed and still can be fired, but under due process, so that a principal cannot fire a teacher arbitrarily. Senior teachers have "merit" through years of valuable experience and they have been through a lengthy process of accountability. That is why seniority should be kept.

Teachers themselves say it takes at least five years of classroom experience to become truly competent. After four years, I felt like I was beginning to hit my stride. The next year I worked with a teacher who had 37 years' experience. What an education I got! I marveled at her skill at presenting material and pacing the lessons to connect with her students. She could "read" her very challenging eighth-graders and could teach appropriate behavior and social skills along with academic content. Her repertoire of "looks" that silenced 25 teenagers in a heartbeat—priceless!

Just as valuable is the energy and enthusiasm of young teachers, their fresh ideas, tech savvy and their rapport with students. Until the real human value of teachers is recognized, students and society will continue to be deprived.

—Susan Van Gelder and Tom Siracuse, retired public schoolteachers

that here today. People have to make the commitment to be here, day after day in large numbers.

"People like Walker do not want to see us out here, thousands of people congregating and supporting each other. They want to keep us divided, arguing and fighting among ourselves. They don't want us to have the power. We've got all the trades out here, even non-union workers supporting the unions. If you take down our standards, you take down their standards too.

"It's a crime what is going on in this country. We should all be prospering. Corporate America is making huge profits at our expense. The CEOs get \$300 million salaries, that's way out of line. Then our people are the ones who fight the wars. They don't send their people. They talk about patriotism and they don't even know what it is."

Another protester gave voice to what so many are feeling and told *News & Letters*: "This is historic what is happening here, we are making history. What they are doing cannot be tolerated."

—Suzanne Rose

Protest Brown's cuts



Hundreds of low-income and unemployed people and people with disabilities marched through San Francisco on Feb. 28 wearing signs identifying services they would lose under Gov. Jerry Brown's proposed draconian cuts. They chanted, "They say lie down and die/we say organize," and demanded budget solutions that do not devastate lives. Their sentiment was that the best expression of international solidarity is fighting for our rights right here.

Rally in Asheville

Asheville, N.C.—About 500 union supporters rallied at Pack Square Park in downtown Asheville on Feb. 26 at noon to show our solidarity with workers in Wisconsin.

Despite North Carolina's "right-to-work" laws, there are still unions in Asheville, and those unions were front and center. Union members from the United Steel Workers, the Teamsters and the Communication Workers-America joined with local Green Party members, liberal Democrats and anarchists to stand against reactionary measures against workers' rights and public services.

MoveOn.Org organized the rally and titled the national gatherings as "Save the American Dream," which implies that U.S. workers should be entitled to a specific vision of a good life. "I am happy to see this level of national solidarity with our brothers and sisters who are working to achieve their own dreams, but I would be happier if it came without reference to national identity," said local radio show host Virginia Paris. "We all have hopes, and they often differ from traditional definitions of an 'American Dream,'" she said.

"It was heartening to see so many people come out to support organized laborers," said Joe Rinehart, an adjunct instructor at Appalachian State University and a worker-owner at Firestorm Café & Books in Asheville. "I would love to see this sort of enthusiasm here every day for real worker empowerment."

Dr. Errington Thompson opened with a history lesson about the importance of unions. He reminded us of the Marion Massacre of 1929, a textile strike in a town about 30 minutes east of Asheville, in which six men on strike were shot down by law enforcement.

Speakers also included City Councilman and outspoken atheist Cecil Bothwell, local union organizer Mark Case, and Vicki Meath, executive director of Just Economics, a local non-profit that attempts to address economic disparity through capitalist welfare. Unfortunately, Meath's suggestions for finding solutions to economic problems involved lifestyle changes like buying locally to support local bosses.

Some participants carried signs provided by the Teamsters that said "Stop the War on Workers!" Most brought their own, with reference to child labor laws, the 40-hour workweek and workplace discrimination. When the event was formally over, a group of anarchists sang old Wobbly tunes.

—Thad Eckard

Michigan support rally

Lansing, Mich.—It was a dreary, overcast, cold day at the Capitol building here on Feb. 26 when over 2,000 came from all over the state to show solidarity with workers in Wisconsin and elsewhere. Driving in from Detroit, one could pick out those heading for the rally by the bumper stickers on their cars.

The sound system was poor, and seeing the speakers was impossible as they were in a little depressed area; the only good thing about the weather was that it wasn't snowing or blowing. Yet the crowd stuck around, yelling responses to the speakers they could hear, booing at the mention of Republican union-busting efforts under Gov. Rick Snyder: "Recall Rick; No to the Nerd" and "We will not yield!"

The picket signs showed the defiant mood of the crowd. There was a little fellow sitting on his father's shoulders with a sign that said, "Educate me now or deal with me later"; others proclaimed: "Walk like an Egyptian"; "Here to form a more perfect union, not an oligarchy"; "Tax the Rich"; "Damned Right: It's Class Warfare" and many more.

People were grateful to the activists in Wisconsin and Cairo for inspiration. There is shock as people realize how much we lost last November and just how far the Republicans are itching to go.

But it was clearly not a crowd looking for total change. For example, when one speaker raised ecological concerns about building more power plants, a workingman in the crowd tried to shout her down, saying, "Power plants mean jobs." Many speakers and signs called for union protection for the middle class. Very few mentioned what Snyder's proposed budget will do to the poor. And while some spoke of working families, none mentioned the working class.

Nevertheless, it is a movement from hopelessness to defiance, from despair to action. Hopefully, it's a wake-up call for those who haven't yet noticed how seriously the Republican agenda threatens rights that we have long taken for granted.

—Judy Hutting

I love LA, not job cuts

Los Angeles—On Feb. 14, Valentine's Day, over 700 city workers gathered for one hour at City Hall under the theme "I love LA" to protest cuts in city services and layoffs, with more furloughs and deferred raises. A speaker said that the \$588 million giveback from deferred raises and furloughs is an attack on workers.

Workers carried picket signs with the names and acronyms of their respective departments. They included libraries, sanitation, public transportation, parks and recreation and housing. Workers responsible for child care, senior programs, gardeners/caretakers, animal shelters, water safety monitoring, city car and truck maintenance, sewer maintenance, airport airway maintenance, traffic operators all protested. Unions represented included SEIU and AFSCME.

A 911 operator said there are plans for an additional 15 to 25 furlough days for each shift: daytime, night and early morning. Many departments are already under some furlough days, which is equivalent to a pay cut in today's climate of rising prices.

A few days later, tens of thousands protested Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker's drive to take away public workers' rights to unions.

—Basho

NYC pro-union rallies

New York—There have been union rallies here and throughout the state every day to protest the union-busting legislation in Wisconsin, Indiana and Ohio as well as the anti-union budget proposals put forth by New York City Mayor Bloomberg and New York Governor Cuomo. These budget proposals would lead to renegotiating pensions, gutting seniority rights and layoffs of public sector workers. They would lead to closing schools, firehouses and hospitals, and cut funds to help low income people heat their homes and for schools for the deaf, blind and disabled.

Unions throughout the country are showing unprecedented militancy and solidarity, expressing a solid understanding of the class and even connecting the pro-democracy struggles in the Middle East and the anti-union austerity policies in Europe to what is happening in this country.

U.S. unions are challenging the big lie that the contracts that public sector workers have achieved over the years are the cause of the budget deficits. These budget deficits have been caused by the economic crisis brought on by the bursting of the Wall Street speculative bubble. This caused people to lose their jobs and homes, and reduced the tax revenues of cities and state.

No governor, Republican or Democrat, has pushed for even a moderately higher tax on millionaires. This, together with the restoration of the one penny stock transfer tax in New York would bring city and state budgets a surplus. These so-called budget crises are being used as an excuse to break the public sector unions, the largest power base of unions remaining in the U.S. The takeover of the State Capitol in Wisconsin is a hopeful harbinger of the defeat of the attack on the working class.

—Tom Siracuse

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Revolutions in Egypt, Tunisia, Libya shake the world order

continued from p. 1

and looked after the wounded during the battles; others were simply helping with distributing water. But there were a great number of women that were on the front line hurling stones at the police and pro-Mubarak thugs. Something changed in the dynamic between men and women in Tahrir. When the men saw that women were fighting in the front line, that changed their perception of us and we were all united. We were all Egyptians now. The general view of women changed for many. Not a single case of sexual harassment happened during the protests up until the last day when Mubarak stepped down. That is a big change for Egypt."

As one commentator described it, "The Caireans... have implicitly brought into focus the idea of the 'right to the city' as a collective project of social transformation. They were not stopped by fears about maintaining order, nor by the police and the state's paid murderers, nor by threats of a coup. Instead they organized a continuous occupation of a city's central square by tens, then hundreds of thousands, then millions of people, defending it, feeding it, nurturing it, articulating it, developing it, as their daily work."¹

As a young occupier declared, "You feel like this is the society you want to live in." Or as a 62-year-old engineer, said: "I will never vacate this square until the demands of the people are executed by the military leaders. We cannot have a half-revolution, we need a complete revolution."

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER?

As in Tunisia, the question remains: what happens next? The U.S., European and Middle eastern rulers would like to see the army in control of a "transition" to bourgeois democracy—a great step backwards. They want the initiative taken out of the hands of the masses, who have been so magnificent in rising to every challenge. It is only the deepening of that self-activity which can create the basis for workers' control of production, for breaking the law of value and establishing a new society where the division between mental and manual labor can be ended. With it, a real banner of freedom can encourage the rest of the world to break away from capitalism and its crises—as has already begun to happen.

A new struggle is underway in Egypt, as in Tunisia. On one side, it is a struggle by the masses to defend, extend and deepen the content of the revolution. On the other side, the rulers will try to cut it short, to remove the initiative from the masses and channel everything into "democracy building."

The despised emergency law will only be revoked, says the Army, when Tahrir Square is liberated from liberators. President Obama calls this scenario "a credible transition to democracy." It must be opposed, whether

promoted by outside forces, the Army, the Muslim Brotherhood, El-Baradei or some new party.

QADDAFI SERVES IMPERIALISM'S AIMS

Libya's 42-year ruler, Muammar Qaddafi, has added another level of complication. Situated between Tunisia and Egypt, with many of the same issues, it was inevitable that Libya would also explode. But Qaddafi, in his armed assault against that country's freedom movement, has done services for the world's rulers that Mubarak or Ben Ali did not do.

Only a ruler who spoke the language of revolution, without the substance, could confuse the issues enough that the old world of misery and oppression could regain a foothold within the moment. Qaddafi poses as an anti-imperialist, despite his friendships with ruling

class politicians from Blair to Berlusconi; he has failed to use Libya's oil wealth for the benefit of the people; he has aggressively promoted the "favorable investment climate" there, through his son Saif al-Islam; and he has denied basic human rights, while lamenting the ouster of that "good man" Ben Ali.

Yet a part of the Left, following Fidel Castro and Hugo Chávez, still buys Qaddafi's act, despite the fact that the only place his Green Book has ever taken root is among the international "Third Position" of neo-fascism.

By pulling the focus of discussion back to militarism, war and "humanitarian intervention," his actions help to pull the discussion away from revolutionary initiatives of the masses, and back down well-worn paths of counter-revolution. The U.S. rulers don't much care about the Libyan people, one way or the other—but they would love a long, dragged out war of words in which the ruling class postures and takes center stage, spotlight in red by the Libyan blood Qaddafi provides.

Despite having lost control of Eastern Libya, along with other strategic areas, Qaddafi for now maintains enough military resources to crush protest demonstrations in Tripoli—at the cost of hundreds killed—and to bomb rebel-held towns and cities. He is not shrinking from crimes against civilians. What has limited his ability, to a great extent, is the defection of a large part of the Libyan army to the rebels. Some pilots have also refused to bomb their fellow citizens.

Meanwhile Netanyahu, Ahmadinejad, the Saudi royals and the U.S. Fifth Fleet in Bahrain can breathe a sigh of relief that they are not the ones playing that role, yet.

BAHRAIN AND PALESTINE

The U.S. allies Israel and Bahrain, a monarchy close to Saudi Arabia, have made no secret of their fear of revolution.

The Gulf nation of Bahrain has seen demonstrations that included large percentages of its population. The majority Shi'a are ruled by the Sunni al-Khalifa monarchy, and Bahrain is the base to the U.S. Navy's Fifth Fleet. Protests that began with demands for reform escalated to calls for the end of the monarchy following a series of brutal attacks by security forces that left many dead and injured.

The monarchy has made some concessions, but demonstrations

continue. Many open questions remain, given even greater weight by the presence of the U.S. military and the movement's possible effect upon Saudi Arabia's restive Shi'a population.

The Israeli government made no secret of its support for Mubarak. It has depended on the existence of dictatorships both to serve as threats to justify its own crimes of occupation, and as deal-making partners—in this respect, President Netanyahu and Israel's Right would prefer Mubarak to his assassinated predecessor Sadat, and both to Nasser, leader of the 1952 Revolution. The sight of Arab revolutions fills them with horror.

In Palestine, the fear of genuine revolution was seen in the way demonstrations in support of the Egyptian movement were initially suppressed by both the Palestinian Authority and Hamas. But the same stirrings among youth, workers and women that have exploded elsewhere are also stirring among Palestinians. This was articulated most clearly in the recent Manifesto of Gaza Youth (see "Gaza youth shout out," Jan.-Feb. 2011 N&L).

The hypocrisy of the U.S. veto of a UN resolution condemning Israel's illegal (as even the U.S. government admits) West Bank settlements demonstrates once again the counter-revolutionary commitment of this country's rulers. It was the diplomatic corollary of those "Made in U.S.A." tear gas canisters that littered Egypt's streets.

REVOLUTION AND PHILOSOPHY

It is imperative to recognize in this great mass upsurge for freedom the living Subject that can transcend the old categories of thought. It is vital not to be pulled in by ideological spectacle, whether of a

false "revolutionary" like Qaddafi or the order-mongers of the bourgeoisie. This is what can make revolutionary philosophy a way forward, as uniting theory and reality.

The revolutions in the Middle East are the living movement of world history. For the moment they can even be considered its central pivot.

The question of the day is the one that has been

central to the development of Marxist-Humanism as a philosophy of revolution: What happens after the revolution? The "leaderlessness" of all these revolts makes clear that masses of people in motion are not seeking yet one more "leadership," whether generals, clerics or parties.

Specifically, women are seeking new kinds of relationships that go beyond the very concrete limitations set by Egypt's

history. Workers in Egypt and Tunisia are fighting for human dignity along with more concrete demands, and it has brought them together with youth who are seeking a place in a world with no future for them.

All these demands, and more, open vast historic vistas that call for profound changes in the structure of everyday life. They unfold before a backdrop of world capitalist crisis that resonates on multiple frequencies with connections between struggles.

We are back at the kind of radically questioning moment that Raya Dunayevskaya pointed to at the start of the modern era, when Karl Marx, in 1844, transformed G.W.F. Hegel's revolution in philosophy into a philosophy of revolution. Like today's revolutionaries in Tahrir Square, young Marx was looking beyond "factionalism"—which party ran the government—or merely political changes, toward the revolutionizing of life itself: creating new relations between men and women, nature and industry, human beings and our work. By 1850 Marx had defined this as "permanent revolution."²

Current events are bringing Marx's act of philosophic creation to vivid life.

Then as now, "The class challenge to the rulers, *from below*—the development of the class struggles that came into the open during the last year of Hegel's life and developed into full-fledged revolutions in Marx's time—marked the beginning of a totally new age and *therefore* also of philosophy: 'the nature of the fact and of cognition.'"³

WHERE TO NOW?

It is a very significant step that new Leftist parties—formerly illegal—are forming beside newly independent union federations. There will surely be independent Marxist thinkers, as arose from Iran's 1979 revolutionary experience.

Marxist-Humanists bring our own history to that dialogue. This includes the post-1968 development that Dunayevskaya described this way: "These were not just 'factional struggles' but *historic-philosophic* tendencies in a very new form that at one and the same time caught the historic link to Marx and had an original contribution to record. That theory was needed, that there could be no revolution without a philosophy of revolution, was shown by the fact that De Gaulle, without firing a single shot, succeeded in aborting the great 1968 revolt in France....The youth in revolt had not betrayed; they thought they were very original in rejecting 'factional struggles' and insisting, instead, on more and more activity. But they didn't achieve what they were after. So this time we had to find the link *from theory* and not only from practice."⁴

It is the masses making history that clarifies the role of revolutionary organization at such a moment. That role is nothing more or less than the comprehension of history as the human struggle for freedom and self-determination, in order to project the necessary conditions for a truly free human society—the many paths to reach that needed new society will not be easy to work out.⁵

—March 5, 2011

1. Nigel C. Gibson, "Egypt and the revolution in our minds," 2/17/2011 *Pambazuka News*, <http://pambazuka.org/en/category/features/70972>.
2. "While the democratic petty bourgeois wish to bring the revolution to a conclusion as quickly as possible, and with the achievement, at most, of the above demands, it is our interest and our task to make the revolution permanent... not the improvement of existing society but the foundation of a new one."—Karl Marx, "Address to the Communist League," March 1850.
3. Raya Dunayevskaya, *Philosophy and Revolution: From Hegel to Sartre and from Marx to Mao*, p. 45.
4. Raya Dunayevskaya, *Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution*, p.xxviii.
5. "That which Hegel judged to be the synthesis of the 'Self-Thinking Idea' and the 'Self-Bringing-Forth of Liberty,' Marxist-Humanism holds, is what Marx had called the new society. The many paths to get there are not easy to work out." (*Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution*, p.xxxviii.)



Celebration on Feb. 11 in Tahrir Square in Cairo, Egypt, after President Hosni Mubarak was toppled.



Free Libya demonstration in San Francisco, Feb. 26.

1. Nigel C. Gibson, "Egypt and the revolution in our minds," 2/17/2011 *Pambazuka News*, <http://pambazuka.org/en/category/features/70972>.

University sells out campus radio

San Francisco—In a sudden, secretive move, which may be a sign of worse to come for student and community radio stations, the Jesuit-run University of San Francisco (USF) shut down KUSF 90.3 FM, the 34-year-old student station. On Jan. 18 when the students were on break, the popular DJ Schmeejay was finishing his show when he noticed that no sound was going out over the airwaves. Shortly, he and others present at the time were confronted by security guards who ordered them to leave and then padlocked the station. The website was also shut down. University President Stephen Privett had been negotiating for many weeks, hiding behind a non-disclosure agreement, to sell the station to (the once-respected) KDFC for \$3.75 million.

There was a whole series of shady money deals behind the scene. Entercom, which owned KDFC, sold it to the University of Southern California (USC), who then bought the 90.3 FM frequency from USF. The deal was handled by Public Radio Capital, an organization which has non-profit status but operates as a commercial enterprise. Even the Media Studies faculty, partly in whose name it was done, were not informed and they joined the protest immediately!

The next day, hundreds of students, community volunteers, faculty, and USF alumni flooded the Presentation Theater on campus and confronted Privett, demanding the return of the station and full disclosure. They accused him of betraying his Jesuit ideals.

Privett claimed that the station might benefit the community but was of little benefit to students, which student protesters answered, "You don't speak for us!" "We're all part of the community!" and "What happened to the 'Core Values' which you have been preaching?!" Privett's claim that KUSF would continue as an online station turned out to be an outright lie.

Many of the station's assets were donated by non-student community members, including much of the music collection, which the university appropriated. Everyone knows that it was just quick money.

Demonstrations to save the station are ongoing, and the San Francisco Board of Supervisors has condemned the sale (but it does not have the force of law). A

Ex-Gay 'therapy' lies

Memphis, Tenn.—On Feb. 21, Wayne Besen, executive director of Truth Wins Out (TWO), gave a multimedia lecture at Rhodes College here. Besen, author of *Anything But Straight: Unmasking the Scandals and Lies Behind the Ex-Gay Myth*, founded the organization in 2006 to alert the public to the fact that so-called "ex-Gay therapies," purporting to turn LGBT people straight, do not work and in fact do great harm.

Religious right counselors practice these "therapies" in individual sessions, in "ex-Gay" group homes and day camps. However, there are no licensed therapists, and their notions of what is supposed to make people Gay and what is supposed to "cure" them are not accepted by any major medical associations (who also all agree that this "therapy" is psychologically harmful). The "therapies" are made up to support the ideology that Gays should become heterosexual. The real motive of this movement, Besen says, is to create a homophobic climate so that anti-LGBT legislation can be passed. Leaders of the movement support sodomy laws and the federal marriage amendment; they oppose hate crime laws, legal protections against job discrimination, LGBT adoption, and programs to stop school bullying.

Three other speakers told of their experiences with these programs. One man said that the major "ex-Gay" group, Exodus International, had targeted him for "homosexuality prevention therapy" at the age of 10 because his behavior did not seem "gender appropriate." At 19, he voluntarily went to an Exodus counselor who practiced "touch therapy" in which the counselor holds and touches the client and he sexually harassed him in other ways. Like many in these programs, the speaker stated that he struggled with self-hatred because he was told that being Gay would lead to unhappiness and drug addiction.

A married Gay male couple, who had met while seeking counseling from the Memphis "ex-Gay" group Love in Action (LIA), described the cult-like rules at its group home: at group sessions, clients take turns describing their sexual histories and thoughts in front of the group and then make these same statements to their parents. They said after they left the program, former staff members of LIA contacted them to apologize.

Besen stated there are dangerous new directions in the "ex-Gay" movement. Its goal for 2011 is to target children as young as three years old. The movement is having more success in other countries, including Uganda, which is considering instituting the death penalty for homosexuality.

Besen's group, TWO, is looking for people to testify against "ex-Gay" programs in court and he is optimistic about defeating this movement. He said, "we are winning" because society is becoming more accepting of LGBT people and more are coming out.

—LGBT supporter

petition is under way to block FCC approval of the sale, although this is a long shot. In one local newspaper an iconic photograph appeared, a parody of the Christ the Redeemer statue with arms outstretched offering comfort. In the photo Privett's arms are thrown up in an expression of moral surrender, of "What the hell?!" He risks being remembered in that way. Everything he did was legal, but it was unethical and anti-social.

The protests have become an ongoing movement which is spreading nationwide. It is for public access to the airwaves, freedom of expression for minority views, community and student cooperation, and for openness in public decisions. Students and community radio stations from all over the nation have joined in solidarity with KUSF, including KALX Berkeley and WFMU Jersey City. The airwaves, like the air we breathe, the water around us, and the planet we stand on, belong to all of us. To help out, contact www.savekusf.org. Stay tuned!

—USF Students, Faculty, Alumni, and Community Members

Stop housing cuts!

Chicago—Faced with the prospect of budget cuts throwing thousands of people out on the streets or forcing them into institutions, 300 people packed into the Chicago Temple on Feb. 25 for a teach-in called "Stop the HUD Budget Cuts!" As Liz Brake of the Jane Adams Senior Caucus said, "They pick on the old, the



poor, the disabled because they think we won't fight back. They're wrong!"

Called together by the Chicago Housing Initiative—composed of several public housing residents' organizations, tenants' and neighborhood groups, and housing advocacy groups—along with Access Living and the Chicago Anti-Eviction Campaign, we heard a number of speakers outline the severe impact of the proposed budget cuts. The Republicans under Speaker John Boehner came under the heaviest fire but one speaker reminded everyone that the Democrats are pushing cuts in housing too.

This was not a crowd that would fall for the "everyone has to sacrifice" mantra. We knew that the poor are getting budget cuts and the rich are getting tax cuts. Cuts in low-income housing programs equal the cost of tax deductions for vacation home mortgages. Heating and cooling grants to poor families equal tax breaks for oil companies. And so on.

Cuts are even proposed for funds for helping people with disabilities live independently instead of in nursing homes. The House Republicans, President Obama and Illinois Governor Pat Quinn (a Democrat) all want to cut these funds, even though it costs Medicaid \$45,000 to keep someone in a nursing home and less than one-third that amount to allow an individual to live independently. This giveaway to nursing homes has nothing to do with balancing the budget.

When the Chicago Housing Authority opened up its waiting list for public housing, over 210,000 families applied in three weeks. This is for a waiting list with 40,000 spaces and no promise even to get screened for eligibility in less than seven years!

After the teach-in, we marched to the state office building. In the midst of the rally, about 30 people suddenly surged into Clark Street, blockading traffic. They held signs reading, "Future Resident of Speaker Boehner Tent City." Beside them were large cardboard boxes marked, "Tea Party Housing Development." Police arrested 11 of them. They refused to arrest the four people in wheelchairs—it looks bad on TV when people are grabbed out of wheelchairs and thrown into paddywagons. Traffic was stopped for well over 15 minutes. Meanwhile, 300 protesters chanted with the blockaders, "Housing is a human right—we won't go without a fight!" and "Not on the backs of the poor!"

—Anti-Eviction Campaigner

FBI hounds Memphians

Memphis, Tenn.—In response to the roundups of Colombia and Palestine solidarity activists across the Midwest by the FBI, members of the Mid-South Peace and Justice Center (MSP&JC) and the Socialist Party organized a street demonstration last year in front of the Federal Building condemning the Neo-McCarthyite surveillance of peace activists. We waved at passing cars and held signs, "Stop FBI roundups." Local authorities did not harass or intervene in our gathering of 20-25.

Months later, on Jan. 25, three FBI agents gained access to the security-code-locked First Congregational Church where many activists' offices are located, and wandered into a busy office. They notified the staff that anti-war activists were planning a demonstration outside the building that day. "I paused and tried not to laugh," said Brad Watkins of the MSP&JC, "when I said, 'Uh...yes sir. These are the offices of the Mid-South Peace and Justice Center.'" Staff further informed the agents that, as written in the press release, this is not a demonstration but simply a meeting.

That meeting of 20 people apparently needed several hours of TACT—a Memphis police department unit similar to SWAT—surveillance, and a lengthy series of absurd explanations from the Memphis Police Department (MPD) regarding its unwelcome presence.

I believe that these two incidents are part of a larger series of well-organized coincidences that day, including a home visit by the MPD and a warrantless, gun-brandishing home invasion by the Shelby County Sheriff's Department. The meeting at the MSP&JC was to file freedom of information requests. Those who called it are the same individuals who organized the demonstration at the Federal Building condemning the FBI raids. The home invasion occurred at the residence of a member of this group. And, yes, the other home visit occurred at the residence of people who were at the same demonstration.

Public outrage over this absurdity prompted a much more poorly organized series of absurd official responses. Ernest Greenleaf of TACT said at the time, "We're just here to make sure nobody bothers y'all." MPD spokesperson Larry Godwin stated the presence was in response to a complaint by a "concerned citizen." He said the prolonged presence of six TACT vehicles was just a mistake, that they were just killing time or hanging out. Days later, Mayor A.C. Wharton, caught with his pants down in the face of rogue actions by law enforcement, apologized and claimed the FBI/police visits were a response to threats from the "sovereign citizen" movement. Wharton is apparently unaware that filing FBI complaints is the last thing that would piss off the anti-government sovereign citizen movement.

I have called the local FBI offices a number of times and have yet to get a return call. The day after my first call, however, a car drove down my block a number of times, slowing down each time he passed my house; he pulled over in front of my house twice. Twice he drove off the moment I stepped outside and approached the car. I wanted to ask him a question—why bother these folks? But the only answer I'll get I already have—the most well-organized series of coincidences I have ever seen.

—Ceylon Mooney

QUEERNOTES

by Elise

Transphobia is alive and well. Transgender woman Chrissie Bates was found stabbed to death Jan. 10 in her apartment in Minneapolis, Minn. She's identified as Christopher P. Bates by the police investigating the crime. A vigil was held for her Jan. 21 by Queer rights group OutFront Minnesota. **And, in Honduras, officials are being called upon to simply investigate the recent murders of six Transgender women.**

* * *

Zuna Institute's "Black Lesbians Matter" is a 2010 study of African-American Lesbians, Bisexual and Transgender women. This population is little known, very vulnerable and much in need of advocacy for financial security, access to education and healthcare, and marriage equality. Zuna, formed in 1999, is the first group to conduct a study for African-American Queer women. For more information, visit their site at zunainstitute.org.

* * *

Friends of murdered Ugandan Queer rights activist David Kato interrupted anti-Gay slurs by the church official presiding over his funeral and fought off attacks by other homophobes, then carried Kato's casket to the cemetery. Kato advocated for Sexual Minorities Uganda and spoke prominently against Uganda's Anti-Homosexuality legislation that would imprison and even execute people for being Queer. Meanwhile, Kato's U.S. allies marched in New York City and San Francisco carrying signs saying, "Demand Justice for David Kato!" Uganda is attempting to frame Nsubuga Enock, whom Kato once bailed out of prison, for his murder.

WORLD VIEW

by Gerry Emmett

Violence attributed to rival drug cartels has again fallen heavily on the border areas around Ciudad Juárez, Mexico. In one weekend in February, 53 people died in the city of only 1.5 million. Since 2008, over



Susana Chávez Castillo

7,600 have died, with 3,112 murdered last year alone. Beyond the cartels, there is suspicion that businesses intend to profit from driving people from prime real estate around the city.

Ciudad Juárez's violence has fallen heavily upon women. Over 400 have been murdered in the last decade, with another 400 disappeared.

Recent threats and attacks have targeted activists, including those who have fought the femicide. Human Rights Watch has called for investigations into these incidents, which include:

- Threats to labor advocate Cipriana Jurado.
- Threats to Irma Monreal and Paula Flores, activist mothers of murdered teenage girls, who were driven from Juárez.
- A suspicious fire at the home of María Luisa García Andrade, a leader of *Nuestras Hijas de Regreso a Casa* (May our Daughters Return Home). She became an activist when her sister was raped and murdered.
- Marisela Reyes Salazar was leading a hunger strike, and three of her politically active relatives disappeared on Feb. 7. Another relative, Sara Salazar, had her home burned down shortly after. Two other relatives, Josefina Reyes and Rubén Reyes, were murdered.

Greek youth continue the struggle

Once again demonstrators took to the street in Athens—the first general strike of the year—against the austerity drive of the Greek "socialist" government. Creditors granted loans of \$150 billion to Greece last year, but the terms included cutting pensions and changing the tax system. February's protests were organized by two main labor unions. But it was Athens youth who refused to confine their protest to marching, and armed themselves with stones and firebombs confronting police who answered with tear gas. Schools, hospitals and government offices were closed for the demonstrations. Class warfare, launched by the bourgeoisie against the European working class and poor, continues.

Greece, which has experienced the deepest cuts, is the one country that continues in an almost permanent resistance. Will they remain alone, or will other workers and youth join them?

—E.W.

Murder in Juárez

• Marisela Escobedo Ortiz was shot to death in December outside the governor's palace in Chihuahua, while seeking justice following her daughter's slaying.

In a grim symbol of sheer horror, one of the victims was the respected poet and women's rights activist Susana Chávez Castillo, who coined the slogan, "*Ni una más*," "Not one more!" She was raped and murdered in January. Her left hand was cut off. In one of her last poems, Susana Chávez had written of: "*Sangre clara y definida*," blood of clarity and definition—and in a terrible way, her death does clarify and define the inhumanity that needs to be totally uprooted and destroyed.

Authorities treated her death the way they often do, saying that she was drunk and fell among bad company—the same pattern of blaming the victim that is a common answer to the families of women killed.

The difficulty in appealing to the legal authorities was also illustrated by the role of a recently killed prominent cartel gunman, Luis Humberto Peralta Hernández, "the Condor." He was reputed to be responsible for over 100 murders, and his cartel is blamed for most of the killing in Ciudad Juárez. He had also been a member of the Chihuahua state prosecutors' office.

Racist convicted

Racist Shawna Forde was convicted of first degree murder in Pima County, Ariz., Feb. 14. The coordinator of the Minuteman American Defense (MAD) border patrols and her two colleagues—Jason Eugene "Gunny" Bush and Albert Gaxiola—shot and killed Robert Flores, 29, and his 9-year-old daughter Brisenia in May 2009 in Arivaca. Bush had ties to the racist Aryan Nations. Gina Gonzalez, wife and mother, was also shot but survived to identify the killers.

Forde was planning to fund her underground militia through robberies of drug cartels and recruit members from the Aryan Nation. She was close to others in the "border patrol" milieu, like Minuteman co-founder Jim Gilchrist and white supremacist Glenn Spencer of the American Border Patrol.

No to 'bunga-bunga'!

Hundreds of thousands of Italian women took to the streets Feb. 13 to protest President Silvio Berlusconi's sexist and absurd political culture of "bunga bunga." Demonstrations, mostly of women, calling for his resignation were held in 280 Italian cities.

Berlusconi will have to stand trial beginning April 6 for having sex with an underage partner and abuse of power. He is alleged to have paid a 17-year-old Moroccan girl for sex, and to have intervened when she was charged with theft by telling police she was the niece of Hosni Mubarak. He claimed that her prosecution would cause a diplomatic incident, but was actually worried that his relationship to her would be revealed.

The revelation did come, following a lengthy series of leaks detailing Berlusconi's parties with strippers and pole dancers, paid in cash and jewelry by the President and his wealthy guests. This reflects the culture media magnate Berlusconi has long promoted in Italy—reducing women to commodities along with all the rest of life. Sexism is a pillar of his reactionary politics.

It is appropriate that Berlusconi, the super-rich friend of dictators like Mubarak and Qaddafi, seems to be falling into disgrace at the same time as they have been falling from power. If convicted, he could face three years on the underage prostitution charge, and up to 12 years for abuse of power.

Whither Bolivia?

It took five days of protests, but the social movements, which brought Evo Morales to power in 2006 forced his government to back off of a huge increase in the price of gasoline at the end of 2010. In El Alto, government offices were broken into and striking bus drivers stridently enforced their stop-work action against any drivers who sought to pick up passengers. In the countryside, coca growers blockaded a main highway.

After a series of meetings with leaders from the social movements and unions, Morales announced the cancellation of increases, saying he would "continue to govern by obeying the people." The confrontation has exposed the challenges for the social movements in face of a Left government, which proclaims its desire for building socialism, but whose practices are not necessarily independent of neo-liberalism.

Oscar Olivera, a crucial leader of the Cochabamba "Water War" in 2000—a key thread in Bolivia's revolutionary transformation—commented on the difficulties of the present moment:

"People could not understand that a government that claims to follow the demands of the people, that said it would always take actions in consultation with the public, had made decisions against them, which they now say had been studied with experts for seven months. The problem is that the measure resulted in an increase in the price of consumer goods such as milk, transport, bread, materials for construction, housing....

"In a very organized but independent way the people took to the streets to oppose this measure. But they didn't just protest in the places with a tradition of popular rebellion such as the mining areas of Oruro and Potosi, it was all over the country. Even in Chapare, an Evo stronghold, villagers blocked roads. . . What this government has done is to weaken and fragment the social fabric that was built up in a very industrious, steady and dignified way since 2000....

"The government talks about the anti-racist law, but authoritarianism is evident, it is arrogant and it despises those who are not subordinate to MAS [Movement for Socialism, the government's political party]....

"This situation has led to a period of reflection, discussion and a mobilization of the grass roots, and the people are becoming more informed. They have relied too much on the government, which has a lot of credibility. Some people believe that this government can be saved, that it will improve things. I hope that the government has the ability, generosity and humility to listen to the people, and recover this process, which is not owned by Evo or MAS, but rightfully belongs to the Bolivian people." [Interview, Latin American Solidarity Center <http://www.lasc.ie/content/oscar-olivera-takes-stock-gasolinazo-bolivia-new-ways-doing-politics-and-economics-have-be-0>]

—Eugene Walker

Famine in North Korea

North Korea is approaching another famine with reports of 50% to 80% of the barley and wheat harvest wiped out by cold weather. Malnutrition has increased.

Part of the problem is the cut-off of food aid by South Korea and the U.S. over the recent military escalation. This hasn't cut supplies to the military, which always has priority in North Korea, but has brutally affected the civilian population.

The U.S. claims it wants to keep aid from going to the military, but the cut off has led to reports of people reduced to eating dirt. It is yet another excuse for military posturing by Kim Jong-Il. As with the threat of nuclear war on the peninsula, the U.S. government has no answer for the sufferings of North Koreans.

NEWS AND LETTERS COMMITTEES

Who We Are And What We Stand For

News and Letters Committees is an organization of Marxist-Humanists that since its birth has stood for the abolition of capitalism, both in its private property form as in the U.S., and its state property form, as it has historically appeared in state-capitalist regimes calling themselves Communist as in Russia and China. We stand for the development of new human relations, what Marx first called a new Humanism.

News & Letters was founded in 1955, the year of the Detroit wildcat strikes against Automation and the Montgomery Bus Boycott against segregation—activities which signaled a new movement from practice that was itself a form of theory. *News & Letters* was created so that the voices of revolt from below could be heard unseparated from the articulation of a philosophy of liberation.

Raya Dunayevskaya (1910–1987), founder of the body of ideas of Marxist-Humanism, became Chairwoman of the

National Editorial Board and National Chairwoman of the Committees from its founding to 1987. Charles Denby (1907–83), a Black production worker, author of *Indignant Heart: A Black Worker's Journal*, became editor of the paper from 1955 to 1983. Dunayevskaya's works, *Marxism and Freedom, from 1776 until Today* (1958), *Philosophy and Revolution: From Hegel to Sartre and from Marx to Mao* (1973), and *Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution* (1982) spell out the philosophic ground of Marx's Humanism internationally, as *American Civilization on Trial* concretizes it on the American scene and shows the two-way road between the U.S. and Africa.

This body of ideas challenges all those desiring freedom to transcend the limitations of post-Marx Marxism, beginning with Engels. In light of the crises of our nuclearly armed world, it becomes imperative not only to reject what is, but

to reveal and further develop the revolutionary Humanist future inherent in the present. The new visions of the future which Dunayevskaya left us in her work from the 1940s to the 1980s are rooted in her discovery of Marx's Marxism in its original form as a new Humanism and in her re-creation of that philosophy for our age as Marxist-Humanism. This is recorded in the documents on microfilm and open to all under the title *The Raya Dunayevskaya Collection—Marxist-Humanism: A Half-Century of Its World Development*.

Dunayevskaya's philosophic comprehension of her creation and development of Marxist-Humanism, especially as expressed in her 1980s writings, presents the vantage point for re-creating her ideas anew. Seeking to grasp that vantage point for ourselves and make it available to all who struggle for freedom, we have published Dunayevskaya's original 1953 philosophic breakthrough

and her final 1987 Presentation on the Dialectics of Organization and Philosophy in *The Philosophic Moment of Marxist-Humanism* (1989), and donated new supplementary volumes to the *Raya Dunayevskaya Collection*. News and Letters Committees aims at developing and concretizing this body of ideas for our time.

In opposing this capitalistic, racist, sexist, heterosexist, class-ridden society, we have organized ourselves into a committee form of organization rather than any elitist party "to lead." We participate in all class and freedom struggles, nationally and internationally. As our *Constitution* states: "It is our aim...to promote the firmest unity among workers, Blacks and other minorities, women, youth and those intellectuals who have broken with the ruling bureaucracy of both capital and labor." We do not separate mass activities from the activity of thinking. Send for a copy of the *Constitution* of News and Letters Committees.