

NEWS & LETTERS

THEORY / PRACTICE

"Human power is its own end"—Karl Marx

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WORKSHOPTALKS

Some cuts don't heal

by Htun Lin

As Congress's latest self-imposed sequestration crisis makes clear, not all cuts are the same. A campaign slogan of California Nurses' Association (CNA) goes: "Some Cuts Don't Heal."

The looming full launch date of Obamacare in 2014 has the HMO industry imposing cuts, patient care be damned, in a race to the bottom to reduce costs, while competing for new subscribers offered by the Affordable Care Act. Where I work at Kaiser, the HMO carries out its massive cuts with the collaboration of their major union, the Service Employees International (SEIU).

Another union, the National Union of Healthcare Workers (NUHW), supported by the CNA, is now challenging SEIU in an election. NUHW correctly exposes SEIU lies and betrayals, such as secret deals with management to give back hard-earned benefits. But the contest appears to many in the shop to be no more than a competition over who gets our dues.

HMOs like Kaiser (with the help of company unions like SEIU) are distorting Obamacare's cost-cutting language, meant to rein in Medicare fraud and overcharges, to their own ends. They are using this opportunity to cut labor costs and patient care expenditures, while still gouging the privately health-insured and government programs like Medicare.

Steven Brill's Feb. 20 *Time* cover story, "Bitter Pill: Why Medical Bills Are Killing Us," is getting a lot of

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EDITORIAL State of the U.S. wars

The opening of Barack Obama's second term made it clear that, despite all talk of ending the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, there is to be no end to the state of permanent war either abroad or at home.

President Obama promises to end the war in Afghanistan after 13 years. But the Afghan people have every right to fear a repeat of what happened after Russia's withdrawal in the early 1990s: no end to war, but an internecine struggle for power among multiple warlords, including the Taliban; and continued exploitation and violence directed at women, youth, workers, and national minorities.

Iraq, where Obama officially declared the war over in 2011, is still suffering from the sectarian and ethnic violence stimulated by the U.S. invasion and occupation. Iraq's chaos and violence provides an example of the kind of "peace and stability" that imperialism could live with in Afghanistan and Syria, rather than self-determination of the masses.

The administration long ago made clear that it would use the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Iraq and Afghanistan, not to reduce the size of the military, but to "pivot" to East Asia, pressuring China. Marines have been deployed in Australia, and 60% of U.S. warships are to be deployed in the Pacific by 2020, further militarizing an already tense region.

China has been increasingly forceful in territorial disputes with several other Asian nations over resource-rich uninhabited islands. Last year its warships confronted warships from both The Philippines and Japan. The latter even scrambled fighter jets. North Korea's resumed nuclear weapons testing added fuel to

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From India to Egypt to U.S., women fighting for freedom

by Terry Moon

Two recent events have shown the deep and seemingly intractable worldwide oppression of women and, at the same time, revealed women's militancy and determination to change their oppressive reality. First was the vicious gang rape and murder of Jyoti Singh Pandey at the end of the year on a Delhi, India, bus. This was followed by mob sexual attacks on 25 women in Tahrir Square, Cairo, Egypt, on Jan. 25 at the demonstrations and protests marking the second anniversary of the uprising that overthrew President Hosni Mubarak.

It is not only that these were savage attacks on women in public spaces, it is that they brought to the surface the simmering decades-long anger of women whose lives have been circumscribed—and many destroyed—by male violence. This is a violence that is savagely brutal and unforgiving—one that ranges from disfiguring and blinding acid attacks to 300 men mobbing a woman in Tahrir Square and attacking her so savagely that she had to have a hysterectomy. It is a violence that has nothing to do with desire and everything to do with power.

INDIAN WOMEN'S RADICAL DEMANDS

That women's simmering anger has now boiled over into rage and a determination to transform these inhuman relationships was seen clearly in three recent events. First were the huge and sustained demonstrations in India, where thousands of women and men poured into the streets for weeks on end demanding deep changes not only in the laws, but in society and actual human relationships (see "Rape protests in India," Jan.-Feb. 2013 *News & Letters*).

Tellingly, the reaction by the state and others has been to confine women even more. Curfews for

students in many campus dorms have now been made earlier and college women must get permission to go out with friends and provide details of the friends they are going out with. An Indian state ordered women to stop working after 6:00 PM, while another ordered girls to wear overcoats. One of the routinely oppressive and sexist all-male informal village councils, this one in Haryana, suggested that girls be married off sooner and not be allowed to use cell phones.



"The Circle of Hell." The final result. A graffiti painting by Mira and Zeff addressing the sexual harassment at Tahrir Square, Cairo, Egypt.

The reason of Indian women is evident in their critique of the government's response to its hastily called JS Verma Committee's report that recommended changes to India's anti-rape laws. While Indian women's liberation groups were pleased that the new laws would criminalize voyeurism, stalking, disrobing women and acid attacks, they vigorously oppose the death penalty as punishment for rape where the woman dies or is seriously injured. Introducing the death penalty is rightly seen as a retrogressive move.

Furthermore, the government's own commission proposed recognizing marital rape and holding commanding officers accountable for rapes by their subordinates in the armed forces. These recommendations

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Chicagoans rally: Forward on Climate

Chicago—"Hey! Obama! We don't want your climate drama!" we chanted at the Forward on Climate rally here on Feb. 17. There were at least 20 rallies that day, with 40,000 people in Washington, D.C. Most of the 400 here were college students brought out by Chicago Youth Climate Coalition (CYCC).

Foremost was stopping the Keystone XL pipeline. If approved by President Obama, it would carry tar sands oil from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico, greatly adding to the amount of carbon emitted into the atmosphere. Speakers also warned of the dangers of fracking for natural gas, and told of campaigns by students at several Chicago colleges to make their schools divest from oil, coal and gas companies.

These rallies were preceded by civil disobedience on Feb. 13, when 48 people were arrested for handcuffing themselves to the White House fence.

NO! TO TAR SANDS MINING

A key demand was for Obama to deny a permit to the tar sands pipeline. Many protesters were disturbed by the ambivalence of Obama's State of the Union address, noted for his ringing words:

"For the sake of our children and our future, we must do more to combat climate change....We can choose to believe in the overwhelming judgment of science—and act before it's too late."

But not only did his specific proposals amount to far less than what is needed to steer the world away from catastrophic warming, he even boasted in the same speech about increasing fossil fuel production, which drives climate change. He promised, "My administration will keep cutting red tape and speeding up new oil and gas permits." And of course he advocated a "market-based solution," as if capitalism is not a funda-

mental part of the problem.

—Franklin Dmitryev

RALLY PARTICIPANTS SPEAK

I was really disappointed in Obama's remarks about fracking, which we pretend is "natural" gas. I'm a member of CYCC, a coalition of students from around the city. I'm a student at Roosevelt University. At RU we have an organization called Rise, based on building student activist networks. Climate change is connected to economic rights issues, immigration rights issues, anti-poverty issues. Our main goal is to mobilize youth because we really only have a few more years to take serious climate action.

—Dylan

Today we fight for the ultimate goal for rights to clean air, water, and existence. Pilsen Environmental Rights and Reform Organization fought for over ten years on a campaign to close the Fisk coal-fired power plant. With lots of grassroots organizations and widespread partnerships, we won. This is a huge victory. But the two coal plants of Illinois are only representative of the environmental devastation we see all over the world. We can change the world for the better.

—Megan

I'm a member of Rise and CYCC. If Obama is truly going to address climate change, he cannot rely on fracking. I come from a low-income background. Much of environmental pollution and climate change effects are in low-income, minority-based communities. Those are people who don't necessarily have a voice.

—Gianna

After reading articles about climate change, I was moved to get active. I didn't know anything about the

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WOMAN AS REASON Left still can't fathom Women's Liberation

by Terry Moon

Women's struggle for freedom has continued to develop into a worldwide movement with revolutionary content (see page 1). Unfortunately, much of the Left seems unable to hear this radical dimension of women's struggles. A recent example is Sharon Smith's essay, "Marxism, feminism and women's liberation" (<http://links.org.au/node/3210>). Smith, a member of the International Socialist Organization (ISO) (USA), has to *at last* and at least give lip service to an undeniable fact: women's liberation has changed the world.

YET ANOTHER POST-MARX MARXIST

Rather than giving us anything new, however, Smith just walks the worn path of post-Marx Marxism: treating Marx and Engels as practically the same person; praising Engels's *Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* over anything Marx wrote; reducing Marx's concept of reproduction to bearing children; reducing women's oppression to working-class women's oppression within the working-class family.

She writes as if "understanding the role of the family" takes centuries of struggle, and when we master that we will understand "women's second-class citizenship in society."

Then there is Smith's ludicrous fabrication that "this crude approach" of "reductionism" "does not describe the IS (International Socialist) tradition, which certainly since the 1960s women's liberation movement

has taken women's liberation seriously as central to the struggle for socialism." To refresh her memory: in the mid-1960s the sexism in the Left was so extreme—including in "the IS tradition"—that women started leaving the Left in droves, breaking up groups and flooding into, or starting their own, women's groups.

Women in the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) were ordered to join women's liberation groups to take them over. They did not identify themselves as SWP-ers. When I confronted them—they weren't that hard to figure out—they accused me of "redbaiting" because I demanded that they be as open about their politics as I was about mine. From the 1960s to today, most of the Left has tried to belittle, destroy, take over and divert the Women's Liberation Movement.

Smith gives us nothing *but* reductionism, like asserting that all of women's oppression "starts with the family." There is nothing new here. Poor Lenin is trotted out so that Smith can put women's oppression where she thinks it belongs. Despite acknowledging the transformative effect of the Women's Liberation Movement, Smith's theoretical approach confines the women's movement's significance to being one of the "specific forms of oppression to maintain the system" of capitalism. Ah, finally the reason for women's oppression—rape, acid attacks, anti-abortion fanatics, female infanticide—it's all to prop up capitalism.

Smith never gets to the inadequacy of the principle that compelled her tendency's accommodation to "reductionism." She doesn't get to it because, like post-Marx Marxism in general, her attempt to assimilate Women's Liberation doesn't involve any real rethinking of the "IS tradition's" theoretical bases.

'I.S. TRADITION' IS VANGUARD PARTYISM

She is still practicing and preaching that accommodation: the elitism and vanguard partyism that led her tendency to a decades-long opportunistic relationship to women in struggle and deafness of the SWP and ISO to the revolutionary dimension of the women's liberation movement from the mid-1960s onward.

To Smith it is the so-called "revolutionary party" that has the theory and will lead the masses. In her article's summation she reduces Marxist feminist theory and practice to the party: "That practice must involve the building of a revolutionary party, because without a revolutionary socialist party, there can be no successful socialist revolution."

Tellingly, except in the most general terms, Smith's essay does not take up what women are doing and saying today or in the last 50 years. She quotes a few women theorists to make her points, but nothing from actual women fighting for their freedom, or even fighting for better human relationships in that "working-class family."

Raya Dunayevskaya, the founder of Marxist-Humanism, had a different view. She was opposed "to [the] attempt to reduce Women's Liberation to 'an organizing idea'..." To her, "Social revolution does come first, *provided* [Dunayevskaya's emphasis] it is not—indeed revolution cannot be—without Women's Liberation or behind women's backs, or by using them only as help-mates....It is precisely because," she wrote, "Women's Liberationists are both revolutionary force *and* Reason that they are crucial. If we are to achieve success in the

new revolutions, we have to see that the uprooting of the old is total from the start."

It is that total uprooting that women are reaching for from the streets of New Delhi to the squares in Egypt and Tunisia, including women in the U.S. demanding reproductive justice. Will the Left help, or see us only as fodder for their vanguard parties? It is high time the movement from practice was comprehended as itself a form of theory. It is our task to meet that movement from practice with a total philosophy of revolution.

Iranian girls learn bodies not sinful

In Iran, after the Islamic Revolution the whole issue of sexual health education was forgotten. Years later, a law made it compulsory for all marrying couples to attend a one-hour session at a local clinic on family planning and genetic diseases, including thalassemia—a serious inherited blood disorder.

We hypothesized that offering sexual health education to some of the most deprived girls in Tehran would result in the girls having more positive feelings about themselves and engaging in less risky sexual behavior. We initiated a program to try to do just that.

The girls, between 10 and 18, are often illiterate or uneducated, from poor backgrounds. Most are run-aways, the others are criminals. None have ever had sexual health education, and their knowledge about themselves is only what they learned from their peers and tradition or religion.

We start by explaining the anatomy of the reproductive system, adolescence, sexual health, and sexually transmitted diseases. The girls are encouraged to talk, and they jump at the opportunity. This education offers an alternative to the more mainstream traditional and religious teachings that say women and their biological changing are the root of sin.

I have seen more than 700 girls, most of whom are on the run from home, start viewing puberty and its symptoms as natural, as opposed to a sin, defect or crisis. They love and respect their bodies and consequently their "selves" more. With that disappears hatred and the wish for revenge. They stop blaming their family and stop developing more behavioral disorders, which would lead to a vicious circle in the end.

Ideally, we would also educate them about sexual and emotional health in relationships, to have natural and safe sex, and turn into healthier adults. I would like to examine whether it will make the girls less prone to sexual abuse if they know and love their bodies, have higher self-confidence, learn how to say NO, and believe that their bodies belong to themselves, not to others to hurt.

—Iranian social worker

Fight to test rape kits

Detroit—Four years after discovering 11,303 untested rape kits in a Detroit Police Department warehouse, Wayne County Prosecutor Kym Worthy's appearance on NBC's "Rock Center" gained national attention for her efforts to bring justice to victims of rape. Worthy obtained a million dollars in federal money to test the kits. Of the 600 tested so far, 21 serial rapists have been found. Worthy and her staff have devoted countless volunteer hours to identify and prosecute the perpetrators.

Reaction from women nationwide has been fast and furious. Anne Breslaw wrote on jezebel.com, "While his DNA sat on the shelf from 2002 to 2008, untested, one convict, Shelly Brooks, raped and murdered five women. (Writing that actually made me nauseous.) The idea of these sexual assault victims undergoing the invasive rape kit procedure so quickly after their trauma, only to result in bureaucratic red tape and slow-moving forensic work rendering their bravery futile, is no less than rage-blackout inducing."

Early last year reporter Abigail Pesta echoed that analysis in an article for *Newsweek*: "Cities across the country had reported stacks of kits: 11,000 in San Antonio, 1,200 in Albuquerque, 4,000 in Houston, according to Sarah Tofte, who has studied rape-kit pile-ups for Human Rights Watch. Experts estimate that hundreds of thousands of untested kits are languishing in police storage facilities.

"Part of the reason for the clog is the price of testing the kits. Each kit can cost an average of \$1,200 to \$1,500...But resources aren't always to blame, she says; often the kits are simply a low priority for police."

Some of the kits are 25 years old, but Worthy is seeking funding to test them all, approximately \$15 million. Tax-deductible donations can be made to the Detroit Crime Commission online at www.detroitcrimecommission.org or by mail: Detroit Crime Commission, 1001 Woodward Avenue Suite 650, Detroit MI 48226. (313-394-1600.) Specify "Wayne County Prosecutor's Office Rape Kit Initiative" on your donation.

—Susan Van Gelder

Past time to stop rape in South Africa

Grahamstown, South Africa—Thandiswa Qubuda was gang-raped in the early hours of Jan. 20 at the corner of New Town and E Street in Grahamstown. She was 30



South Africans, outraged over another horrible rape and murder, that of Anene Booysen, participated in One Billion Rising on February 14.

years old and the only one surviving in her family. Both her parents had died and she was living with her aunt.

She was savagely beaten during the rape, suffered permanent brain damage and eventually died from the beating. The Revered Mzi Dyantyi, family members and the Unemployed People's Movement (UPM) held a prayer and anointment in her hospital ward.

The men that were arrested were granted free bail. The rape case was then dismissed and struck off the role because of the extreme negligence and incompetence of the police. The only charge that is remaining is murder.

Witnesses have been subject to serious intimidation by one of the accused. One has been taken to a place of safety after being threatened with death by one of the accused. Another has had to flee to Johannesburg. And yet the accused were given free bail!

We do not believe that the state is taking the rape and murder of Thandiswa Qubuda seriously. The state holds poor people in contempt. We are just voting fodder to them. We are not human beings to them.

Our President, Jacob Zuma, cannot give leadership in the struggle against rape, attacks on Lesbians and other forms of gender-based violence. After his rape trial he emerged bruised and lacking in credibility to many South Africans. His utterance in court when he stated that he knew that a woman wanted sex because of what she was wearing was disgraceful. The way that his accuser was vilified was disgraceful.

If the President were to deal with the scourge of rape seriously and to lead the fight against abuse of women with honesty and sincerity, his dignity would be restored to many South Africans. But we have no faith that this will happen. When we look at his silence in the face of the repression of the movements and struggles of the poor, we have no confidence that we will ever have leadership from above.

Therefore it is clear that the leadership in the struggle against rape will have to come from below. It is time for real action against rape. As the UPM we are committed to doing whatever is in our power to work with others to end this scourge.

Enough! Genoeg! Kwanele!

—Linda Boo, cousin to Thandiswa Qubuda; Xola Mali, UPM spokesperson; Shongile Jonas, UPM Secretary for Women

WOMENWORLDWIDE

by Artemis

On Feb. 21, Russian police detained two middle-aged women wearing balaclavas and placing flowers on the altar of Christ the Savior Church in Moscow in support of the feminist activist punk band Pussy Riot. It was the anniversary of the band members' performance of a "punk prayer" protest song at that church. Two band members received a two-year sentence, and another was released on appeal with a suspended sentence for "hooliganism motivated by religious hatred," although they were really protesting the union of church and state.

* * *

In 2009, the Israeli feminist organization Isha L'Isha released a report stating healthcare workers were giving Ethiopian Jewish women in refugee camps, the three-month birth control drug Depo-Provera without their consent. A December 2012 TV documentary prompted the Health Ministry Director in January to forbid health workers from continuing this practice unless the women wanted the drug. There is controversy among journalists over the government's role in this practice, and whether the women themselves chose to use this form of contraception.

* * *

In February, in the first race of her first full season on the NASCAR Sprint Cup racing circuit, Danica Patrick became the first woman to win the coveted pole position for the Daytona 500 race, in which she won eighth place. She is enormously popular with female as well as male fans in this male-dominated sport. Feminists have noted that race car driving is a sport in which a woman can compete with men on an equal footing.

ATU orders bus drivers back to work

New York City—Over a month ago 8,800 school bus drivers, mechanics, and matrons—members of Local 1181 of the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) who are responsible for transporting New York's children—went out on strike for the first time since 1979. This came after billionaire Mayor Michael Bloomberg announced his intention to eliminate the "Employee Protection Provision" (EPP) of the union contract.

Over the last two years, Bloomberg sought to shred the EPP, which provides a measure of job security for workers by requiring private bus companies chartered by the city to hire according to seniority.

Bloomberg's goal was to liquidate the drivers' seniority. Veteran drivers have priority in picking routes, building up rapport with parents and children alike. Bloomberg's goal to break the union was evident when he put out a notice calling for new bids for the bus service.

The strikers kept up the picket lines through a cold New York winter, defying rain, snow, and



ATU workers and others rally in support of school bus drivers' strike

Bloomberg. The decision to order the drivers and matrons back to work in February came without any input from the strikers. There was no discussion within the union, just an announcement that the strike was over and that the drivers should return to work. But the question that many are asking is: what went wrong?

Although the 8,800 members of Local 1181 stood strong and united, the same could not be said for other unions representing school bus drivers. A Teamsters local and another local with school bus drivers in its ranks both failed to honor the picket lines. That helped break

the strike by easing up the pressure on Bloomberg.

When the strike began, the union strike fund was close to collapse, but New York's other unions did not offer to help so that the workers could continue to stay out on strike. This lack of solidarity hurt the striking drivers and matrons.

At the end, union leaders were told by a number of Democratic Party politicians that if the union ended the strike and if one of them becomes mayor this year, they would "do right" by the union. But, as one union member put it, "Since when do we trust politicians, of any party?"

Not surprisingly, some of the bus companies are already starting to fire strikers, not individually but in large numbers. But as one former striker told me, although they lost the strike, it was important to fight, and that he was going to stay in the union.

All the ATU members can hope for now is that some Democratic Party politician will stand up for union rights if he or she is elected, a dubious proposition. The same politicians were nowhere to be seen during the strike, except at the end when they helped broker the sellout.

—Michael Gilbert

Car wash wage win

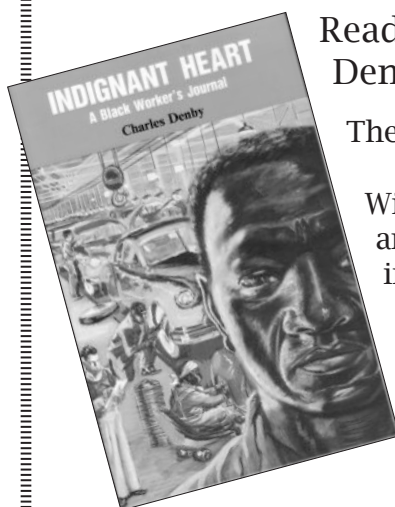
Bronx, N.Y.—Following the successful unionization of two New York City car washes (See "Car wash unionizing," Nov.-Dec. 2012 *News & Letters*), another car wash in the Bronx unionized after a protracted struggle with the management of the company. Sunny Day Car Wash initially fired twelve workers for trying to organize a union. The workers, Mexicans and Ecuadorians, fought back and protested their dismissal for two months.

Last November, the workers protested the fact that the company had not paid them for three weeks of work. After that protest, everyone was fired. But they set up a picket line every day in front of the car wash and got the support of other unions and community organizations. They demanded their jobs back and the payment of wages owed them.

This is the third victory of car wash workers in the New York City area in the last year. As one of the workers said, "My co-workers have demonstrated courage, and with the help of the organizations we can return to work today with dignity."

—Strike supporter

On the 35th anniversary of Indignant Heart: A Black Workers' Journal,



Read Charles Denby on:

The early UAW

•
With Dr. King and Rosa Parks in Montgomery

•
Stokely Carmichael in Lowndes County

and much, much more

See literature listing, page 7

Meatcutters stand up

Queens, N.Y.—Trade Fair, a supermarket in Astoria, Queens, with a unionized meat department, is engaged in a scurrilous effort to break the union. But the union members at Trade Fair supermarket are standing firm. Their pride is evident in the union buttons they wear on the job which say, in English and Spanish, "Standing Strong, Prepared to Strike." Store management, in huge posters outside the store attacking the union, calls these displays of workers' determination "disruptive."

Signs outside the store announce that there are positions open in the meat department. One union member told me they are trying to fire union members and hire non-union replacements, part-timers, to take their place. He said the goal of management was to break the union.

When the union tried to defend the rights of their workers, management became verbally abusive and threatening towards the workers and their supporters, trying to physically intimidate the workers into breaking with the union. (See YouTube video, "Bully Trade Fair owner flips out on workers.")

As a union spokesman says in the video, their treatment has been disgraceful, and they ask, "Is this the American dream?" In response, Local 342 of the United Food and Commercial Workers Union, which represents many grocery store workers in New York City, has set up informational leafletting in front of the store, with volunteers from the union explaining the union's side of the story to community residents.

—M.G.

Attacks on organizing

Detroit—The number of unionized workers in the U.S. last year dropped by 400,000 members, to 14.3 million workers. This unexpectedly sharp decrease, to 11.3% of the work force, dropped union membership to the lowest it has been since 1916, when it was 11.2% of the work force, according to a report in *The New York Times*.

The reasons are many. Assaults on unions like right-to-work legislation in Indiana and Michigan and laws narrowing the right to union representation in Wisconsin had a huge impact on unions locally and nationally, as well as on the attitudes of workers toward their unions. Union membership last year fell by 13% in Wisconsin, by 18% in Indiana and by 6.6% in Michigan.

Huge demonstrations, rallies and protests by workers and their allies before anti-union legislation was passed, revealed clearly that workers were more than willing to do whatever was necessary to prevent the legislation, and they had massive national public support. This revolutionary spirit was quashed by union and political leaders and the reactionary legislation passed, dealing crippling blows to workers.

Nationally, the number of government union workers fell by 234,000 last year with deep cuts of teachers, police and firefighters as state budgets tightened. The states with the least number of union workers, as expected, are clustered in the South, where most have right-to-work laws that depress income, seen dramatically in the fact that full-time workers in right-to-work states make about \$38,600 a year compared to workers in union states who make about \$49,000 a year.

That is undoubtedly emboldening reactionary politicians in other states to introduce similar laws. It is no secret that Right-wing politicians in every state have such legislation already drawn up and are waiting for any opportunity to get such laws passed.

Other factors dimming unionization include the sophisticated strategies corporations employ to oppose unions along with intimidation, harassment and firing of workers. When union efforts succeed, corporations can delay the unionization procedures for years. The specter of unemployment is always looming on the horizon—not only the national unemployment rate, but also corporate threats to move jobs overseas or to other manufacturing facilities.

But the most important development is the transformation of union leadership from being militant fighters to contract concessionary specialists and corporation supporters. Workers have always known when their leaders represent or misrepresent their aspirations, and supported the most effective fighters for their interests.

Now unions have become so bureaucratized that the leadership is pounded into a mold to support policies to keep themselves in office, not to fight for the workers. This has resulted in an ever-widening chasm between the workers and leaders to the point that the leaders are now seen by the rank-and-file workers as their enemies rather than their champions. This has been confirmed with every contract that the workers reject but have forced down their throats.

Such constant betrayals have clearly revealed to the workers that, although they are aware that they are in a daily life-and-death class struggle with their corporate capitalist rulers, their leaders are not and cannot be trusted.

—Andy Phillips

WORKSHOPTALKS

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attention. Brill rightly says Obama's Affordable Care Act does not address the most obvious way to cut costs, which is to extend Medicare. Medicare is the most cost effective because, as a massive purchaser of healthcare, it uses its clout to keep prices down. The Affordable Care Act still leaves individual insurance purchasers subject to insurance-industry gouging.

WHO LIVES OR DIES

Obama's reform efforts aim to curb runaway healthcare costs like the over-prescribing of state-of-the-art tests for people with Cadillac healthcare plans. But what about the more serious abuse: manslaughter through deliberate negligence?

A friend of mine I'll call Tasha spent two weeks in the ICU at Highland Hospital in Oakland after an auto accident. Only after her discharge (perhaps prematurely, due to staffing shortage) to a skilled nursing facility did a nurse find the infection, caused by a super-resistant germ now lurking in hospitals, which would kill her within 30 hours.

Why did Highland Hospital miss detecting the killer bug which killed Tasha? Negligence—institutional, not individual, because of staffing shortages. As an inner-city general hospital, funded by Medi-Cal and Medicare, having a destitute patient population and a higher mortality and morbidity rate, Highland is severely understaffed and unable to fully cope with its tremendous patient load.

This speed-up costs almost 100,000 lives each year in hospitals private and public across the nation. We who tend to the sick every day have a lot to say about work conditions affecting patient care. Literally hundreds of thousands of lives of workers and patients could be saved if only we would be heard.

In the past, failure to deliver proper healthcare was deemed wayward, an anomaly, an offense warranting discipline and shortage of staffing or some other critical resource was recognized as a problem. Now chronic staffing shortage occurs by design.

HOW TO PROFIT FROM NEGLECT

Administrators don't call it neglect, just part of maintaining the financial health of the company. For-profit chains like Sutter and Tenet, masquerading as "non-profits," have gobbled up financially troubled community hospitals, then imposed severe cuts in patient services and staff to appeal to shareholders.

Karl Marx had warned us about this brave new world when he described how capital's constant revolutionizing of instruments increases the monotony and speed-up of its factories to the point where all the human interest is taken out of the workplace.

Labor advocates today only speak about the cost to our bodies and our income. But what's left out of the discussion is the cost to our minds. The monotony, speed-up and repetitive motion of the assembly line cause injuries not only to our bodies but to our minds.

Real healthcare reform cannot be achieved while the pull of capital's dominant ideology traps one and all into the self-fulfilling dead-end thinking that "there is no alternative." This kind of self-alienation infects everyone in society, even on the shop floor. A cure is afforded only when people who have to deliver that care reclaim not only their own labor, but the very meaning of labor itself, thereby reclaiming our own humanity.

FROM THE WRITINGS OF RAYADUNAYEVSKAYA

Editor's note: For Women's History Month, we present excerpts from "An Overview by Way of Introduction; the Black Dimension," Chapter 6 of the book Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution. The chapter serves as an introduction and overview for the book's Part Two, "The Women's Liberation Movement as Revolutionary Force and Reason." All footnotes are from the original; some have been omitted for space considerations.

Because it is our age which has forced upon the world consciousness the truth that Women's Liberation is an Idea whose time has come, it is necessary to turn backward and forward in time as well as to look globally at this phenomenon. Neither the urgency of our time, nor space, will permit us to turn as far back as 1647, when the first Maids' Petition to the British Parliament asked for "liberty every second Tuesday"; or even to Mary Wollstonecraft's "Vindication of the Rights of Woman," 1792. But we must begin with 1831, both because of its relevance to today, and because of the events that happened that year—in particular the greatest slave revolt in United States history, led by Nat Turner, who held that the idea of freedom is present in every slave so tempestuously that "the same idea prompted others as well as myself to this undertaking." It was the same year that a Black woman, Maria Stewart, became the first American-born woman, white or Black, to speak publicly.

Here is what Maria Stewart said:

O ye daughters of Africa, awake! awake! arise! no longer sleep nor slumber but distinguish yourselves. Show forth to the world that ye are endowed with noble and exalted faculties...How long shall the fair daughters of Africa be compelled to bury their minds and talents beneath a load of iron pots and kettles?... How long shall a mean set of men flatter us with their smiles, and enrich themselves with our hard earnings: their wives' fingers sparkling with rings and they themselves laughing at our folly?¹

When it comes to the question of woman, it was not only the voice of the working woman, or that of the Black dimension, that was not listened to. The same held true of the middle-class woman Margaret Fuller, whose intellect had been recognized as serious but who was still considered merely as a sort of "handmaiden" of the Transcendentalists.

Now that we have her full story,² it is clear that as a feminist she was an **original**, and that as an activist she was so far from the rarified atmosphere of Brook Farm as to have become a participant in the 1848 Italian Revolution, where she took a partisan as her lover. Whether or not Vivian Gornick is correct in her conclusion that "had she lived, Margaret Fuller would have become one of the first important American Marxists,"³ the point is that Margaret Fuller judged herself to "have become an enthusiastic Socialist."⁴

A WORLD-HISTORIC MOMENT

Objectively, though the United States had experienced no social revolution in 1848, a revolution in women's liberation did occur that year. The Woman's Rights Convention at Seneca Falls, N.Y., disclosed a new force for revolution. Women throughout the world heard it. From St. Lazare prison in Paris, to which they had been sentenced for their activities in and after the revolution of 1848, Jeanne Deroin and Pauline Roland sent greetings in 1851 to the Second National Woman's Rights Convention, held in Worcester, Mass. On behalf of that convention, Ernestine Rose declared: "After having heard the letter read from our poor incarcerated sisters of France, well might we exclaim, Alas, poor France! where is thy glory? where the glory

The Black dimension and Women's Liberation as revolutionary reason

of the Revolution of 1848?"⁵

The 1840s had been filled with revolutionary ideas as well as actual revolutions. Thus, in 1843, Flora Tristan was the first to call for a Workers' International of men and women; in her book, *Union Ouvrière*, she stressed the need "to recognize the urgent necessity of giving to the women of the people an education, moral, intellectual and technical...[and] to recognize in principle, the equality of right between men and women as being the sole means of establishing *Human Unity*."⁶ The very next year, typhoid fever deprived us of this exciting utopian revolutionary. In that same year, however, 1844, Marx discovered a whole new continent of thought and of revolution, with his now-famous Humanist Essays.

It took a revolution—the Russian Revolution of November 1917—to dig out these 1844 Manuscripts from the musty, closed Second International archives. Once they were published, the shock of recognition was not just that they were great writings, but writings that disclosed so profound an Idea of Freedom that it transcended both time and place, that is to say, the Germany of the 1840s. The genius Marx could articulate such a philosophy of revolution, not because he was a prophet, but because he dived so deeply into human relations that he came up with this concept of Man/Woman:

The infinite degradation in which man exists for himself is expressed in this relation to the woman as the spoils and handmaiden of communal lust. For the secret of the relation-



Maria Stewart, Harriet Tubman, and Sojourner Truth

ship of man to man finds its *unambiguous*, definitive, *open*, obvious expression in the relationship of man to woman, and in this way the *direct*, *natural* relationship between the sexes. The direct, natural, necessary relationship of man to man is the *relationship of man to woman*...From the character of this relation it follows to what degree *man* as a *species* has become *human*...⁷

Which is why Marx concretized each human relationship as a "to be" instead of a "to have": "Each of his human relations to the world—seeing, hearing, smell, taste, feeling, thought, perception, experience, wishing, activity, loving...in place of all the physical and spiritual senses, there is the sense of possession, which is the simple alienation of all these senses...The transcendence of private property is, therefore, the total *freeing* of all the human senses and attributes." But for "the wealth of human needs [to] take the place of the wealth and poverty of political economy," a total uprooting is needed.

The Marxist philosopher Herbert Marcuse, when these Essays were published in Germany in 1932, perceived the pivotal point of philosophy, its integrality with actual revolution. He entitled his review "The Foundation of Historical Materialism,"⁸ and traced how embedded in Marx's philosophical critique was his theory of revolution. As he put it, "we are dealing with a philosophic critique of political economy and its philosophical foundation as a theory of revolution" (p. 3). Furthermore, Marcuse continued: "This does not mean that Hegel's 'method' is transformed and taken over, put into a new context and brought to life. Rather, Marx goes back to the problems at the root of Hegel's philosophy (which originally determined his method), independently appropriates their real content and thinks it through to a further stage" (p. 4). Marcuse devoted 45 pages to detail each of Marx's Essays, and not only as philosophy but as practical and revolutionary analysis

- Miriam Schneir, ed., *Feminism* (New York: Random House, 1972), p. 91.
- G.D.H. Cole, *A History of Socialist Thought*, 5 vols. (London: Macmillan & Co., 1956), 1:186.
- There have been several translations by now of the 1844 Manuscripts. The best known are those by Martin Milligan, Erich Fromm, T. Bottomore, and Loyd Easton and Kurt Guddat. I am using my own translation, however, which is the first one that was published in English, as an appendix to my *Marxism and Freedom* (New York: Twayne Pub., 1958). These essays are further discussed in chap. 9. Emphasis in original.
- This 1932 essay by Herbert Marcuse first appeared in English translation in 1972 in *Studies in Critical Philosophy* (London: New Left Books). Pages cited in text following are to this edition.

related to the whole human existence.

And yet...and yet...missing from Marcuse's comprehensive analysis was any reference whatever to the Man/Woman relationship, which Marx made so central in the essay "Private Property and Communism." That essay covered a great deal more than the two topics in the title. What was involved in Marx's opposition to private property was very far removed from a question of "property." Rather, as he made clear over and over again, his opposition to private property was due to the fact that it "completely negates the *personality* of man..."

And to make absolutely sure that his readers did not find still other ways of either fragmenting or "collectivizing" the individual, Marx ended the essay with a warning that "communism, as such, is not the goal of human development, the form of human society."

Just as even a Herbert Marcuse missed hearing the crucial Man/Woman concept, so all too many Women's Liberationists today do not perceive the Black dimension as Reason in our age. Those who deny today that the idea of revolution and that exciting Black dimension were both crucial in establishing the first Woman's Rights Convention not only have forgotten that today's Women's Liberation Movement likewise arose out of the Black dimension, but have failed entirely to grasp what is the root of theory, its true beginning. Take something as simple as a name—that of Sojourner Truth—and compare it to what we today think of as an accomplishment when we use, not our husbands' names, but our "maiden" names. When Isabella became free and wanted to throw away her slave name, she included her entire philosophy in her new name. It is true that she attributed to God the reason for her name, saying that when she wanted to have nothing to do with her slave past and asked God for advice as to a name, "He" told her to sojourn the world over and reveal the truth to the people. But the fact is that her name tells us more than just the fact that she had broken with male domination.

Or for that matter, consider how she silenced the clerics at the meeting who were booing her. She asked them, "Do you believe in Christ?" and added, did the clerics know where Christ came from? She proceeded to tell them: "from God and a woman! Man had nothing to do with Him!"

Naiveté? Then consider the "generalship" of a Harriet Tubman, be it as conductor of the Underground Railroad or in her activity behind the lines of the Confederacy during the Civil War.

These historic facts of a Harriet Tubman or a Sojourner Truth⁹ are not the only manifestations of Black activity in and influence upon the early women's rights struggle and the Civil War; thousands were involved. The turning point for American Black women was

9. See especially Earl Conrad, *Harriet Tubman* (New York: Paul S. Erikson, 1943), and *Narrative of Sojourner Truth*, an Ebony Classic (Chicago: Johnson Pub. Co., 1970).

continued on p. 5

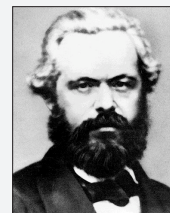
For International Women's Day and Women's History Month, treat yourself to

Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution

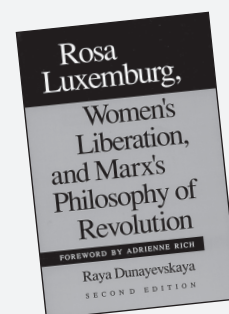


by Raya Dunayevskaya

Read the whole book to discover Rosa Luxemburg's feminist dimension, post-Marx Marxism as pejorative, Marx's concept of the Man/



Woman relation, new moments of Marx's last decade which leave a trail to our day, and much more.



To order, see literature listing, p. 7

1. Bert James Loewenberg and Ruth Bogin, eds., *Black Women in 19th Century American Life* (University Park, Pa.: Penn State University Press, 1967).

2. Bell Gale Chevigny, *The Woman and the Myth* (Old Westbury, N.Y.: Feminist Press, 1976). In Larzer Ziff's profound study of classic American literature, *Literary Democracy: The Declaration of Cultural Independence in America* (New York: Viking Press, 1981), Ziff includes a chapter on Margaret Fuller (pp. 146-64) which deserves serious study. He first quotes Fuller's statement in her 1845 work, *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*: "Let it not be said wherever there is energy or creative genius, 'She has a masculine mind.'" He then develops his view of her "vigorous independence of mind" as inseparable from the fact that she had become a revolutionary in Italy and was returning to the United States "to work for the next revolution." The chapter ends with: "Such exhilaration at attaching passion to intelligence, will to action, self to history, was on the ship with her when she arrived off Fire Island. Kindled in Europe, it was drowned within sight of the American strand."

3. Vivian Gornick, *Essays in Feminism* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978), p. 212.

4. Chevigny, *The Woman and the Myth*, p. 490.

From the writings of Raya Dunayevskaya

continued from p. 4

reached in 1867, after the Civil War, when even the most revolutionary Abolitionists, like Frederick Douglass and Wendell Phillips, refused to collaborate with the women in their fight for suffrage on the grounds that this was "the Negro hour." Sojourner Truth hit back at her own leader, Frederick Douglass, calling him "short-minded." In that, Harriet Tubman joined. Not only did they separate from their Black male leaders and align with the white women, but it became clear that "short-minded" was more than an epithet. Rather, it was a new language—the language of thought—against those who would put any limitations to freedom....

INDIVIDUALISM AND MASSES IN MOTION

...What illuminates the contributions both of an original character and of the masses in motion is the way those masses in motion uproot the old and create the new. Let us, therefore, turn to see it in two very different locales and historic periods.

Take Africa, whose history, especially as it concerns women, has hardly been touched. We are first now beginning—without knowing the full story, even now—to hear about one of the great events that happened in 1929, which entered Great Britain's imperial history as the "Aba riots," but which the Africans named "The Women's War."¹⁰ This event, hidden from history, involved tens of thousands of Igbo women, who organized demonstrations in Calabar and Owerri provinces in southeastern Nigeria, against both British imperialism and their own African chiefs, whom they accused of carrying out the new British edict to tax women. These women, without any help from their own men, combined forces across tribal lines and began their protests, called "making war," or "sitting on a man."¹¹

This was by no means an individual act, but a traditional Igbo way of expressing revolt; it involved masses of women, meeting at an agreed time and place (in this case the hut of the Warrant Chiefs), dancing, and singing scurrilous songs that detailed the women's grievances and insulted the chiefs (including questioning their manhood) and banging on the men's huts with the pestles they used for pounding yams. Traditionally, this might last all night and day until an apology came and the man mended his ways. In the 1929 Women's War¹² it continued through November and December.

It was serious enough, and British imperialism feared it sufficiently to forget that women had not previously been fired on. This time they brought out the troops, murdering 50 women and wounding 50 others. The women, however, had won their point, and the taxes were not imposed. It was clear that, though the event had women leaders—Ikonia, Nwaunedie, Narigo—this grassroots leadership had emerged out of the collective action of Igbo women.

The greatest of all events were the March and November 1917 Russian Revolutions. We saw in the last chapter how very conscious Luxemburg was of those revolutions and how totally she practiced the principles of proletarian revolution in her call for the revolution in Germany. However, the last chapter did not describe in any detail the March Revolution, which was initiated by women. It was initiated, on International Women's Day, against the advice of all tendencies—Mensheviks, Bolsheviks, Anarchists, Social-Revolutionaries. Those five days that toppled the mighty empire demonstrate that it is never just a question of leaders, no matter how great. Rather, it is masses in motion....

* * *

Having viewed the relationship of Man/Woman as Marx's concept, integral to a philosophy of revolution; as it appears in the Women's Liberation Movement, as revolutionary force and reason; and at different historic periods, we can see that it is not just a question of then and now—that is to say, of contrasting historic periods. Rather, time is now to be considered as Marx defined it: "Time is space for human development."...

10. See Judith Van Allen, "Aba Riots or Igbo Women's War?" *Ufahamu* 6: no. 1 (1975). An elaborated version also appeared in *Women in Africa*, Nancy Hafkin and Edna Bay, eds. (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford Univ. Press, 1976).

11. An exciting historical "forerunner" of the practice of "sitting on a man" is found in Marx's *Ethnological Notebooks* (p. 116), where Marx is summarizing Lewis Henry Morgan's findings: "The women were the great power among the clans, as everywhere else. They did not hesitate when occasion required, 'to knock off the horns,' as it was technically called, from the head of a chief, and send him back to the ranks of the warriors. The original nomination of the chiefs also always rested with them."

12. "Women's War" is not as unusual a phenomenon as patriarchal histories would have us think, whether we are dealing with the dramatic fictional Greek *Lysistrata* or, as legend would have it in the land of Rosa Luxemburg's birth, with the 1863 Polish revolt against tsarism, which was likewise referred to secretly as "Women's War." In the preface to her *Comrade and Lover: Rosa Luxemburg's Letters to Leo Jogiches* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1979), Elzbieta Etinger refers to this 1863 revolt.

Lincoln and 'The Abolitionists'

The 150th anniversary of the Civil War, and of the Emancipation Proclamation in particular, has a lot of people talking about that history and race relations today. Steven Spielberg's movie *Lincoln* is less the cause than the effect of this surge in popular interest. *Lincoln* is very moving and beautifully made, with excellent acting and shrewd writing.

Tony Kushner's screenplay is shrewd enough to dramatize a selective slice of history as a covert argument for Obama-style politics. The historic achievement of the 13th Amendment abolishing slavery appears to depend largely on political chicanery, which is an endorsement of Obama's pragmatism and moderation. Radicals are portrayed as Lincoln's enemies, which is more true of the 2013 Obama than of the 1865 Lincoln. Aside from leading Radical Republican Rep. Thaddeus Stevens, Abolitionists are barely acknowledged.

A key scene involves a conversation between Lincoln and Stevens. Urging Stevens not to be so darn principled, Kushner-Spielberg's Lincoln asks him, "If in pursuit of your destination, you plunge ahead, heedless of obstacles, and achieve nothing more than to sink in a swamp...What's the use of knowing True North?" This motivates what is, from the movie's point of view, the high point for Stevens: his grudging decision to equivocate on the floor of the House about his views on racial equality. In other words, what is to be celebrated is a pragmatic compromise of principles.

PRINCIPLES AND SLAVERY'S ABOLITION

In truth, it was the uncompromising, principled radicalism of the Abolitionist movement—and the revolts and resistance of slaves and free Blacks on whose shoulders the movement stood—that made Civil War and the abolition of slavery inevitable, and transformed Lincoln from a moderate politician into the instrument of emancipation.

Lincoln himself acknowledged this near the end of his life: "I have only been an instrument. The logic and moral power of [William Lloyd] Garrison and the anti-slavery people of the country and the army have done all."



Fifty-fourth Massachusetts Colored Regiment charging Fort Wagner, South Carolina, July 18, 1863.

That quotation is mentioned in this year's documentary "The Abolitionists" on PBS's *American Experience*. It goes much further than *Lincoln* by showing how decisive the Abolitionist movement was in the country's history. Exploding the mainstream narrative of Abolitionists as a deranged fringe, it shows that the Abolitionists had a tremendous effect on U.S. politics and on attitudes in the North, while stirring up violent reaction in both North and South.

WHERE ARE THE WOMEN?

Even this three-part documentary, however, has its limitations. While it takes up Angelina Grimke's groundbreaking advocacy of women's rights, it mentions neither Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman, nor the 1848 Seneca Falls Convention on women's rights, which grew out of Abolitionism. Nothing is said of the new divide that arose within the movement after the 13th Amendment was passed, when even Frederick Douglass opposed the call by women like Truth and Tubman to include women's right to vote in the Constitutional amendments being pushed.

The full depth of the Abolitionists is best captured by Raya Dunayevskaya's *American Civilization on Trial* (emphases in the original):

"The movement renounced all traditional politics, considering all political parties of the day as 'corrupt.' They were inter-racial and in a slave society preached and practiced Negro equality. They were distinguished as well for inspiring, aligning with and fighting for equality of women in an age when the women had neither the right to the ballot nor to property nor to divorce. They were internationalists, covering Europe with their message, and bringing back to this country the message of the Irish Freedom Fighters.

"They sought no rewards of any kind, fighting for

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us! See contact information, p. 9.

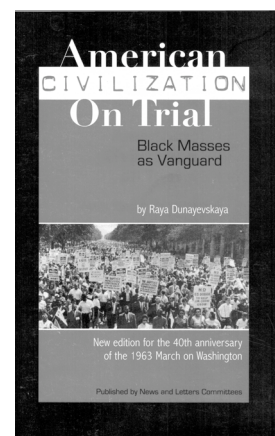
the pure idea....

"These New England Abolitionists added a new dimension to the word intellectual, for these were intellectuals, whose intellectual, social and political creativity was the expression of precise social forces. They gloried in being 'the means' by which a direct social movement expressed itself, the movement of slaves and free Negroes for total freedom."

In many ways, it seems that today's historians are still catching up with this brilliant pamphlet that was published 50 years ago, which so profoundly captured the truth of American history precisely because it is rooted not only in exhaustive research but in Marx's Humanist philosophy of freedom.

—Franklin Dmitryev

AS OTHERS SEE US



American Civilization on Trial

Raya Dunayevskaya's sublimely researched *American Civilization on Trial: Black Masses as Vanguard* (ACOT), deserves a place among the U.S.'s most honest historical treatises. This seminal work overlays

Marxism and the struggle of the African American. It concludes that it is intrinsically human for any economically exploited people to self-appraise their worth. This process is not only dynamically held in permanence, but also one that globally connects the working classes.

Dunayevskaya's work is also an exegesis of racism in the U.S. She notes racism's dehumanizing pathos during times preceding the American revolution, tracks its insanity preceding and following the American Civil War, and elucidates its destructive tendencies during the post-World War II labor movements. *ACOT's* poignant reference to J. Edgar Hoover's attack on the Civil Rights Movement leaders serves as the bookend to the American founding fathers' rejection of language within its own Declaration of Independence that would have emancipated its African stepchildren. This evidentiary argument concludes that the stated American quest to secure global freedom is perpetually compromised by its rabid insistence that its darkly tanned offspring never enjoy the liberties that white men—even its liberal communists—take for granted.

ACOT's tenets are seasoned in Marxism. In their dialectics, these tenets not only provide guideposts for understanding a nascent U.S. agricultural economy's rise as the de facto world economic power, but also as a template for the peoples' struggle in societies throughout the world to liberate themselves from exploitation. Dunayevskaya notes Marx's view of pre-Civil War America as an economically unsophisticated and agrarian society. Marx, nonetheless, views the African in bondage as America's most likely change agent. She writes that Marx defines the common struggles of African slaves and Russian serfs as the most important powers in changing the world's economies. When examining its essence—that is to say the essential need for all of humanity to be free—people breach nationalistic constructs and unite in a common struggle. Whether the struggle in permanence takes place in Poland, France, England, Russia, or the U.S., it tends to dismantle the capitalist paradigm.

While *ACOT* masterfully captures the most important moments of U.S. history, it does not imagine African Americans' labor as an excess in a post-industrial world. Dunayevskaya's trajectory plots an improved African-American condition. The opposite proved true. After the first edition of *ACOT* was published, a high-flying U.S. economy began a nose dive. The manufacturing engine stalled. Industry jettisoned the sacrosanct annual wage increase. Tossed alongside it were jobs. African-American labor took the hardest hit. The vanguard of change woke to a bitter reality: its dizzying flight to digest more of the bourgeois construct, left it among the permanent class of the unemployable.

ACOT's guidance still provides a path out of darkness. Dunayevskaya lays out the route for African Americans to reshape themselves into a vanguard for those in a revolutionary struggle. This potential is realized when African Americans retrace the path that got them on the road to liberation over 200 years ago. Moreover, just as the capitalist boss jettisoned them to save his own margins, African Americans jettison all points of separation with their brothers and sisters in Russia, Europe, and all points on the globe. They identify themselves as a bright spirit in a common, united, and permanent liberation struggle.

—Ibrahim

AMERICAN CIVILIZATION REMAINS ON TRIAL

American Civilization on Trial (ACOT) is not "Black history." Rather, Blacks play such an enormous role in the U.S. that their history that is in ACOT is a history of America.

**Octogenarian
Midwest**



The movie *Django Unchained* could have been an ad for the NRA's position on the current gun control debate, namely that the only thing that can stop a bad guy with a gun is a good guy with a gun.

That formula may suit Tarantino's Spaghetti Western style, where a lot of bad guys do get killed. But it shortchanges the real history of the idea of freedom that was personified in the over 30-year struggle by the Abolitionists. I am glad PBS is finally paying some attention to that page of U.S. history.

**Oakland activist
California**

What was missing from the current Abolitionists TV special and the movie *Lincoln* was that "Black masses as vanguard" was not part of them. That lack reminds me of the passage in *ACOT* where Dunayevskaya writes briefly about the relationship of individuals and masses in motion. All the historians had marginalized the Abolitionist movement. The only one I heard about in high school was John Brown, who was always presented as a fanatic. Dunayevskaya didn't stop by saying the real history was marginalized. She brought up John Jay Chapman, who had written that the history of the U.S. from 1800 to 1860 would someday be rewritten with William Lloyd Garrison as its central figure. She said that is better, but still a history of great men, instead of masses in motion. The Abolitionists acknowledged that they stood on the shoulders

of the mass movement of slaves following the North Star to freedom.

**Student of history
Illinois**

The first Black U.S. president made a first ever trip to Burma, facing the new Asian power in China, India, etc. Is Obama selling American "soft power" in Asia? He is still expanding drone strikes, not to mention indefinite detentions. Democracy in the U.S. cannot be real as long as it is shackled elsewhere, just as "labor in the white skin cannot be free as long as in the Black skin it is branded."

**Htun Lin
Oakland**

My friend believes that an apology for slavery to African Americans is in order. Japanese Americans and Native Americans, too, deserve an apology. The way you atone is first acknowledge the humanity of the person you've harmed. You acknowledge a people so they can acknowledge themselves, to begin healing of those who did the harm as well as those who were harmed. When my humanity is marginalized just to have a job, how can you have a healing that lets me find my humanity within myself? It's necessary to look at the condition of African Americans, to acknowledge us as a nation so the healing can begin.

**Ibrahim
Bay Area**

The political letter from Raya Dunayevskaya in the January-February *N&L* took up the then new book, *ACOT*. Dunayevskaya wasted no time in elaborating key turning points becoming part of the historical flow of the book. She expected Marxist-Humanists would be elaborating on those points, be it more on John Brown, Confederate draft resisters, or anything up to the present day. We have an unfulfilled legacy to work on.

**Bob McGuire
Chicago**

RELIGION, REVOLUTION AND COUNTER-REVOLUTION

I'd rejoice at the Pope's retirement except he and John Paul II stacked the deck of cardinals so thoroughly that whoever replaces him will just be his clone or worse.

**Disgusted
Midwest**

Ratzinger's resignation surprised me; I thought popes had to die in office. The press started interviewing people, saying how wonderful he is. I don't think so. He didn't do anything about pedophile priests, nothing for women except keep them down, helped destroy liberation theology and any opposition views, and appointed right-wing cardinals like himself. German Chancellor Angela Merkel said he was not so bad. What an apologist! Ratzinger was in the Hitler Youth. Lots of excuses were made for that, but other young people at the time stood up and said no.

**Erica Rae
Illinois**

Christianity has often inspired revolutionary mass movements among the poor. During the 17th-Century English revolution, the Levelers preached radical social equality and the Diggers took over the land, while Anabaptists established a utopian commune. In the 19th Century, the radically egalitarian Taipings took over half of China and held it against the Emperor for over a decade in the name of a Christian Utopia. In 20th-Century Latin America, Liberation Theology-inspired clergy and Christian base communities among the poor courageously resisted wealthy oligarchies backed by U.S. imperialism, in 1979 successfully overthrowing the Somoza dictatorship in Nicaragua as part of the Sandinista coalition.

Is there any hope for Catholic renewal? Any perspective of a revival of the Liberation Theology movement of

the 1960s and '70s? Is there any scenario that one could imagine, wherein a rebellion of mainly female base Catholics and lower clergy succeeds in unseating the hierarchy?

Last August, 900 U.S. nuns gathered in St. Louis to prepare their reply to the Vatican's crude attempt to stifle their self-governing orders. Catholics across the country were stunned and outraged by the Vatican's attempt to threaten the women who have been the backbone of this church for centuries. Thousands of faithful Catholics have held vigils across the country, and more than 57,000 people have signed a petition organized by the Nun Justice Project in support of the nuns. Catholics have made clear that they stand in solidarity with the sisters and their good works among the poor and marginalized.

**Richard Greeman
New York City**

I know, I should be nice to the guy, because he is an 85-year-old man, I haven't walked in his shoes, blah, blah, blah. First of all, I am just some lapsed Catholic who could never touch a hair on the head of the German clergyman, nor would I want to. Second of all, Ratzinger didn't show any mercy when he closed down schools of liberation theologians fighting for the rights of the oppressed and the downtrodden. He didn't show mercy when he silenced priests, defamed works of good theologians who wrote on the side of the poor, and didn't have any pity on Fr. Roy Bourgeois, for example, who dissents from the Church's position on female ordination. He had no consideration for the consequences of "keeping up orthodoxy," so I don't find it inappropriate to call him the viper that he is now. If you are too nice to be angry at him, I got you covered.

**Abe Cabrera
Louisiana**

READERS' VIEWS

The alliterative listing of dramatic moments—"Seneca Falls, Selma, and Stonewall"—in President Obama's inaugural address was a powerful way to show how this history impinges on the meaning of the present. But it was no substitute for the creative power of the negative that stands on its own in the transformation of reality. After all, Seneca Falls came out of Abolitionism's total commitment to new human relations, completely in opposition to, and outside of, a Constitutional framework, while—as with Obama's hero, Lincoln—a Constitutional framework seems to predominate over Obama.

**Ron Kelch
Oakland**

THIS SOCIETY'S WARS

Chicago allows the murder of children daily. The city leaders express sorrow, but they don't do anything comprehensive to deal with the problem. Most Chicagoans are not particularly concerned with the deaths of innocent children because they are not their children. Racism rears its ugly head! The children are from Black or Hispanic neighborhoods. Private groups have rallies and meetings, but they don't coordinate their efforts. How long will this tragic killing of innocent children go on in Chicago and the nation? Where is the outrage? Where is the reverence for life, especially from the "pro-life" hypocrites?

**Long-time human rights activist
Chicago**

A thought keeps recurring to me. A girl who took part in Obama's inaugural parade came back to Chicago and got murdered. Some Black nationalists blame the system. I don't agree. Five hundred people in Chicago decide to kill someone every year. They do it for reasons other than necessity. How do we "fix" that? Some see those who do the killing as depraved, broken individuals. I don't know how to answer such a problem. It is not even warfare, or gang rivalry.

**African-American Reader
Bay Area**

Originally brought forth under the Nixon administration during the Vietnam War, the Alternative Minimum Tax (AMT), was in essence a war tax meant to fund the genocide that the U.S. government perpetrated on the peoples of Southeast Asia. And yet now in 2013, 38 years after the end of that war, we still have the AMT. The government rakes in tens of billions of dollars each year from the AMT. This is positive confirmation of capitalism's permanent war economy.

**Little Brother of Fighting Spirit
Michigan**

This past month in New York, Occupy came to the Edison Electric Company, which is trying to eliminate pensions for the workers. A lot of people are now unemployed in this economic crisis. The capitalists manipulate the system by passing laws to get the most out of workers without paying fair wages or providing a comfortable life for them. Right now they are cutting teachers' wages even though we are in the worst economic crisis in the U.S. in decades. So again, there's a struggle between the poor and the rich, the capitalists and the non-capitalists.

**Teacher
Los Angeles**

WOMEN'S LIBERATION

I really hand it to the women of India for opposing the death penalty for rapists as regressive. I oppose it too, but

it is a big temptation to want to hurt them back!

**Adele
Memphis**

Nadezhda Tolokonnikova of Pussy Riot is ill in her Russian prison at Perm or Mordovia. She is 24 years old and a mother. She has shown her ability as a political leader and a performer. In Russia as well as the U.S., and everywhere else, prison confinement should be the punishment: *not* starvation, rape, freezing cold, unbearable heat, beatings, illness, 24-hour bright lights, etc. Prisoners have internationally recognized rights—human rights. Nadezhda and Maria Alyokhina—also imprisoned—did nothing wrong. Political dissent is spreading, as is the punishment for it. You or I could be next! If you want to sign a petition to Vladimir Putin and the Russian prison authorities, go to <http://act.watchdog.net/petitions/2390?r=91049>.

**January
Northern California**

The public debate on sharia is changing, as is evident at our speaking engagements. University societies the length and breadth of Britain are increasingly speaking out for secularism and human rights. There is a bill to rein in the power of sharia in Britain's House of Lords, exposing sharia bodies as being abusive to children in "marrying" young girls to old men in forced marriages. One Law for All continues to grow and influence this debate—including our vital opposition to the far Right and its attempts to hijack the issue of sharia law to further their own racist agenda. With your help, One Law for All will continue to lead the fight against sharia in Britain and elsewhere. You can help us. Our website is at: <http://www.onelawforall.org.uk/>

**Maryam Namazie and Anne Marie Waters
Spokespersons, One Law for All**

The Arab Spring showed the shortcoming of not fighting the sexism of the Muslim fundamentalist ideology. The cry of Iranian women against Khomeini's 1979 order to wear the chador, "At the dawn of freedom we have no freedom," is still valid in the Arab Spring. It is a challenge against the counter-revolution from within the revolution.

As gender alienation shows, we need many more continuing revolutions in the Middle East. We need the permanent revolution that Marx called for, in the Middle East, as the center of the world globalization of capitalist crises. The importance of the Arab Spring was not only that it brought revolution to the center of the struggle for freedom, but it also raised the question: Why revolution? Why now? It is demanding a new social and economic order.

**Ali
Los Angeles**

CAPITALISM ISN'T WORKING

Whoever thinks capitalism works needs to repeat just one word: sequester.

**Observer
Detroit**

Editor's note: There is a correction to the article, "Why 'green on blue' attacks?" in the Jan.-Feb. 2013 issue. There was a mistake regarding the number of Afghans killed during night raids between 2010-2011. Where the author had originally written the correct number, 1,500, it was mistakenly changed to 15,000. We apologize for any confusion this may have caused.

AT THE CROSSROADS OF HISTORY

When the Green Movement started in Iran over the 2009 election, the so-called leaders were part of the government who were against Ahmadinejad. The growth of the movement of women and youth got so big it became "out of control" by the so-called leaders. The government leaders got scared because the people found their own leaders and the movement was becoming radical. The "leaders" called it the Green Movement, green being a religious symbol, to try to limit it to a religious movement. But the Movement was past that point.

Middle Eastern Revolutionary West Coast

With great joy I received five copies of *Crossroads of History: Marxist-Humanist Writings on the Middle East* by Raya Dunayevskaya. It is really great and Gerry Emmett's Introduction was on target—clear, concise, and challenging to the Left. The professional Staff Congress of the City University of New York—the union of faculty and staff members—has been having a film series: "Combating Islamophobia," including showing films from Iran. I'm anxious to see what they will think of this new pamphlet and *News & Letters*.

**David
New York City**

I'm grateful that you've finally published a collection of Dunayevskaya's writings on the Middle East. They are indispensable for any comprehension of what is happening in that region today. Her intellect is keenly missed as we experience the Arab Spring. But she gave us firm ground upon which to understand today's events.

**Feminist
Illinois**

In Egypt Morsi took absolute power after the youth, women and workers started the revolution. The Islamist fundamentalists, the Muslim Brotherhood, came at the end and took the majority in the election. Morsi grabbed absolute power. The same thing happened in the 1979 Iranian Revolution. There was a deep struggle against the Shah where all the people were united, but the counter-revolution came in under Khomeini

and started killing anybody who was opposed to him. He brought in a religious, autocratic dictatorship, something never before seen in Iran.

**Azadkar
Los Angeles**

DISMAL CAPITALIST HEALTHCARE



Suzanne Rose wrote in the last issue of the tragic case of 14-year-old Marie Freyre, who died due to inadequate healthcare.

Her death illustrates that the U.S. *must* improve our healthcare system! A single-payer system would be a great step in the correct direction. Maria should have stayed in the care of her mother, as a judge ordered. As much as possible, the disabled and the elderly should have home care. The government should help pay substantially for that for families in economic need. The nursing home and hospital need to be held accountable for Marie's needless suffering and death.

**Elise
Chicago**

What is described in "Rape and people with disabilities" (Nov.-Dec. 2012 *N&L*) is utterly disgusting. How in the world did this man get away with victimizing a physically disabled woman with the mental capacity of a child? The Connecticut court ruling is completely bunk, has absolutely no merit and they obviously understand nothing about people with severe physical disabilities. I am gonna be blunt, jail time isn't even a good enough punishment for the likes of an individual like this.

**D.B. Clark
Ontario**

We marched, petitioned, and packed an open forum and a courtroom. We delivered 200 flowers to President Zimmer. And we won. One month after Toussaint and Jacob were beaten by University of Chicago police and arrested along with Victoria and Alex, the prosecutor dropped the charges. Victoria, Jacob, Tous, and Alex were fighting because Chicago's South Side didn't have a trauma center. It still doesn't. Please

sign the trauma center petition: <http://www.change.org/petitions/university-of-chicago-medical-center-expand-access-to-lifesaving-trauma-care-on-the-southside-of-chicago>

The Administration and the prosecutor faced overwhelming, persistent, and creative opposition that came from people who rarely manage to speak together, including private university students, professors, teenagers in Woodlawn, social workers, senior citizens who marched with walkers, and even two curious Brazilians.

**Duff
Chicago**

PLUNDERING DETROIT

The other shoe finally dropped in Michigan, as Gov. Snyder is poised to appoint a dictatorial emergency manager over the biggest prize of all: Detroit. Critics claim that emergency managers in cities like Flint have not solved cities' economic problems, but that is because Snyder is solving a different problem: privatizing assets like Pontiac's Silverdome or Benton Harbor's lakeside Jean Klock Park without local protest. Developers have already been lusting after Detroit's crown jewel, Belle Isle.

**Ex-autoworker
Detroit**

FEAR OF NUCLEAR WAR...

Fear is being spread in Kashmir that nuclear war is imminent with Pakistan. People are being told to dig air raid shelters. Violent skirmishes on the India-Pakistan border have become routine, only to be overplayed occasionally by either side for political convenience. Given that both are nuclear-armed, it is imperative that saner counsel prevail. We urge all concerned to re-engage instead in working for the common prosperity of people on both sides. To see the full statement from Kumar Sundaram, visit <http://space4peace.blogspot.com/2013/01/indians-told-to-build-bomb-shelters.html>.

**Global Network Against Weapons
& Nuclear Power in Space
Brunswick, Maine**

...AND ENVIRONMENTAL DISASTER

The State Department quietly released its new environmental impact statement on the Keystone XL pipeline on March 1, when all the news was focused on the budget "sequester." The statement claims that the pipeline is "unlikely to have a substantial impact" on the environment.



The administration refuses to acknowledge that NASA's top climate scientist said that allowing an outlet for Canada's tar sands would be "game over" for the climate. Beware, Obama! The ever-growing climate justice movement is not going to take this sitting down.

**Long-time environmentalist
Escondido, Calif.**

WHY SUBSCRIBE TO N&L?

I highly recommend *everyone* who feels empathy for other human beings &/ or other living things to follow and subscribe to @newsandletters #1u

**@daytona_slim
Florida**

Editor's note: #1u is the hashtag for "One Union"—support all workers!

FROM BEHIND THE BARS

N&L is enlightening beyond measure. I always share my copies with fellow comrades, as a "study program."

**Prisoner
Lancaster, Calif.**

Your prison mail tells me what's going on in the real world. Could you let me know who is my donor so I can thank them for how much the sub means to me?

**Prisoner
Delano, Calif.**

TO OUR READERS: Can you donate the price of a sub (\$5) for a prisoner who cannot pay for one? It will be shared with many others.

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS FROM NEWS & LETTERS

by Raya Dunayevskaya

- Marxism and Freedom: from 1776 until Today**
Foreword by Joel Kovel \$24.95
- Philosophy and Revolution: From Hegel to Sartre and from Marx to Mao** \$24.95
- Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution** 1991 edition.
Foreword by Adrienne Rich \$24.95
- Women's Liberation and the Dialectics of Revolution: Reaching for the Future** \$24.95
- The Power of Negativity: Selected Writings on the Dialectic in Hegel and Marx** \$24.95
- Crossroads of History: Marxist-Humanist Writings on the Middle East** \$10.00
- The Marxist-Humanist Theory of State-Capitalism** \$10.00
- The Philosophic Moment of Marxist-Humanism: Two Historic-Philosophic Writings**
\$3.00 paperback, \$10.00 hardcover
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- Guides to Collection and Supplement to the Raya Dunayevskaya Collection: Marxist-Humanism: A Half Century of Its World Development**
Full description of 17,000-page microfilm collection \$5.00
- The Raya Dunayevskaya Collection—Marxist-Humanism: A Half Century of Its World Development** A 17,000-page microfilm collection on 9 reels available from Wayne State University, Detroit, MI 48202 \$165.00

Dunayevskaya en Español

- Marxismo y libertad** \$10.00
- Filosofía y revolución: De Hegel a Sartre y de Marx a Mao** \$10.00
- Rosa Luxemburgo, la liberación femenina, y la filosofía marxista de revolución** \$10.00
- Una Trilogía de revolución todo en un solo libro: Marxismo y libertad; Filosofía y revolución; y Rosa Luxemburgo la liberación femenina y la filosofía marxista de la revolución** \$25.00
- La liberación femenina y la dialéctica de la revolución: Tratando de alcanzar el futuro** \$10.00
- El Poder de la negatividad: Escritos sobre la dialéctica en Hegel y Marx** \$10.00
- Dos ensayos por Raya Dunayevskaya** \$5.00

by Charles Denby

- Indignant Heart: A Black Worker's Journal**
Includes Afterword by Raya Dunayevskaya \$14.95

*Pamphlets published by
News and Letters Committees*

- The Coal Miners' General Strike of 1949-50 and the Birth of Marxist-Humanism In the U.S.**
by Andy Phillips and Raya Dunayevskaya \$8.00
- Dialectics of Black Freedom Struggles: Race, Philosophy & the Needed American Revolution**
by John Alan \$10.00
- Pelican Bay Hunger Strikers: 'We want to be validated as human'** \$5.00
- Voices from within the Prison Walls**
by D. A. Sheldon \$8.00
- Working Women for Freedom**
by Angela Terrano, Marie Dignan, and Mary Holmes \$8.00

- Bosnia-Herzegovina: Achilles Heel of Western 'Civilization'** \$10.00
- Kosova: Writings from News & Letters, 1998-1999** \$8.00
- On the 100th Anniversary of the First General Strike in the U.S.** by Terry Moon and Ron Brokmeyer \$8.00

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VOICES FROM THE INSIDE OUT

Prisoner's 'Thin Comfort' dilemma

We are on lockdown status again, as every inch of the prison compound is searched for contraband. We're living on thin sandwiches again. We call them jam sandwiches. You take two pieces of stale bread, put a spot of peanut butter on one and jam them together. This time around is the worst ever. I was hungry day and night until another con began giving me his bag meals.

Across the wide expanse of cellblock directly in front of my cell on the opposite side lives an elderly Mexican-American who is confined to a wheelchair. The day after Christmas he began refusing his meals. I didn't think it unusual at the time because some people fast around holidays. But then I recalled that up to Christmas Eve he had been getting books delivered to him every day for months from the prison law library. That suggests he was working on his appeal or maybe even a lawsuit. Then abruptly after Christmas no more law books came and he quit eating. The guards didn't take notice because they work a different cellblock everyday. There is always a con or two who skips a meal and whenever that happens the guard just gives it to someone else because there is no shortage of cons asking for any "extras."

Nobody seemed to notice that the old man had quit eating. When we went on lockdown status on Jan. 11, he had not eaten in 16 days and he continued to refuse his meals. I don't know his name or even if he speaks English. I stand at my cell door window and smile and nod across to him. That is the extent of our communication. I began informing the guards at meal times that the old man had quit eating.

Long ago I read an article about I.R.A. prisoners inside English prisons who went on hunger strikes *en masse* to force England to recognize them as prisoners of war instead of common criminals. Many starved themselves to death and the horrid publicity of it forced the English to agree to the strikers' demands. One prisoner lived to see recognition granted and celebrated. But he was doomed nonetheless because after a couple of months or more of eating no food he had caused irreversible damage to his vital organs.

Not long after we began getting bag meals, at every meal the old man asked the guards feeding us to give his bag to me. So I began eating his sandwiches along with my own. He sits at his door at meal times and as soon as he sees that I have his bag he shoots me a thumb up sign and returns to his bed. I have asked a sergeant of guards and then a lieutenant and a captain to stop at his cell door to talk to him when they each came through the cellblock on their inspection rounds. They did, but still he refuses to eat. I eat his food and am grateful for it because it keeps the pang of hunger away from me.

As I write this on Jan. 22 it has been 28 days since the old man last ate. I woke up in the middle of the night to discover his cell door open. He was gone and I was startled by the sight of it. But then a few minutes later guards brought him back to his cell. I think they must be taking him to the medical department to monitor his weight loss. **There are horror stories floating around inside this super-segregated high security prison about force-feeding cons who are trying to escape their sentence by starving themselves to death.** They are strapped down to a gurney and a rubber tube threaded up their nose and down their throat to drip nutrients into their starved bodies.

I was able to get a guard to take a *National Geographic* and a religious magazine over to his cell and slide them inside under his cell door. A minute later the old man appeared at his cell door and shot me a thumb up sign. He is looking gaunt. I have done all I can to help him. I don't want him to give up on life but at the same time I look forward to eating his food and confess that deep inside myself I hope it doesn't stop. Does my soul have a hole in it for harboring such a thought? I reason with myself that if I refuse to accept his food the guards will just give it to someone else but that rationalization provides thin comfort. Prison is hell, I tell you. We're still on lockdown.

—Joseph

California hearings on prison torture

Sacramento, Calif.—On Feb. 25, around 100 people, mostly family members of prisoners organized as California Families Against Solitary Confinement (CFASC), gathered on the state capitol steps. They shared their stories before a historic second legislative hearing on California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDC) policies regarding prisoners held

liberation movement in San Quentin, one of the goals was to build a new man, the way Brother Malcolm X showed we could...We don't know how long it will take to create that new, beautiful world. It might take generations. But if we continually work at it and try to create the new man in ourselves, we can achieve a personal freedom. I go through different changes to stay human for I will never get used to isolation and deprivation."

After the rally, we filed into the hearing room, refuting CDC's lies about their new program. Assemblyman Tom Amiano opened the hearing by saying he was humbled that CFASC members held bake sales to raise money to make the trip. He ended the hearing by acknowledging that this is a "populist" issue larger than any hearing.

The following day, CFASC lobbied for ending solitary confinement. It was surprising how many

legislators watched the televised hearing. One senator said "they have never" seen a hearing like this one and "it was the talk of the offices," "a lot of light was shed."

—Urszula Wislanka



Families gather in Sacramento for hearings on extended solitary confinement

in the Security Housing Units (SHUs). An estimated 5,000 prisoners are tortured in California by being subjected to extended solitary confinement, 2,400 of them for indeterminate time.

Following the prisoners' hunger strikes in July and Sept.-Oct. 2011, CDC proposed revisions to its policies. The proposed revisions do not address any of the prisoners' demands and in fact codify practices that are totally unacceptable. The prisoners, who have been promised that their demands will be met, have rejected CDC's proposal and are planning another hunger strike for July 8.

For many people the rally was their first action. They spoke from the heart. **Dolores Canales** said, "My life changed on July 1, 2011, when the SHU prisoners went on hunger strike. I knew my son had spent a decade in solitary confinement. I knew my son was unjustly held in isolation. I knew this, and I didn't give it a second thought. Now, I cannot stop thinking about it."

"The National Institutes of Health and federal law prohibit research chimpanzees to be held in solitary confinement. It is seen as detrimental to their mental and physical health as they are social animals. Chimpanzees must be able to see and hear other chimps, they must be able to touch each other as well.

"Chimpanzees are seen as social beings. What are human beings? Human beings that are being deprived of human contact, human beings that are being deprived of natural sunlight. Why is there no law to protect my son, your husband, your father, your brother, your sister and your loved one? We are demanding that they enact such a law in the United States of America!"

Another family member read a letter from a loved one in the SHU: "CDC refuses to change. How many others will be destroyed by this failed system? For human beings to decide to starve themselves to death speaks volumes to the conditions here in the SHU."

Another mother said: "When I go visit my son, I see others who have been in there for 10, 20, 30, some over 40 years. It breaks my heart. What does that say about the future of my son, who has been there for 'only' four years? What do I have to look forward to? What does his son have to look forward to? He has not been able to touch his son since he was three years old! It devastates everybody. We have to stand up and make changes so that families can be reunited, so we can touch them, so they can be treated as human beings.

"I lay awake at night thinking of how my child is suffering. None of us should have to worry about the mental condition of our loved ones. None of us should have to worry about their physical condition. They have not harmed anyone, have not stabbed anyone. A prisoner who actually assaults a guard gets 18 months to two years in the SHU and then he is out.

"We're not here to make CDC lose face. We just want you to do the basic human, moral thing."

Hugo Pinell, 42 years in solitary, sent a statement written in February: "In 1967, when I joined the

Escape from Camp 14

Escape from Camp 14, by Blaine Hardin (Viking, 2012).

The recent news out of North Korea is that Kim Jong Un, the third dictator in the Kim dynasty that has ruled North Korea since its inception in 1948, continues to explode nuclear weapons, following that with threats to use them. The state is obsessed with nuclear war capabilities even as most North Koreans live under extreme deprivation if not outright starvation. *Escape from Camp 14* is the story of Shin Dong-hyuk, the only person born in a North Korean slave labor camp to escape, doing so at the age of 23 in 2005. Shin's life is testament to the putrid essence of that militarized, state-capitalist totalitarian society.

The Kims, beginning with the "Great Leader" Kim Il Sung who ruled North Korea from 1948 until his death in 1994, added a new abomination to Stalin's and Mao's massive use of slave labor, reeducation camps. Kim Il Sung decided to not only enslave his political opponents and those who showed any whiff of dissent from his absolute rule but to **also sentence their families and offspring through three generations.** Shin was born and grew up in a camp that had no reeducation function. He was only to be worked to an early death and wasn't even deemed worthy of being subjected to state propaganda about the "Great Leader."

What being alive meant for Shin was that others, including his family, were either mere competitors for food or armed guards whose job was to severely punish and usually execute anyone who broke the rules, especially the rule to turn in violators of the rules. "Snitching" is a pejorative which normally implies some previous mutual human relation, but here it was just a given condition of life from the start. The only assemblies allowed in the camp were for frequent public executions which were "teachable moments" that shaped Shin's earliest memories.

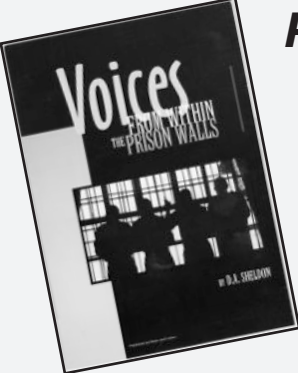
Shin began to have a different kind of relationship with another human being when he was cared for by another prisoner after being severely tortured. Then when Shin himself was assigned to befriend a new prisoner, Park Yong Chul, in order to snitch on him, Shin made the fateful decision to not snitch. Thrilled with the description of foods available outside of camp, Shin developed a bond with Park.

Shin's new friendship and experience of mutual trust with Park led to their decision to attempt an escape. Park didn't survive, throwing Shin again into a situation where he could trust no one. He came to realize that even acts of kindness, like the offer of a job when he reached China, were motivated by greed, the exploitation of his labor.

The power of Shin's story is his own assessment of his life as a struggle to become human. What is made painfully clear to anyone who dares read this book is that the struggle to become human never ends.

That is an especially important message for those leftists, caught in their own binary thinking and abstract revolutionism, who can support North Korea as an opposite to U.S. imperialism. As Hegel and then Marx kept making abundantly clear, the dialectic has nothing to do with subsuming the concrete, the lived experience. Rather, recognizing the dialectic in the movement of the lived experience can be a totally new beginning in human freedom.

—Ron Kelch




Prisoners speak for themselves

Two perspectives on the prison struggle:

Voices from within the prison walls

Pelican Bay hunger strikers, 2011

See News & Letters literature list, p. 7



Rallies across U.S. against Keystone XL pipeline

40,000 in Washington, D.C.



Julia Hicks

Washington, D.C.—I drove from Memphis to Washington with three others and joined the 40,000-plus people there on Feb. 17 for the Forward on Climate Change rally, the biggest ever held on climate change in this country. Yes, the 15-hour drive was long. Yes, it was super cold. Yes, we stood for a long time during the rally and were glad to begin marching to restore feeling in our frozen toes. But yes, we were glad and proud to be there.

I attended my first protest in Washington, D.C., in the 1980s, returning many times to protest U.S. involvement in wars in Nicaragua and El Salvador, then to demonstrate against our invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan. Those marches were protests. We were expressing our outrage at our government for such unforgivable acts of aggression. It felt good to join so many others who were just as angry and ashamed.

The climate change rally was not like the anti-war protests. We were there for something more than to protest and to show our indignation. We were there knowing that President Obama could decide not to approve the Keystone XL pipeline. We were there knowing that President Obama has urged us as citizens to "make him" do what is right. We were there knowing that, as Van Jones said, this decision could define him. We were there because we are hopeful that he will do what is right and begin legislating to save our planet rather than to save oil executives.

Then we learned that President Obama was not at the White House on that day. He was in Florida, golfing with oil executives. So... we shall see.

—Sandy Furrh

Climate Chicago rally

continued from p. 1

Keystone pipeline before I came out today. I want to learn more about what I can do and different movements that are afoot. All the storms we've been having are making climate change more urgent. Reading about it made me comprehend how big it is and how much immediate action is required.

—Ben

* * *

I am part of a generation that will either receive the catastrophic effects of climate change or will come together in order to fight for our future. I want a future that isn't compromised by huge fossil fuel companies. I want a society that puts my friends and family before profit. I'm a member of CYCC, a lovely group of dedicated students with a shared dedication to ending fossil fuel consumption and attaining a just and sustainable future. We know that our efforts can make a difference worldwide. We will not stand by while fossil fuel companies wreak havoc on our planet and our health. We cannot wait for politicians and Big Oil to shape our future. We need to join across borders and backgrounds, genders and ethnicities, to reshape our world. We need to fight for all the children who may live in a world completely different from the world we grew up in.

—Virginia Baker

In Los Angeles

Los Angeles—On Feb. 17, over 1,000 environmental activists gathered at La Placita of historic Olvera Street to agitate to stop the tar sands Keystone XL pipeline. The pipeline is to run over 2,000 miles from Canada through the U.S. to the Gulf Coast. There, this dirtiest of oil will be shipped to the Asian market.

The protest was begun by Canadian First Nations people as the Idle No More Movement to stop the mining of tar. It was part of a massive demonstration the same day in Washington, D.C.

Participants included the Pachamama Alliance, Native American women drummers, Aztec dancers, Food and Water Watch, Natural Resource Defense Council (NRDC), Sea Shepherd, Alliance for Climate Education, Green Party, League of Women Voters, Children from Union Elementary Schools Carbon Science Club, students, ML King Coalition, Occupy people, various Marxist groups, and many others. Noticeably missing were large labor unions.



Robert Stuart Lowden

Some of the many signs read "tar sands = extinction," "carbon-oil-gas = death," "tax carbon," and "Wanted: Stephen Harper and Trans Canada for genocide, stupidity, terrorism and greed."

We marched for a mile to City Hall, where speakers addressed the crowd with a PA system powered by solar panels.

Speakers ranged from Lakota Chief Phil Lane, Jr., who said we do not want our sacred land destroyed and thanked Stephen Harper for awakening a sleeping giant, to Congressman Henry Waxman, who urged President Obama to stop Keystone, noting there were 25 separate climate crises in 2011 and 2012. We heard from climate scientists who told of worsening severe weather; women of color speaking of how, because of racism, pollution impacts minorities more severely; a homeowner impacted by fracking who said their house used to be in paradise, now it's in hell; a longtime anti-nuclear activist who warned of the dangers of the aging San Onofre Nuclear Power Plant in Southern California; and several poets, including a Black woman who recited her poem on trash that goes into a can but doesn't go away, asking, "How many landfills can we fill?" There was also a large cloth petition for us all to sign which will be sent to President Obama.

The rally ended with everyone joining in a traditional Indigenous round dance to the beat of the women drummers.

Global warming and climate change are caused by expanding capitalist production, consuming massive amounts of oil, coal, methane gas, gasoline, timber (logging), etc. As the *News & Letters* article "Climate Chaos and Capitalism" (Sept.-Oct. 2012) stated: "Until we can abolish capital, we will have no chance of avoiding climate chaos."

—Basho

In San Francisco



David M'oto

San Francisco—On Feb. 17 there was a Climate Forward rally at Justin Herman Plaza protesting carbon emissions, the Keystone XL pipeline, fracking and other threats to the environment. Before the rally, as some 6,000 marchers completely encircled a nearby large city block containing State Department offices, dozens of Indigenous people held a prayer vigil. One of them, a young First Nation woman from Canada, told the crowd about the Idle No More movement started by four women (see "Idle No More," Jan.-Feb. 2013 *News & Letters*).

—David M'oto



by Suzanne Rose

Chicago, Ill.—After a Seattle couple ordered their six-year-old daughter with disabilities to undergo a treatment to keep her physically small, a coalition of disability rights activists including ADAPT, Not Dead Yet and Feminist Response in Disability Activism met on Feb. 19 with leaders of the American Medical Association to discuss the AMA's reaction. The advocates asked the AMA to issue a statement opposing the "growth attenuation" treatment that the girl endured, which included a hysterectomy, removing her breast tissue and giving her massive doses of estrogen in order to keep her from going through puberty. Disability activists around the world have condemned the practice, some calling it "mutilation" and "abuse."

* * *

New Delhi, India—Disability rights groups joined the One Billion Rising global campaign to end violence against women, spotlighting harassment and poor treatment faced by disabled women. Samarthyam Anjee Agarwal, an organization which promotes accessible environments, organized events highlighting violence against women with disabilities. Their initiative got the support of the Delhi Metro, which displayed digital flash messages on violence against women in its train coaches and at all Metro stations. At the YWCA and Parliament Street, dancers in wheelchairs performed "Delhi Rising." Their message to women with disabilities was "Celebrate life, celebrate diversity and celebrate freedom."

* * *

New Market, Md.—The death of Robert Saylor, a 26-year-old man with Down syndrome killed in police custody, has been ruled a homicide. He was asphyxiated on Jan. 12 while lying handcuffed and face down on the ground. The police were called to the movie theater where Mr. Saylor was watching a movie with his caregiver. When she left the theater to get her car, Robert waited for her in his seat and wouldn't leave. That's when a theater employee called the police. When his caregiver returned, the police ignored her and her efforts to de-escalate the situation. They said Mr. Saylor was distressed after being handcuffed, appeared to panic and started to struggle. He had not threatened anyone. "Robert just loved everybody," said his mother, Patti. "If the police had gotten the proper training on how to deal with someone with Down syndrome, this wouldn't have happened."

* * *

St. Louis, Mo.—The Transportation Security Administration is apologizing to a Missouri family after agents at Lambert-St. Louis International Airport on Feb. 9 detained Lucy, a three-year-old with spina bifida in a wheelchair heading to Disney World for a vacation. Agents took away her stuffed animal and tried to stop her parents from filming their body search of Lucy and her pink wheelchair, telling them it was illegal which is not true. The family had made it through the TSA checkpoint, but as they walked to their gate, another TSA agent pulled Lucy aside for additional screening. Annie, Lucy's mother, refused to stop filming. The video shows Lucy weeping uncontrollably and screaming that she no longer wanted to go to Disney World.

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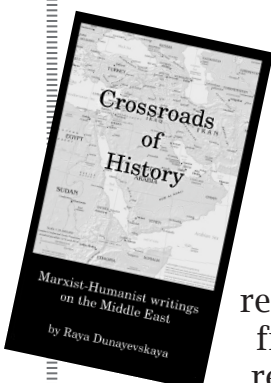
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From India to Egypt to U.S., women fighting for freedom

continued from p. 1

tions the government did not accept. This is disturbing, as it continues the practice of giving soldiers a green light to rape as they have historically done and are still doing, for example in Kashmir. Indian women have made it clear that they see rape and sexual abuse embedded in their society as a way to keep women down.



One Billion Rising in Barcelona, Spain

As Kavita Krishnan, secretary of the All India Progressive Women's Association, said of the new restrictions on women, "I don't think that all the reaction was due to fear of sexual violence. The reaction is also to the assertion of freedom. When a woman starts demanding freedom and rights, that's where the discomfort begins."

CONTINUING THE EGYPTIAN REVOLUTION

The second recent event is women's—and men's—response to the mob attacks on women in Cairo's Tahrir Square. First women and men created organizations to physically protect women in the Square. One such group is Operation Anti-Sexual Harassment/Assault (Opantish). They track and document the attacks and try to intervene and take the women to safe houses or hospitals. They are pressuring groups who call for demonstrations to make sure the area is secure for women; and they make the point that to fail to do so reflects an attitude of indifference or worse to women's oppression.

Opantish states, "These attacks aim to exclude women from public life and punish them for participating in political activism and demonstrations." They stress that ignoring the dangers women face "in the ongoing struggle for justice...jeopardizes not only women's participation but the very success of the revolution."

Another response to the mob attacks was taken by The Uprising of Women in the Arab World (see "Women WorldWide," Nov.-Dec. 2012), who called for protests on Feb. 12 at Egyptian Embassies around the world. They began as a Facebook group but have made the leap into the physical world. Demonstrations were held around the world, including in Brussels, Belgium; Morocco; several cities in Egypt; Tunisia; Sudan; Yemen; Jaffa, Gaza and Ramallah in Palestine; the USA; Italy; Hungary; Germany; Canada; and Russia. Women used the demonstrations to show solidarity with all Arab women's rights, not just Egyptian, and as a way to critique their own societies. Many took advantage of the day to show the suffering of Syrian women.

ONE BILLION RISING

The third event was the One Billion Rising action on Valentine's Day. This was conceived by Eve Ensler, author of "The Vagina Monologues." The name comes from the fact that one in every three women in the world, that's one billion, will be beaten or raped during her lifetime. One Billion Rising called on people to strike and dance to call attention to violence against women. The call to dance was inspiring. As a 25-year-old woman in India said, "Dance allows you to express emotions—outrage, anger, hope—that sometimes words don't allow you to." One Billion Rising spread like wildfire through India. Tens of thousands joined rallies and dance events there. Women saw it, as one said, "as a new struggle for freedom." In Mumbai alone, more than 1,000 people came together to take a pledge to respect women.

In Somalia, more than 300 women gathered in Mogadishu. About 600 people danced and sang in one of at least five events in Egypt. In Indonesia, where a high court judge had recently joked that women might enjoy rape, there were many One Billion Rising actions across the islands. There were 40 events in New York City, several in Turkey and Germany; and 1,500 danced in Iceland. Women organized flash mobs in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; in City of Joy in Congo; and in Bangladesh 1,000 acid attack survivors took part in rallies across the country.

Women also danced in Tunisia. The recent assassination of opposition leader Chokri Belaid shows the ruling Islamist party Ennahda's complete unwillingness to rein in hard-line Islamist Salafists. Belaid's murder was preceded by attacks on women and others, as homegrown reactionaries try to destroy Tunisia's family code, one of the most progressive in the Arab world.

Tunisian women are adamant that they will move

forward, not back. Their spirit and determination to create something new were expressed passionately by a woman in low-cut jeans and a sweater who got up on top of a car and faced a large group of young Islamist men harassing her to wear the hijab. She yelled at them fearlessly: "This is Tunisia, a country with a 3,000-year-old history. As for you, you are mere outsiders and bloody descendants from the deserts of Saudi Arabia, destined to be on the sidelines of history. Tunisia will never become another Afghanistan!"

WOMEN FIGHT FOR REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE

In the U.S. too, women are facing that worldwide oppression, and here too they are fighting back—continuing the 50-year struggle for women's liberation. Their biggest battle is in reproductive rights, with state legislatures coming up with one inhuman law after another—some 1,100 bills sought to limit abortion rights and 135 passed in 36 states in 2012. Now, Texas has a new law that makes it mandatory to display an ultrasound to women who have decided on abortion. Even

if a woman averts her eyes, the doctor must give a verbal description of the fetus.

North Dakota and a slew of other states are trying to pass so-called "heartbeat" bills that would ban abortion as early as six weeks, before most women even know they are pregnant. Right-wingers in Mississippi successfully forced all abortion clinics in the state to close. Indiana introduced a bill that would require women to endure two expensive, invasive, and completely unnecessary transvaginal ultrasounds before and after having a medication abortion during the first trimester of pregnancy. And there is a push in all 50 states to pass so-called "personhood" measures declaring a fertilized egg a human being, which could ban all abortion and could outlaw common forms of birth control and in vitro fertilization. It also puts a woman who has a spontaneous abortion in legal limbo.

There is as well the Catholic hierarchy's well-funded attack on birth control that tries to strip away women's freedom under the guise of religious freedom. Birth control is both a means to control fertility and healthcare because women's health cannot possibly be separated from women's sexuality and pregnancy. To impose a religious ban on insurance funding for needed medical devices and medication is tantamount to the Catholic hierarchy imposing a fatwa on birth control.

While women in India work to stop their army from raping women under occupation, U.S. women are fighting against the rape of women soldiers by their so-called comrades in arms. Sexual assault on military women is estimated to be 22,000 a year. Nothing the military has done—and they have only done something because of the huge outcry women have already made—has put a dent in the number of attacks. As long as women have to report rapes to superiors who control their jobs, promotions, and in the military their very lives, rape in the military will thrive. Military rape and abuse remains a "silent epidemic." To break that silence, women have started the "I Am One" campaign that documents the personal experience of women survivors and puts them on the web.

REPUBLICANS HELD VAWA HOSTAGE

Another sign of the War on Women is how Republicans took the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) hostage, first holding it up for over a year, then trying to gut it instead of passing it. The House Republicans' version, which was rejected by the Democrats, completely eliminated any protection for LGBT people. It grudgingly granted tribal courts some authority needed to

prosecute non-Native American men who rape or abuse Native women on reservations. But, always mindful of white rights over all others, the Republican version granted those prosecuted the right to move their cases to a federal court. Furthermore, in a stunning act of racism, those found guilty by an Indian court of battering and/or raping Native American women on Indian land could only receive a maximum sentence of one year! That racism and xenophobia extended to immigrants and trafficking victims, some of the most brutalized women in the world. It would have limited conditions under which undocumented women could have legal status while their claims were investigated.

Nevertheless, 138 Republicans voted against passing the VAWA. The only reason it was eventually passed by the others is women's anger, expressed in the November election with a 10% gender gap that returned President Obama to office and kept a Democratic majority in the U.S. Senate. It would have elected a Democratic House majority as well except for successful Republican gerrymandering that gave short shrift to women, Latinos/as and Blacks.

INTERNATIONALISM OF STRUGGLES

Violence against women is, tragically, an international phenomenon and women worldwide are fighting it. While the form of the demonstrations may differ, the content is strikingly the same as women in each country articulate that violence stems from their own cultures. They reject the idea that it is women who should change their behavior or dress more modestly, drink less, stay hidden, stay veiled, wear this or that, stay in

at night—the list never ends. Rather, women are demanding that men must change, that their entire societies must be transformed.

Women have—explicitly—positioned themselves at the center of the struggle, raising questions about the needed totality of any revolution. It must include all segments of society.

That women, globally, are challenging very basic aspects of their societies—and this is true in both developing and developed nations—is new. What shines through so luminously in countries like Egypt and Tunisia and is also evident in the U.S., is that the struggle is about new, really human relationships, and that it is a

revolutionary struggle.

Today, women's liberation has shown itself to be the heart—the driving force—of all genuine revolution. Any separation opens the door to counter-revolution. The ongoing struggles for freedom make clear that nothing short of a banner of new human relationships, from Man/Woman to labor, is needed.



One Billion Rising in Washington, D.C.

Celebrate International Women's Day with: Women's Liberation and the Dialectics of Revolution: Reaching for the Future

"No doubt we will not fully overcome male chauvinism so long as class society exists.

But we can and will break up its monolithism. We can and will witness the development of women themselves not only as force but as reason. We can and will be a catalyst not only for our development as all-around human beings, but also for that of men. The first step in that direction is to meet the challenge as it appears, everywhere it appears, any time it rears its head, under no matter what disguises. The first act of liberation is to demand back our own heads."

—Raya Dunayevskaya
From: *Women's Liberation and the Dialectics of Revolution*

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Save City College of San Francisco!

San Francisco—What is happening at City College of San Francisco (CCSF) is something even the most avid conspiracy theorist would find hard to imagine.

Until July 2, 2012, the college had never received any sort of sanctions from the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC). In fact, in 2007, the *New York Times* named CCSF as one of the top 11 community colleges in the nation. Then suddenly, on July 2, the ACCJC issued the most serious of three possible sanctions, an order to **show cause (why the college should not be closed)**.

In response, CCSF met the recommendations of the Commission, and in November San Francisco voters passed Prop. A, which led to a projected \$16 million in funding. But then, in the same month, under the new interim Chancellor Thelma Scott-Skillman, a more than \$10 million budget gap appeared, seemingly out of nowhere. The more than \$26 million in funds presently unaccounted for are called the "Scott-Skillman Gap."

It is now clear that more is going on than meets the eye. It appears that major decisions are being made behind closed doors, with no accountability. The plan seems to be to dismantle the legacy of FDR's New Deal, of which CCSF was a creation. At CCSF, that means

transforming the college into a school for narrow job-training, especially for the tech industry, or a feeder school for four-year colleges, and to end the whole concept of lifelong learning.

Education for working-class and minority people is largely being abandoned. This goes along with the recent deregulation of for-profit schools and the war on public education in general. **Though it is only one of six regional accreditation commissions, the ACCJC accounts for 89% of sanctions issued nationwide between 2003 and 2008.**

One important question also arises: what kind of accreditation does the ACCJC have, what is their authority based on? Though it supposedly oper-

ates under federal and state authority, ACCJC claims to be independent of government; in other words it is a private organization. It is really a form of regulatory control which appears to have been hijacked by industry. A big fight is brewing, and hundreds of students have joined the movement to save CCSF.

On Feb. 21, after a noon rally on Ram Plaza, students occupied the CCSF administration building all night. Expect big changes and a powerful movement in the future.

—D. Chêneville

photo by Labor Video Project



Britain's rulers keep failed policy of austerity

London, England—Moody's Investor Services, the international credit ratings agency, stripped Britain of its elite AAA credit rating, after citing stumbling economic performances and ongoing struggles to reduce its deficit. This is precisely what ongoing government attacks on welfare were supposed to prevent.

Chancellor George Osborn is struggling with intense unpopularity following his government's "austerity" measures. But Osborn merely doubled down on his failed policy, claiming that "tonight we have a stark reminder of the debt problems facing our country and the clearest possible warning to anyone who thinks we can run away from dealing with those problems."

The ruling coalition government, made up of the Liberal Democrats and Conservative parties, has taken a hostile view to welfare provision. Institutions such as the National Health Service have come under attack. Imposing a strict plan of austerity with the most recent measures being laid out in a now notorious Welfare Reform Bill, the Coalition has repeatedly stressed such actions are necessary to restore economic stability.

Moody's own credit research analysis stressed that

Django Unchained

Django Unchained is a Quentin Tarantino movie and thus, by definition, a bloody movie. There are horrific close-ups of violence in the latter part of the movie. But the reason that the movie has struck such a chord among millions of viewers is not the violence, but the type of violence that it is.

In the movie, we see the daily violence of the slave system: slaves being force-marched across a desolate countryside, barely clothed, and in shackles and chains. We see slaves being whipped for having the effrontery to try to run away from their "owners." We see a slave being torn to pieces by dogs for committing the same "crime." Tarantino has done the people in the U.S., especially young white people, a favor in bringing to light the barbarity of the slave system.

The movie is a reminder of the brutality and violence of the slave system, a system where men casually talk about buying and selling other human beings. It is also a reminder that, throughout the history of slavery and even today, there have been courageous Black men and women who stood up for freedom and justice, some with arms in hand who answered the violence of the oppressor with the violence of the oppressed. *Django* is a movie about the violence of the oppressed.

Without giving too much away, I would say that the fictional character of Django combines the qualities of Nat Turner, Malcolm X, and Jonathan Jackson. Although it took a bloody civil war to bring an end to the system of chattel slavery in this country, Django does his part by bringing the violence of the slave owners home to them in a direct and unforgettable manner. As a white person viewing *Django*, I found myself cheering as Django used arms to bring havoc to the slavemasters and their hired guns. This is a great movie, a revolutionary movie. If you have a chance to see it, I strongly recommend you do so.

—Michael Gilbert

the decision to downgrade has more to do with an "anticipated slow growth of the global economy" than with Britain's internal market. Claiming that the UK's economic recovery has proven slower than that of previous recessions in the 1970s, '80s and '90s, Moody's noted the apparent inability of the government to meet its fiscal consolidation targets.

The agency also mentioned the possibility of a further downgrade should political commitment to debt recovery and consolidation prove lacking.

The loss of Britain's elite economic status comes as a stark reminder of the government's previous claims that their economic policy would be the way for Britain to retain its AAA rating. "Protecting the credit rating will not be easy," claimed Osborne back in 2010, "but the economic risk of not setting ourselves this benchmark is not one that I am willing to take...we will protect Britain's credit rating and international reputation."

The Welfare Reform Bill passed last month. In addition to further caps on assistance for those in and out of work, there is a measure aimed at reducing the availability of housing benefit for those deemed to be "under-occupying" their homes. **This so-called "bedroom tax" will force those living in a property with a spare bedroom to take a cut in their housing benefit. Those in under-occupied properties can face a reduction of up to 14% in housing benefit for single rooms and 25% for two unoccupied rooms.**

Considering that housing benefit is usually paid to those already on low wages, the unemployed or the disabled, the additional "tax" could provoke an exodus from social housing into the private sector.

DESPISED BEDROOM TAX

"Surveys tell us that around one-third of tenants will try and move, mainly to one-bedroom properties," said Hugh Owen, Director of Policy and Communications at Riverside Social Housing, "However, there is a national shortage of one-bedroom council and housing association homes, and many tenants will have no choice but to move into the more expensive private sector or stay put."

According to experts, economic reality does not point to the necessity of measures such as the bedroom tax. Martin Wolf, in an article for the *Financial Times*, said the decision by Moody's to reduce the UK's credit rating was "neither surprising, nor informative nor, in itself, damaging. But it is humiliating for the coalition government."

Wolf went on to state that the move represents the failure of the government's own attempts to slash the deficit; an opinion that represents diminishing faith in Chancellor Osborn's ability to manage the crisis.

"He, his colleagues and advisers were too confident about the strength of the economy and so about its ability to cope with fiscal tightening," wrote Wolf. "He could tighten harder; but then he risks another recession. He can tighten more gently; but then he is open to the charge of abandoning his plans. He will presumably stick doggedly to his plans and hope for the best."

—Dan Read

EDITORIAL

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the regional tinderbox.

Obama's State of the Union address contained thinly veiled military threats against both North Korea and Iran. He did not mention the growing U.S. military presence across Africa. The new war in Mali accelerated its spread, with a drone base opening in Niger. Drone installations had already been established in Ethiopia and the Seychelles, and a base for special operations forces in Kenya. The steadily expanding permanent U.S. base in Djibouti serves as a hub for drone missions in the Horn of Africa and Yemen, and hosts other military aircraft and special ops forces.

NEVER-ENDING WAR

The fact is that, while Obama boasted in the State of the Union "that America will complete its mission in Afghanistan and achieve our objective of defeating the core of al Qaeda," his administration still claims war powers based on the 2001 authorization of force by Congress—essentially the declaration of a never-ending "war on terror."

Those war powers apply in every country, including at home. They range from indefinite detention by the military to carrying out executions by drone; U.S. citizens and others can be designated as "enemies" and dispatched without charge or trial. In this sense, Guantanamo and Bagram show us our future.

The state's ever-growing arsenal of surveillance and repression shows how seriously the rulers take the threat of revolt from below. They have not forgotten that the global economic crisis of capitalism is not over, nor have they forgotten that the Arab Spring's revolutions opened up a new period of mass self-activity that spread to all continents.

THE WAR AT HOME

For over a decade, the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks have been exploited to justify greater restrictions on dissent and on any kind of social movement. One area of almost seamless continuity between the Bush and Obama administrations is the use of the label "terrorist" to justify infiltrating and disrupting movements like Occupy and entrapping activists in violent plots hatched or fabricated by police spies. Barriers to warrantless wiretapping, to ever-expanding surveillance, to tracking our every phone call and email, are crumbling.

Gun-toting Tea Partiers are given more leeway than sign-carrying Occupiers; nonviolent peace groups are more likely to be listed as possible terrorist organizations than are abortion clinic bombers and "white nationalist" groups calling for the President's assassination.

Where Obama has exceeded Bush and all other Presidents is in silencing whistleblowers. After taking office, he announced there would be no investigation or punishment of those who tortured detainees, of officials high and low who oversaw the torture, of lawyers who wrote the memos justifying torture—even of the CIA officers who destroyed videotapes of torture after the White House ordered their preservation.

The one person who was prosecuted was the whistleblower John Kiriakou, who confirmed to reporters the use of waterboarding. In January he was sentenced to two and a half years in prison.

Whistleblower Donald Vance gave the FBI evidence that his employer, a private security firm in Iraq, was conducting illegal weapons trading. Vance and co-worker Nathan Erthel were arrested and tortured by U.S. troops. The Obama administration convinced a federal appeals court to dismiss their lawsuit against former Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld. Again, the torturer is exonerated and the torture victims are kicked to the curb!

Targeted for destruction is Wikileaks. A sealed indictment has been prepared for its founder, Julian Assange, according to a leaked memo. Jeremy Hammond has been jailed awaiting trial for nearly a year, charged with leaking documents from private security firm Stratfor, which spies on activists.

Army intelligence analyst Bradley Manning—the biggest source of leaked information, which exposed killings of Iraqi civilians and what the *Guardian* newspaper in England called a "portrait of a chaotic and failing war" in Afghanistan—languished in prison for nearly three years without trial, much of that time in degrading, inhumane conditions that could be called torture.

On Feb. 23, 70 demonstrations were held in several countries to mark 1,000 days of Manning's confinement without trial. Like Manning himself, his supporters are fighting against repression at home at the same time they are fighting against the wars being waged abroad to maintain a global system of exploitation.

There are two worlds in every country, of the rulers and the ruled. The rulers' permanent war is aimed at crushing challenges from below here as much as it is aimed at challenges from abroad. The only alternative to that state of war is tearing up this degenerate society root and branch and building a new one, abroad as well as at home.

WORLD IN VIEW

by Gerry Emmett

Pope Benedict XVI's sudden resignation announcement on Feb. 11 took the world by surprise. It is the first time in almost 600 years that a Pope has decided to quit. He has announced that he will continue to live in the Vatican, bearing the title "Pope emeritus," and "continue to serve the Church through prayer."

It is likely that the ongoing scandals of abuse by Catholic clergy and irregularities involving the Vatican Bank helped the former Joseph Ratzinger make his decision. He was not a natural public figure, being more comfortable in manipulating behind the scenes. But it was his failure to take action on the abuse cases that he knew about, and the public's knowledge that he knew and did not act, that made him singularly poor as a Church figurehead.

Barbara Blaine, president of Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests (SNAP), said, "I would hate for him to be remembered as someone who did the right thing because from our perspective, Pope Benedict's record has been abysmal." While some abuse victim advocates are pressing for Ratzinger to be tried in the International Criminal Court, that is unlikely for many reasons, not least because he will retain diplomatic immunity living in the sovereign Vatican City state, much

Colombia murders

Demetrio López Cardenas, 33 years old and a father of three, a community leader in La Cauca, was murdered Feb. 23. He was shot several times while on his way to an appointment in the town of Buenaventura, near Cali.

Buenaventura, Colombia's largest port, is a poor community, but rich in natural resources. It has seen almost 1,400 killings in the last six years, with many more people disappearing. Violence and human rights violations have displaced thousands. Recently violence against women, community activists, and port workers has increased as the U.S.-Colombia Free Trade Agreement is implemented. It is not uncommon to find dismembered bodies in the street.

Some activists suspect there is more at work than the drug trade and guerrilla war. "What is at the root of this violence is not only drug trafficking, it is territorial control of the municipality, it is a scare tactic to get people to leave and move into rural areas so mega-projects can have free rein. The mobsters, allied with some businessmen, want to get people to leave in fear so they can buy cheap and then do good business," said one.

The Human Rights Team of the Black Communities Process has called upon the Colombian Attorney General's office to identify and prosecute those responsible for Demetrio Lopez's killing. "Impunity cannot remain the mantle that covers the threats and killings of community leaders and other Colombians in places like Buenaventura." Last year dozens of human rights activists were killed in the north coastal region of Colombia.

On Feb. 16, in Codazzi, Angélica Bello died under dubious circumstances—authorities claim suicide; her colleagues dispute this. She and her family had been threatened for years owing to her defense of women victims of sexual abuse by paramilitaries. An Amnesty International spokesman said, "Angélica's death is yet another dark reminder that, unless human rights abuses are investigated and those responsible brought to justice, the authorities in Colombia will continue to send the message that such abuses are permitted."

Ex-Pope Benedict's reactionary career

as the late Archbishop Paul Marcinkus did during the Vatican banking scandal of the 1970s-1980s.

ATTACKS ON WOMEN, GAYS

Ratzinger's career has been distinguished by reactionary politics. As much as anyone, it was he who made sure that the reforms of Vatican II wouldn't lead to fundamental changes in the position of women—in his eyes, not fit to hold spiritual authority—or Gays, who were to remain in the closet. He retained a hypocritical and deadly opposition to both safe sex and birth control. For many of these opinions his only appeal was to prejudice—they were valid because this is how things had "always" been done.

Most telling was his opposition to Liberation Theology, which he did attempt to justify philosophically.

The future Pope's views of Liberation Theology were formed by his flawed and reactionary understanding of Marxism, and of Marx's roots in Hegel. It's likely that, like so many, Ratzinger never bothered to read Hegel's actual works. Thus, the idea of human liberation (and he saw its appeal) became for Ratzinger the basis of a mythology of political reaction. Rather than seeing freedom being proven real in the lives of his contemporaries, in the struggles against exploitation and imperialism in Africa and Latin America, he felt obliged to recreate the very alienation that Marx critiqued in the 1840s.

'ANTI-LIBERATION THEOLOGY'

Where Hegel saw Freedom as the basis of human history, Ratzinger saw the reduction of humanity to necessity and unfreedom. Like a typical post-Marx Marxist, in fact, he wrote "[Hegel's] attempt at total logic ends in illogicality, in the self-dissolution of logic into myth" (*Introduction to Christianity*, 1968). But his positive view is mostly an undialectical inversion of Marx's critique of religion, in fact.

It's too bad Ratzinger was such a poor Hegelian. Hegel's account of the corruption of the Church is basically what he lived out in his failed public career and the wretched ending to his papacy. His consciousness embodied what Hegel critiqued as "externality," or that which is in "rigid opposition to self-conscious spirit" and thus "binds the spirit under an externalism by which the very meaning of spirit is perverted and misconceived at its source, and law and justice, morality and conscience, responsibility and duty are corrupted at their root."

Liberation Theology indeed represented that moment when religion was split into its two aspects, as



Ita Ford, Jean Donovan, Dorothy Kazel, and Maura Clarke (clockwise from top left) were killed by a death squad in El Salvador in 1980 along with their housekeeper and her daughter because they practiced Liberation Theology. Benedict XVI worked with Pope John Paul II to destroy Liberation Theology.

Marx pointed out, the religion of the oppressed and the religion of the rulers. It is what Hegel also referred to in his section of the *Philosophy of Mind* on "Mind Objective" concerning the attitude to a body of objective truth. The post-World War II world had caught up to that stage of philosophy, debating those once-esoteric issues as world-historic battles that continue today in the struggle against various forms of fundamentalism, wedded to state power, that crush the human spirit.

This philosophic failure was central to Ratzinger's life and thought. Indeed, for all his "intellectualism," in many respects he is closer to the pseudo-intellectualism of a cult leader like Lyndon LaRouche. Their published views on popular music, for instance, are so similar, and so racist, that it's tempting to ask which plagiarized from the other.

It would be nice to be able to forgive an old man his human failings, but it's impossible to forget the dead of Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Rwanda—or the AIDS victims of Africa. He has left us our vision of horror and of solidarity. It was his choice.

The ex-Pope may try to return to his behind-the-scenes role with a new, perhaps more charismatic and less damaged Pope. He may feel that as long as the Catholic Church as an institution is seen as "too big to fail," he can drive it toward that smaller but "better," "purer" state that he prefers.

Arctic ice in retreat

The National Snow and Ice Data Center and NASA indicate that the extent of Arctic sea ice this January was the sixth lowest since satellite observation began. Air temperatures were 2 to 5 degrees Celsius higher than average across much of the Arctic Ocean (4 to 9 degrees Fahrenheit).

There is a linear rate of decline of sea ice cover of -3.2% per decade measured against the years from 1979–2000 average. Further, melting of the Greenland ice sheet in 2012 exceeded all previous years of satellite observations. Temperatures were 1.5 to 2 degrees Celsius above average over most of Greenland's ice sheet.

The melting of Arctic ice holds many dangers, from rising sea levels to release of ancient methane frozen in permafrost and sea floors. There isn't a lot of time left to address global warming as it is, but the counterproductive actions now being taken by governments are hard to believe.

CAPITALIST DEVELOPMENT DISASTER

The U.S., Russia, Canada, Norway and Denmark are all seeking to develop the oil and natural gas reserves they expect to become available as Arctic ice retreats. Soviet-era polar explorer Artur Chilingarov is now shilling for Russian President Putin's claims on the Arctic Ocean floor. He claims that "Our economy today is largely based on what was developed in the Arctic—oil, gas, diamonds, gold—thanks to the Soviet Union's policies of exploring and producing there. But back then we did not go into the sea. Resources are not endless and our task now is to leave future generations the same chances of economic stability as the Soviet Union left us."

It should be noted that the state-capitalist "Soviet Union" collapsed from within; was an environmental disaster area, from Chernobyl to Chelyabinsk; and left Russians with an average life expectancy of only 66.5 years (60 for men) as compared with 79.8 years in the European Union. Like the U.S.'s lust for tar sands oil and fracking, this kind of "development" is a local and global catastrophe in the process of happening.

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*.