

WORKSHOPTALKS

Judging workers for control and profit

by Htun Lin

California's notorious Three Strikes Law took any human judgment out of sentencing by mandating 25 years to life for a third conviction, even for something as inconsequential as a stolen pizza or bike. California's prison gulag grew astronomically as courts became machines denuded of a judge's discretion.

The prison system itself became an even more abusive criminal monster, now under the supervision of the courts. The unintended consequences became so extreme that a new proposition just passed in California to give judges some discretion to reevaluate sentences for non-violent third strike offenses.

Mechanical justice took on a new angle with the advent of ubiquitous video-surveillance cameras at traffic stoplights. Computer-generated identification is a gold mine for municipal revenue enhancement, churning out tickets at \$500 a pop for technical infractions like not coming to a full stop before turning on red.

New digital surveillance technology provides precise evidence of technical guilt. With no wiggle room, there is no way for human judgment to catch up.

The phenomenon of human beings losing a race with machines is especially pernicious in the health-care workplace. The computer has become the virtual boss of everyone in the shop, by setting the pace of everyone's job.

PROFIT MOTIVE FIRST AND LAST

Advanced digital technology, touted for its far-
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Thatcher is dead, Thatcherism persists

London, England—They gathered openly, in the streets, in the hundreds. They shouted. They cheered. Flags were waved, music was played. Yet this was not just another Belfast parade in the name of Republican pride. Far from death being a solemn occasion, the demise of British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, the so-called "Iron Lady," was a cause for celebration.

Some may, with good reason, find the celebration of any death to be in bad taste. As a self-proclaimed man of the "centre left," former Prime Minister Tony Blair lashed out against such celebrations, as did the current leader of the Labour Party opposition, Ed Miliband. And yet what prompted people to come cheering out into the streets in places as distant as Glasgow, Brixton, Belfast and Bristol warrants attention.

Plenty of others have gone into great detail on the full catalogue of Thatcher's crimes, from the crushing of the National Union of Mineworkers to her cozying up with dictators of all stripes, even supporting the vile, racist regime of South African apartheid. On this score alone, it seems inevitable that Thatcher's death would hardly be mourned by a great many people.

THE PERSONIFICATION OF CAPITAL

But what is vitally important is to see these abhorrent policies for what they are—not the product of a deranged personality now gone, but the product of a political and economic system in its own right.

Thatcher is said to have had conviction. Granted, she had a certain determination as to be able to identify enemies and go after them. Whether that was trade unionists, ethnic minorities, Argentinean soldiers or even leftists suffering and dying in the prisons of
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Capitalism's violence, masses' revolt show need for total view

The world today is riven between the creativity of masses in revolt and the violent degeneracy of counter-revolution, whose destructiveness even extends to the revived specter of nuclear war two decades after the collapse of the USSR. Such is the degeneracy of the globalized capitalist system, laden with destructive forces and sunk into structural crisis. The deep crisis is seen in the U.S. and abroad, economically, in unemployment and poverty, homelessness and hunger. It is seen politically, in new laws attacking workers and women, and new outbursts of racism. It is seen environmentally, with the advance of climate disruption and fake capitalistic solutions. It is seen in thought, as the lack of philosophy, of a total view, hampers the development of struggles from the U.S. to the revolutions of the Arab Spring facing counter-revolutions.

I. Capitalism's many crises

A. Toward the nuclear brink

The bellicose acts of both the U.S. and North Korea confirm how ready both are to risk nuclear war. It may be true that neither side desires to plunge into such a nightmarish disaster. Yet each has repeatedly pushed closer to the brink. North Korea's leader Kim Jong-un held missile and nuclear bomb tests, repudiated the Korean War's 60-year-old armistice, and restarted a shuttered reactor to produce nuclear weapons fuel. He threatened to bomb South Korea, Japan, the U.S. and Guam. Secretary of State John Kerry declared, "North Korea will not be accepted as a nuclear power"; the U.S. expanded its annual joint military drills with South Korea, adding bombing runs by nuclear-capable B-2 and B-52 warplanes.

The Korean Peninsula has been militarized since World War II ended. Europe and Asia were divided into spheres of influence of the two superpowers, Russia and the U.S. After the Korean War and the collapse of the USSR, the division of Korea persisted, with rising power China as North Korea's remaining ally.

North and South Korea have two of the world's largest standing armies. The North deploys approximately 700,000 troops, 8,000 artillery systems and 2,000 tanks close to the South, ready to strike. Its regime maintains not only its large military but its hold on power through its "military first" policy.

The superpower U.S. has 28,500 troops in South Korea, with another 53,000 based in nearby Japan and 55,000 more in Hawaii and Guam. And this is before the U.S. has executed its "pivot to Asia" to confront China's regional strength. At the same time, China is using nationalism to try to divert widespread internal discontent, revolt and strikes, and has its own imperialist designs to control supplies of strategic resources like oil and rare earths. China has acted ever more aggressively in territorial disputes with several other Asian nations over resource-rich uninhabited islands in the Pacific. Its naval vessels recently confronted ships from both The Philippines and Japan.

Long before North Korea built its first nuclear weapons, the U.S., Russia and China had intercontinental missiles aimed at each other. The recent events are a harsh reminder that the end of the Cold War did not end the nuclear threat to humanity. The fact is that nine countries are now nuclear-armed, with about 16,000 warheads in U.S. and Russian stockpiles.

Only the U.S. has intentionally used atomic weapons against civilian targets. Such weapons are one part of the world's overwhelmingly largest armed forces. De-

This special issue carries our Draft Perspectives Thesis, part of our preparation for the national gathering of News and Letters Committees. We publish it because our age is in such total crisis, facing a choice between absolute terror or absolute freedom, that a revolutionary organization can no longer allow any separation between theory and practice, philosophy and revolution, workers and intellectuals, "inside" and "outside." Join us in discussing these Perspectives.

spite recent budget cuts, the U.S. still spends more on its military than the ten next biggest militaries combined.

The fact that some in South Korea now call for construction of their own nuclear weapons illustrates the lie inherent in the Non-Proliferation Treaty. It calls for nuclear-armed nations to pursue disarmament, but in reality acts as a framework for proliferation. The show of weapons reduction really amounts to arsenal modernization. This is in keeping with an international order in which not only do nations compete with one another, but a group of industrialized countries continuously appropriates natural resources and unpaid labor from the majority of the world's population.

The civilian nuclear energy industry was created

to provide a "peaceful" cover for the nuclear-industrial complex. The civilian industry enables proliferation to continue. In the wake of Fukushima's meltdowns, the people of Japan are the latest victims of the "peaceful" side of the complex.

Not only in Korea but in South Asia the specter of "limited nuclear war" has been raised, as if it is a realistic or sane prospect. In January the Indian government warned Kashmir residents to prepare for nuclear attack at a time of sporadic fighting between the Indian and Pakistani armies in Kashmir.

Brinkmanship cannot be dismissed as mere show. Going over the brink can happen easily where so many weapons, both conventional and nuclear, are in position, whether in Korea, Kashmir, or the Middle East. Even more so where conflict has an objective basis in competition over resources like oil, trade routes, and territory, in the context of the global competition between the U.S., Europe and China, exacerbated by the global structural economic crisis. At the same time, one of the rulers' main weapons against revolt by the masses is militarism, which ratchets up the risk of war.

B. Europe's economic crisis and revolt

Capitalism's utter moribund degeneracy is seen not only in threats to humanity's future from nuclear weapons and climate change, but also in the continuing economic crisis. High unemployment and homelessness persist in the U.S. and Europe, and the world food crisis continues. The UN estimates that 10.3 million people could suffer food shortages in the Sahel region of Africa this year. One in six people in the U.S.—46 million, including one in four children—do not get enough food.

Europe is again in recession. Unemployment there has soared since the financial crisis, reaching 48.7 million in February. In Greece the unemployment rate hit a new high of 27.2% in January, triple that of four years ago. Youth unemployment was 59.3%. It is nearly as bad in Spain, where youths held mass protests across Spain against high unemployment and poor working conditions. They even protested near its embassies in other countries, calling attention to the large number of youth forced to go abroad to find work.

A whole series of European countries has taken bailout loans in return for imposing harsh austerity measures: slashing social spending, pensions and

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Jae-hyun Kim leads a protest in front of the U.S. embassy in Seoul, South Korea, on Feb. 23, 2013, calling for the release of Bradley Manning.

WOMAN AS REASON Violence 'normalized'

by Terry Moon

We are living in contradictory times, especially when it comes to women's struggle for freedom. On the one hand you have a Women's Liberation Movement that has never been more radical, unified and global. On the other hand there is more repression, and the violence is more brutal and deadly than ever before.

In just the last few months we have learned of new atrocities: the gang rape and murder of 17-year-old Anene Booysen in South Africa; the 14-year-old Bangladeshi, Hena Akhter, who was charged with adultery after being repeatedly raped and brutalized by her older married cousin and ordered lashed by the local imam. She died after being hit 70 times. In India the attacks keep happening: a Swiss tourist beaten and raped by eight men at her campsite; a seven-year-old girl sexually assaulted at school. In the Maldives, a 15-year-old rape survivor has been sentenced to be whipped 100 times in public for "sex outside marriage" after being raped for years by her stepfather, who also murdered the baby she bore. The list never seems to end.

VIOLENCE NO LONGER WITHOUT PRECEDENT

Five years ago in March 2008, we wrote in these pages about the "obliteration" of women in Congo: "rape has become so brutal that not only are women's reproductive organs destroyed, but so are their digestive tracts. Some, lucky enough to find medical care, undergo six operations to repair their injuries....Doctors Without Borders...reports that 'acts of sexual violence accompanying the carnage have been without precedent in their frequency, their systematic nature, their brutality, and the perversity of the way they're planned and staged.'"

What only five years ago was an astonishing level of violence in Congo "without precedent," accurately describes the rape suffered by Jyoti Singh Pandey—the young woman in India whose rape and subsequent death galvanized massive demonstrations there—and the level of violence against women worldwide.

We are experiencing what some call a "normalization" of violence against women. You see that "normalization" in the USA when you have elected officials talk-

ing about "legitimate rape," or that it is impossible for a raped woman to become pregnant, or that if she does, that is god's wish and will. What is it but normalized if teenage boys in the heart of the USA think it's OK to rape a 16-year-old honor student who is unconscious, strip her, urinate on her and post pictures and videos of her—and of them brutalizing her—on the internet?

Rape is so accepted as normal that—even with all the stress on stopping sexual assault in the military—an Air Force commander felt both free and justified in throwing out an aggravated sexual assault court conviction of an Air Force fighter pilot. He reportedly "wanted to show the pilot community [which evidently in his mind included no women] that he had their backs."

RAPE AND THE LEFT

Nor has the Left escaped this normalization of violence and rape. That at least partly—and only partly—explains how the rape of a teenage British Socialist Workers Party (SWP) member by a Party big shot was dealt with in such a disgusting manner that it has brought scandal and mass flight from that Party. The case was tried by the SWP, with friends of the accused doing the investigation. Surprise, surprise, they decided that the young rape victim had not proven her case. As in a bourgeois trial, the woman was treated like the accused: questioned about her sexual history, her drinking habits. She was the one punished, banned from speaking at the party's 2012 conference. SWP members who had questions about what amounted to her prosecution were expelled from the Party for discussing it among themselves on Facebook; any others who objected were charged with being guilty of "bourgeois morality" and of capitulating to feminism. This is another way that feminism was presented by the leadership of the British SWP as an evil.

The Left in this case, which is supposed to be about the transformation of society, decided to try to save the reputation of their organization and its leadership and sacrifice a teenage girl. Whatever principles they may have had are thoroughly destroyed. What they accepted as normal was: the girl was lying, the sex had to be consensual (although sex between those with power and those without in any organization is always questionable as "consensual"), feminism is bad, and anyone who questions our authority is the enemy.

The escalation of violence is not happening in a vacuum. It is at least in part a response to women's increasing demands for freedom, demands to be treated as whole human beings who are determined to change their reality.

Be it in Egypt, Tunisia, other Arab Spring nations; India or the U.S.—in fact anywhere in the world—there can be no turning back, no retreat for women. The barbarity of the present makes clear that what is a necessity is for women's demand for full freedom—for full personhood—to be an articulated, nonnegotiable revolutionary demand. Today's reality shows that nothing short of a deep and total revolution that can transform all human relationships will mean women's freedom.

Rallies for equal pay

Chicago—On April 9 rallies were held across the U.S. to mark the day women's earnings catch up to what men's were at the end of 2012. I attended the rally at the Daley Plaza. Speakers included elected officials, leaders of business and professional women's organizations and heads of NGOs. Statistics regarding equal pay for equal work are even worse for Black women and even worse than that for Latinas.

There was a call to tell truth to the lies that the reason women earn less is because they choose to work in jobs that pay less (blame the victim) or that women choose to work fewer hours to take time off to raise a family.

The truth is that traditional "women's work" jobs pay less because of discrimination. There's no good reason a nurse's aide should be paid less than a construction worker except that nurse's aide jobs have historically been held by women. As for the fact that women take time off to raise a family, this ignores entirely that most men do not do their share of child raising, so women are forced to be the primary caregiver.

A recent American Association of University Women study, "Graduating to a Pay Gap," explores the pay gap between male and female college graduates working full time one year after graduation. They conclude that: "in 2009...women one year out of college who were working full time were paid, on average, just 82% of what their male peers were paid. After we control for hours, occupation, college major, employment sector, and other factors associated with pay, the pay gap shrinks but does not disappear. About one-third of the gap cannot be explained by any of the factors commonly understood to affect earnings..."

There was also a call to enforce the federal Equal Pay Act.

As I write this, all the Republican Representatives voted to block the Paycheck Fairness Act. What is wrong with equal pay for equal work?

—Sue S.

The Good News Club

The Good News Club: The Christian Right's Stealth Assault on America's Children, by Katherine Stewart (published by Public Affairs, 2012), is important because it describes a highly organized, well-funded attempt by the religious Right to destroy the U.S. system



of public education and to indoctrinate children and youth ages four and up in Christian Nationalism.

Also known as Dominionism or Christian theocracy, this is the factually inaccurate notion that the founders of the U.S. intended for its laws and morals to be based on the Bible. Fundamentalists, who consider themselves the only true Christians, are to reclaim the country from Leftists who have brought it to a morally degraded

state through concern for the rights and freedoms of everyone. The religious Right must control the U.S. government—and, in some versions of this ideology, the world—to bring about the longed-for Second Coming of Jesus and end of the world.

THE FASCISM OF THE CHRISTIAN RIGHT

Stewart accurately identifies this ideology as fascism and as part of a global rise of religious fundamentalism. Both indoctrinate youth in submission to authority, hierarchal gender roles, and suspicion of free, rational thinking and of differences in others.

Stewart describes how the religious Right's activism changed the court system's interpretation of the Constitution, leading to the religious Right's ability to set up numerous programs in public schools. It ironically co-opted the rhetoric of the Left and its concern for the civil rights of minorities and free speech, reinterpreting religious content as "speech"—a minority viewpoint that must be protected.

The religious Right provides lawyers, trained at its own law schools, to enforce these court rulings and intimidate resistant school administrators and parents. There's a chapter describing how the religious Right takeover of the Texas school board led to the adoption of national textbook standards with inaccurate Right-wing views of history and science.

Stewart attended conventions and leadership training seminars of religious Right organizations that set up programs such as the Good News Club in public schools. They use sophisticated corporate marketing techniques to infiltrate schools and indoctrinate children in obedience to authority and the idea that fundamentalist Christianity is the only way to heaven. The children are constantly urged to convert other children.

PARENTS' WISHES BE DAMNED

The promoters of these programs don't care that parents don't want them or that they tear apart communities and undermine support for the schools, just as they don't care that abstinence-only education does not work. Their stated purpose is to destroy the public school system and replace it with a system of government-funded, private fundamentalist schools.

At the end of the book, Stewart makes one brief statement that she thinks the religious Right will fail to turn the U.S. into a fascist "Christian Nation" because our society is "inherently open and pluralistic." However, her description of the systematic nature of this attack makes me worry they will succeed. Stewart does warn that, if we ignore this threat, Americans may lose universal access to education and our historically new tolerance of difference, which is enough cause for concern. Although Stewart does not discuss how to fight this threat, I hope that this book will be a wake-up call that the religious Right continues to be a threat for future generations.

—Adele

WOMENWORLDWIDE

by Artemis



Tunisian feminist Amina Tyler

On March 8, International Women's Day, 19-year-old Tunisian feminist Amina Tyler wrote: "My body is mine, not somebody's honor" across her nude breasts and posted her photo on Femen Tunisia's Facebook page. Islamic fundamentalists called for her death by stoning. Femen, based in Kiev, Ukraine, organized "International Topless Jihad Day" in several European capitals on April 4, Tyler's birthday, and burned an Islamic flag. This ignited a fierce debate between feminists who say all Islam is oppressive and Muslim feminists who say anti-Islamic sentiment gives fundamentalists ammunition to call feminism a Western import and others who say what Femen did was racist. In the brouhaha, support for Amina Tyler became lost.

* * *

April 7-13 was Meet Us On the Street: International Anti-Street Harassment Week. Over 100 groups, including anti-rape and domestic violence centers, campus groups, and international chapters of "Hollaback!" participated from 21 countries. Events included rallies, marches, and chalk parties for writing slogans on the sidewalk such as "I am reclaiming the streets where I was harassed." Activists handed out flyers such as "Six Things Men Can Do to Stop Street Harassment" and also discussed the fact that LGBT people are often victims of harassment.

* * *

On April 5-12 the student group Sexual Empowerment and Awareness at Tennessee hosted "Sex Week" at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville—a week of speakers and workshops about sexual health, preventing sexual violence, and topics on gender, feminism, and LGBTs. The university revoked funding for the program after state lawmakers criticized it as "offensive to Christians" and conservative newscasters ridiculed it. But supporters, including a local Unitarian church, helped raise more funds.

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New York fast food workers strike for living wage

New York City—More than 400 workers in fast food chains walked off the job April 4, the anniversary of the death of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., to demand a wage increase to \$15 an hour, better working conditions and the right to organize a union. In November, 200 workers had walked out. On April 4, in many places the walkouts had a spontaneous character. Workers left their jobs, some as early as 6:00 AM.

The organizer of the movement, Fast Food Forward (FFF), received statements of support from over 12,000 people. FFF noted that while the major fast food corporations made over \$200 billion in profits last year, many of their workers are paid so little that they have to receive food stamps to feed their families. (See *El Diario/La Prensa*.)

Fast food workers typically earn between \$10,000 and \$18,000 annually. A McDonald's worker said, "We deserve better. I have three kids, and on \$7.25 an hour I can't support them, and I can't give them the education I want them to have."

"I want respect, a better salary, to be able to join



a union without my employer intimidating me," said a striker who has worked at a Taco Bell in Penn Station for four years. "I am doing this for my family and for future generations of workers."

There is a rigid hierarchy in these restaurants, and bullying of employees by management is not uncommon. Two years ago, in New York, an employee was forced from a Subway restaurant after it was discovered that she was pregnant.

The fact that over 400 of these workers publicly defied their managers and struck, although they had no union representing them, is an indication that workers in this sector

are indeed ready to move. Even prior to having a union, workers at fast food restaurants can use the "work-to-rule" tactics of more organized workers to press their demands for higher wages and better working conditions.

But the key, as it has always been in any labor organizing, is the unity and the resolve of the workers, along with the support of the communities where these fast food places are located. A union of community activists who are free to leaflet and picket these establishments with the unity of the workers could bring substantial changes to this industry.

Will the trade union bureaucracy make a serious effort to organize the fast food sector? If unions do not, and do not take on the wholesale food industry and the

Portsmouth, England: unite against austerity

Portsmouth, England—Owen Jones, independent columnist and author of *Chavs*, joined people from across Portsmouth on March 20 to launch a community group to fight against austerity. The new organization, Unite Community Portsmouth, is part of Unite's organizing drive that seeks to re-establish links between the trade unions and local communities. Unite is Britain and Ireland's largest trade union, with 1.5 million members working across all sectors of the economy.

"We are going through the biggest squeeze in living standards since my granddad was born in this city in the 1920s," said Jones, who cites his grandfather's conversion to trade unionism precisely through his experience working in Portsmouth. "So I'm really glad to be here because of this fantastic initiative that Unite has set up."

The Unite Communities project has been instigated across the country as part of an attempt to tackle the loss of influence the trade union movement has over local areas. In the past, when workplaces were more centralized and tended to absorb much of the nearby labour force, it was easier for trade unions to play a direct role in community politics.

Changes in the industrial landscape, from outsourcing of manufacturing to the greater role played by smaller service-sector enterprises, have partially eroded contact between a community and the union movement. Unite initiated the community organizing drive to not only address such issues, but provide an additional platform for anti-austerity politics.

"It's a really exciting time," said Liane Groves, Unite Community National Organizer. "These groups are mushrooming. People are literally meeting in front rooms, local community centers and so on in order to fight these vicious (government) policies."

Groves stressed that Unite does not wish to simply "bolt on" community groups to the rest of the union. "People have to decide how to do things themselves. What's important is that people stand together. The government is trying to divide us between 'scroungers' and 'strivers.' We need to fight against that."

Portsmouth has historically suffered with the decline of national manufacturing, having once had a thriving dockyard. With the advent of austerity policies, Portsmouth will be affected by the "black April" reforms, such as the unpopular bedroom tax.

"When you have people working mainly in the hire and fire service sector, you need to organize right across the community," said Jones, "That is the point we have always got to remember; our own power and our own strength. That when we can collectively organize, when we have confidence and courage in our own strength, then we can win. We can turn this around. We can stand together. We fight together and we can win this together."

—Dan Read

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megastores like Wal-Mart and Whole Foods, they are setting the stage for an America where the working class will no longer be unionized.

While the unions cite the high turnover of workers as an impediment to organizing, others contend that the work force in the fast food chains is now more stable, due to the economic reality that people no longer have the option to quit one job and get another one relatively easily. This enforced stability could provide unions with an opportunity to make inroads into this sector.

Capitalists want a return to the 19th century, when unions and strikes were illegal and crushed by the brute military force of the State. If organized labor does not see that expansion as vital, it will not survive in its present form.

—Michael Gilbert

Trade Fair workers fight expanded lockout

Queens, N.Y.—The March lockout of all unionized workers in the meat department of the Trade Fair supermarket in Astoria has now extended to all nine Trade Fair locations in the borough of Queens, affecting over 100 workers. They were penalized because they wore buttons declaring union pride, and because they were resisting efforts to bring in non-union workers after rejecting a proposed contract which would have cut back their hours and reduced or eliminated benefits.

After at least one belligerent encounter between the workers and management, and a brief walkout by the workers, all the workers found themselves locked out of their jobs. Big banners outside the store, put up by management, called the locked-out workers "strikers," and accused them of disrupting store activities.

Spirits have been high on the picket line. The workers received support from Occupy Astoria and other locals of the The United Food and Commercial Workers International Union (UFCW), the Hotel Workers and politicians. On April 1, Councilman Jimmy Van Bramer joined a crowd of rallying meat department workers of Local 342 at the Long Island City Trade Fair location.

There was also a rally at the East Elmhurst location of Trade Fair, with more than 80 participants. The workers, most of whom are Latinos, have received coverage of their fight in the leading Latino newspaper in New York City, *El Diario/La Prensa*.

COPS HARASS PICKETERS

During shopping hours at the Astoria store, union members stand behind a police barricade, monitored by a squad car from the local precinct, passing out fliers to community residents and potential customers asking them to not shop at the store. Store management has used its clout with the cops, so workers are forced to stand between two barricades at a distance from the store entrance, although there have been no reported complaints of obstruction of business.

Like so many other protests here, the police do everything in their power to minimize the impact of the protest. But there has been a substantial decrease in people buying from the supermarket. Union activists report other significant successes in their campaign, including management taking down the anti-union banners it had plastered all over the front of the store.

Local 342 has filed several unfair labor practice charges with the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) against the company, including intimidation, threats of termination, harassment and coercing of union workers and representatives for exercising their rights as union members. Trade Fair hired replacement workers for all nine Queens supermarket locations amid the lockout. As far as UFCW Local 342 is concerned, this practice is illegal, and those charges have also been filed with the NLRB.

"I need to work. I have to pay my bills, pay my rent," said a mother of three who has worked in the meat department for 23 years. "That's why I need my job back."

OWNER OUT OF CONTROL

One woman stated that workers who have been with Trade Fair as long as 25 years have been locked out. Management has been verbally harassing the picketers at various locations. One union member said that the owner of Trade Fair, Frank Jaber, screamed in her face.

Trade Fair workers in a different UFCW local have come out on the picket lines during their breaks to show solidarity with the locked out workers. A delegation from Communications Workers Local 100 also joined the picket line outside one of the stores.

Locked out workers are receiving more and more support from the community. People going by the 30th Ave. store in Astoria are expressing more support for the workers, and the number of people boarding the bus with Trade Fair bags is decreasing. Trade Fair management is finding itself more isolated. The pressure is on. Time is on the side of the workers.

—M.G.

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reaching precision, was originally promoted by HMO advocates during the healthcare reform debate as a way to enhance healthcare delivery. But when deployed by corporate interests, it is really about cost-cutting and revenue enhancement.

Doctors at the HMO where I work are not only facing ever-increased speedup, but also are monitored by the computer. Because their workloads have become so huge, often doctors are caught making a choice between charting duties or taking care of the next patient.

A doctor's daily routine has been profoundly transformed through ever-increasing speedup and mechanization. Karl Marx warned us that the capitalist will increasingly transform every single profession in society, driving them into the ranks of proletarians, even professions hitherto considered sacred, from men of letters and jurists to teachers and doctors.

For HMO accountants and administrators, foremen of the modern healthcare assembly line, charting is a "cover your behind" legal matter as well as a way to speed revenue recovery. They instituted a sort of scarlet letter punishment method, publicly announcing that a doctor has been suspended due to a backlog of incomplete charts.

It was shocking to see so many doctors, whom I have known for many years as life-saving dedicated professionals, treated in such a demeaning way. Doctors too have joined the ranks of "indignant hearts" that once belonged only to nurses, housekeepers and other rank-and-file healthcare workers.

FIND SCAPEGOATS

We frontline workers know that much of what is called charting has little to do with patient care, but is monitoring the legal and financial aspects of care. Real and chronic systemic deficiencies are covered up, while individual employees, whatever their skill level, become scapegoats.

Everyone—doctors, nurses, lab techs, aides, clericals—is sped up to the point where mistakes are inevitable. The mechanized investigation, discipline and training, instituted to deal with mistakes, has less to do with resolving them than with protecting the company's legal and financial bottom line.

Punishment is meted out based on precise surveillance data, leaving no wiggle room. Human interpretation of data has been wrenched out of the process, as well as the spirit of the regulations and guidelines that were written supposedly with healthcare in mind.

Recently, the California Department of Health issued a sanction against Kaiser when its investigation, triggered by patient and staff complaints, determined that the HMO systematically denied patients access to prompt and adequate mental healthcare. Patients are corralled into group therapy to manage short staffing and other cost cutting policies.

The computer with its air of objectivity has come to dominate human beings. The usurping of human judgment pervades all of society, from healthcare and education to manufacturing and the judicial sphere. Human empathy and understanding have been replaced by automated thinking that mimics the computer. Reclaiming our own minds is a step towards human freedom.

FROM THE WRITINGS OF RAYADUNAYEVSKAYA

Editor's note: Sixty years ago Raya Dunayevskaya first articulated what she later called "the philosophic moment" that shaped her whole body of ideas. We present the Foreword to the original 1955 pamphlet, the first publication of News and Letters Committees, a mimeographed edition of Lenin's "Abstract of Hegel's Science of Logic" and Dunayevskaya's 1953 Letters on Hegel's Absolutes. The original can be found in the Raya Dunayevskaya Collection #12061. (For the text of the entire pamphlet, see #2431.) Footnotes were added by the editors.

Part I of those Philosophic Notes consist of extracts from Lenin's *Philosophic Notebooks*. These were written in 1915, at the time the holocaust of World War I made a shambles of the world in general and of the "vanguard" (official Marxism) in particular. It was at this critical point in history that Lenin felt compelled to study Hegel's *Science of Logic*. Far from being an evasion of the political tasks of the moment, it was a recognition that the time demanded infinitely more than the mere counterposition of a correct political policy against a wrong political policy.

What sent Lenin to examine the very foundations of Marxism—its Hegelian philosophic base—was the very fact that he was so shocked by the German Social Democracy's voting war credits to the Kaiser that he considered the issue of *Vorwärts*, which announced it, as a forgery perpetrated by Imperial Germany, instead of the actual mirror of the Second International's thinking.

Those *Notebooks* mark the great divide in Marxism. They were Lenin's preparation for his writings on *Imperialism* and *State and Revolution*, as well as the actual Russian Revolution in November 1917.

This is the first English translation of the remarks which Lenin made to himself as he studied Hegel's *Science of Logic* and *History of Philosophy*. I made the rough translation of Lenin's *Notebooks* in 1948. It is impossible here to reproduce the whole text as it is a book unto itself, consisting mainly of Hegel's works, with underlinings of all sorts and side remarks and aphorisms by Lenin. I hope the extracts will send the reader to the entire text by Lenin as well as Hegel's *Science of Logic* itself.

In 1950, under the impact of the miners' strike sparked by automation (the continuous miner), I returned actively to the writing of a book on Marxism which I now called "the Lenin book" because I conceived Lenin's *Notebooks* as central to the work. I wanted a worker present at the oral presentation of the thesis because the whole point was that unless the most profound ideas of Marx were expressed so simply and directly that the average worker would understand, it had no meaning at all. Otherwise it would have lost all its purpose, for the new impulses can come from nowhere but out of the struggles, thinking, and aspirations of the working class—especially American workers.

Where Lenin, in 1915, could keep his philosophic discoveries in private notebooks, we could not do so in the 1950s. It did not matter in 1915 because by 1917 the Russian workers had, in actuality, transformed the old order. But now that Russia, far from being a workers' state, is the greatest tyranny on earth, we had to face the question that is in everyone's mind: what happens AFTER workers gain power? Are we always to be confronted with a labor bureaucracy? Our age has so matured that we must **begin** with the workers themselves participating in the working out of the philosophic, that is to say, total outlook. That is the reason the recent se-

THE PHILOSOPHIC MOMENT OF MARXIST-HUMANISM

by

Raya Dunayevskaya

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1. Preface
2. Presentation on *Dialectics of Organization and Philosophy of June 1, 1987*
3. *Letters on Hegel's Absolutes of May 12 and 20, 1953*

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On the 60th anniversary of Dunayevskaya's Philosophic Letters Hegel's Absolute Idea is for workers

ries of lectures have been undertaken **before** the writing of the book.

Part II consists of an exchange of letters on Hegel's Absolute Idea, which I call the concept of a new society. They were written in 1953. That was the year of Stalin's death, on the one hand, and the East German Revolt, on the other hand. A new era of struggle for freedom opened with the East German revolt, and within a few weeks it was followed by a revolt in the slave labor camps of Vorkuta inside Russia itself. Clearly, Stalin's death symbolized the beginning of the end of totalitarianism. The maturity of the age could be seen in the fact that the average man on the street and the philosopher were asking one and the same question: **Can** man be free in this age of totalitarian bureaucracy? We leaped generations ahead when the workers in a satellite country and those in slave labor camps took matters into their own hands and thus illuminated the road ahead to a new society.

1950 had opened a new era in production with the first serious introduction of automation in the form of the continuous miner.¹ From the first industrial revolution, the newly-born factory proletariat gained the impulse to struggle for the shortening of the working day, and thereby established a new philosophy. "In place of the pompous catalogue of the 'inalienable rights of man,'" Marx wrote in his greatest theoretical work, *Capital*, "comes the modest Magna Charta of a legally limited working-day, which shall make clear 'when the time which the worker sells is ended, and when his own begins.' What a distance we have traveled!"

The second industrial revolution was being translated by the workers the world over into a new humanism. Never have they posed the question more clearly as not being one of material possessions nor annual wages but of conditions of labor in a fundamentally new way of life. Without this universal philosophic form, state capitalism as a tendency would remain economist and incomplete. Although we, as a state capitalist tendency, had been saying for years that we live in an age of absolutes, that the task of the theoreticians was the working out materialistically of Hegel's last chapter on The Absolute Idea, we were unable to relate the daily

1. For an account of the miners' revolt against the new machine, the continuous miner, see Andy Phillips and Raya Dunayevskaya, *The Coal Miners' General Strike of 1949-50 and The Birth of Marxist-Humanism in the U.S.* (Chicago, News & Letters, 1984).

struggles of the workers to this total conception. The maturity of the age, on the other hand, disclosed itself in the fact that, with automation, the worker began to question the very mode of labor. Thus the workers began to make concrete, **and thereby extended**, Marx's

profoundest conceptions, for the innermost core of the Marxian dialectic, around which everything turns, is that the transformation of society must begin with the material life of the worker, the producer.

In 1953, when we were preparing to come out with a paper [*Correspondence*] that would be a break from all previous radical papers, I turned to philosophy and saw in the Absolute Idea the breakdown of the division between theory and practice in the movement for total freedom. What was new was that there was a dialectic not alone in the movement from theory to practice, but **from practice to theory**. That, in essence, was the gist of the letters to Hauser,² the philosopher-designate, who, after demurring a day or so, came back, with her usual hyperbole: "I think that these notes represent **our** *Philosophic Notebooks*,

comparable to those of VL in 1915."

Johnson,³ the titular founder of the state capitalist tendency, however, had other ideas. He never acknowledged receiving the letter, and when Hauser came to him with enthusiasm for all the "discoveries" I had made, he managed to shut her up too. What had previously been a literary clique now became a philosophic clique as well.

The titular head of the state capitalist tendency, far from looking at the stage of production and stage of workers' revolt, was busy examining the "social personality" of "original characters" and the "uniqueness" of the great literary writers, to which the new humanism of the great East German Revolt played a secondary role.

It is high time to abolish the division between the "theoretical leaders" and "the rank and file" as well as between "the inside" and "the outside." While the form in which the ideas first evolved in the mind of the author is rough and even abstruse, no stage in the evolution of the book need be kept private. These notes and these letters are being published for all who are interested.

Detroit, Michigan
November, 1955

2. "Hauser" was the organizational name used by Grace Lee Boggs in this period.
3. "Johnson" of the Johnson-Forest Tendency was the organizational name used by C. L. R. James. "Forest" was the organizational name used by Raya Dunayevskaya.

Constitutional scandal rocks Canada

A new book, *La Bataille de Londres* by Frédéric Bastien, has shaken Canada so thoroughly that in some ways it has become a different country. Bastien, an historian who teaches at Dawson College in Montréal, spent eight years researching in the United Kingdom because relevant documents of the Canadian Foreign Office in Canadian archives were almost completely redacted.

Bastien's book reveals how Margaret Thatcher and former Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau collaborated to undermine democracy in the shaping of the "repatriated" Canadian Constitution of 1982, in some cases by using proxies. Bora Laskin, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Canada, and Justice Willard Estey provided information to the British Foreign Office about the constitutional proceedings, and Laskin revealed the confidential discussions between the magistrates about the legality of "repatriation" to British officials.

Questions include the scope of intervention in Canadian affairs by high-level British government officials; the violation of the separation of executive and judicial powers; and questions about how deep these and possible other interventions were. This has been called a *coup d'état*, as it imposed a constitution on all of Canada without the consent of Québec, putting the entire Canadian Constitution in question.

The 1982 Constitution was never signed by Québec. It is detrimental to the rights of French-Canadians as it reduces French to a minority language and, in place of the principle of two nations within one, it establishes an abstract "multi-culturalism" which reduces everything but English to second place.

With the urging of the Québec Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Alexandre Cloutier, and former Québec Premier Lucien Bouchard, **the Québec National Assembly/Assemblée Nationale voted to urge the federal government in Ottawa to "open its books" on all that happened at that time.**

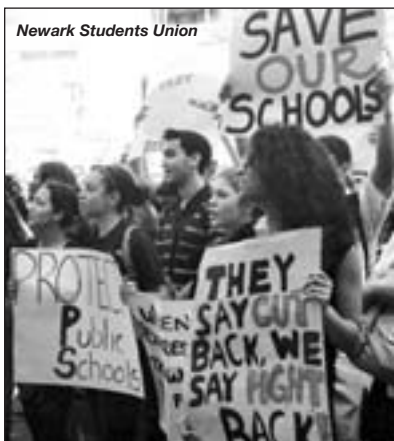
The crisis also puts Prime Minister Stephen Harper in a bind, as he has to choose whether to defend the 1982 Constitution, or use the scandal against Justin Trudeau, who may soon be his electoral opponent. Justin Trudeau is the 41-year-old son of former Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau. He has been described as having 21st century good looks and a 19th century mind.

Also, the New Democratic Party (NDP/NPD) voted overwhelmingly to remove almost all references to "socialism" and to "social ownership," and all "business unfriendly" language from its party constitution. Their new goal is "sustainable economic development." At their Convention, an Obama for America field organizer addressed the election readiness seminars about "cutting-edge" campaign techniques and how to mobilize support. The NDP/NPD is no longer relevant as a labor or social justice party. Former NDP/NPD (now a Liberal) Ontario Premier Bob Rae is a major cheerleader for the Keystone XL pipeline.

Last but not least, federal Natural Resources Minister Joe Oliver, whose job is mainly to promote the XL pipeline, is touring Canada saying that climate fears are "exaggerated."

Canada is in crisis. Expect resistance and new voices for freedom from the people forced to live with it.
—D. Chêneville & Ti-Ouistiti

Newark high school students walk out



On April 9, over 500 Newark students walked out of the Newark Public Schools and marched to Assembly budget hearings to protest Governor Christie's draconian budget cuts. The Newark Student Union is demanding Newark's legally mandated share of funding instead of granting new tax cuts to big corporations.



by Suzanne Rose

A mentally ill graduate student at Cal. State Los Angeles was shot to death by police Dec. 8. The student had bipolar disorder and was off his medications. His parents say that the school knew the student was troubled. Twice that day the police were called to calm down Bartholomew Williams and succeeded. The third time was at his apartment where they went to take him in for a mental-health evaluation. Bartholomew was killed when he attacked police. There are known measures that could have been used to calm Bartholomew instead of shooting him.

* * *

A child with autism was found locked in a 3' x 3' cage in his parents' basement in O'Fallon, Mo., sitting in his own waste. Other children in the home said that the child was fed through the bars of the cage and was not let out to play. Facing felony child endangerment charges, the parents turned themselves in in March.

* * *

More than 20% of doctors in five major metropolitan areas told people with disabilities—who are more in need of routine medical services than most of us—to go somewhere else for their medical care. Under the Americans with Disabilities Act, doctors are to provide "full and equal access to their healthcare facilities and services." But many doctors don't accept patients on Medicaid because those with disabilities need more time for their appointments and the Medicaid reimbursement rate doesn't take that into account. Even with private insurance many doctors are still unwilling to accept a disabled patient.

* * *

On March 30, around 3,000 people marched on George Square in Glasgow, Scotland, while another 1,000 assembled outside the Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh to protest cuts to a housing benefit for those with spare bedrooms. The "Bedroom Tax" will reduce the housing benefit received by those who have a spare room in their home. The new UK Government policy will disproportionately affect disabled people and women. Many disabled use that spare room to store their medical equipment. One protester said, "10,600 people died last year within six weeks of their benefit ending." Many were unable to stay in their homes without that benefit and ended up homeless on the streets.

The inhumanity of solitary confinement

I went to jail for a year when I was 49 years old. One of the most impactful experiences was being placed in solitary confinement. Even though I was in there for only five days, I felt incredible psychological pain.

I thought I knew something about the topic when I went to a demonstration and then a legislative hearing on solitary confinement in California's prisons (see "California hearings on prison torture," March-April 2013 *N&L*). But I was unprepared for the effect it had on me. Its significance went well beyond my individual experience.

There was such solidarity among the people there, mostly families, supporting prisoners. They formed a community.

Their stories validated one another. A woman's loss of a husband, son or father goes to the core of what makes us human. They don't talk about it in academic terms. They feel it. They speak of losing a part of themselves. It was not different from a woman losing her husband in a war.

They all suffer an injustice. Each case we heard during the demonstration and the hearing was unique, yet they all complemented each other. The various stories showed a sensitivity to what is fundamental to our humanity.

The conditions of prisoners are horrible, beyond what anyone would call a "civilized" society. This is especially true of the Secure Housing Units (SHU). Taking away human contact takes away an ability to live, to be human. Prisoners in the SHU are not only taken away from society, they are also prevented from interacting even with those who share similar conditions. We know that withdrawal of a variety of sensory inputs has detrimental effects. Taking away human contact is

like taking away the air people breathe.

One woman spoke of her brother, who killed himself. All the signs were there, but the prison did nothing. It's a surprise that more people in these circumstances don't commit suicide.

What came through at the demonstration was an inextinguishable hope, from people on the inside and on the outside who display a genius in expressing what would make life more just and human. They hoped as well that their loved ones would be released.

During the hearing state legislator Tom Ammiano recognized that the existence of SHUs does not affect only the prisoners but the whole society, not just in terms of cost, but in who we are.

In a country where one in six African Americans will spend time in prison, this is a widespread impact, a challenge to America.

The laws that allow a society to treat its weakest members inhumanely make that society inhumane.

If it does not fix this inhumanity, it chooses to be an inhumane society. It says who we are as Americans, what our values are.

—Ibrahim



Oakland, Calif.—One of many rallies, vigils, speakouts and conferences in solidarity with SHU prisoners and the possible resumption of their hunger strike on July 8, 2013.

Thatcher is dead, Thatcherism persists

continued from p. 1

Augusto Pinochet's Chile, Thatcher certainly made her mark. Unfortunately for those looking to elevate her to sainthood, the experience, as any impartial observer would agree, was entirely negative.

And yet successive governments, even ones formed by the allegedly pro-worker Labour Party, not only have seen fit to fall into line in paying their respects to the now departed "leader," but have retained many of her policies for their own benefit.

Take the infamous anti-trade union laws. The attempts to settle scores with the British trade union movement, which in 1972 humiliated the Conservative Party and played a part in the 1974 electoral defeat of Prime Minister Ted Heath, led to an attempt to bind so-called out of control unions to the state. The backdrop to such a move culminated in the famous Miners' strike of 1984-85, when pit closures and sackings were met by mass strike action from Scotland to South Wales.

The miners, despite heroic resistance, were ultimately defeated, in part via massed ranks of riot police—some now reputed to have actually been soldiers drafted in and draped in police uniform—in brutal confrontations such as the now infamous Battle of Orgreave. Such locales to this day are hotbeds of anti-Thatcherite sentiment, and yet the anti-union laws that followed remain in force, in the process binding British trade unions to an assortment of confused and bureaucratic measures, outlawing secondary picketing and even threatening unions with the seizure of strike funds should they fail to comply.

BLAIR CONTINUES THATCHERISM

Just prior to gaining the Prime Minister's office in 1997, Tony Blair, as an alleged man of labour, worked hard to reassure all concerned that such anti-union practices were here to stay. The soon-to-be Prime Min-

ister, who now stands as one of the most hated men ever to come out of the Labour Party, wrote in Rupert Murdoch's *The Times* that even after "the changes we do propose, British laws on trade unions will remain the most restrictive in the western world."

Jump ahead and we have yet another Conservative administration hell-bent on enforcing the kind of "free market," finance-friendly and big business policies Thatcher upheld. In foreign policy, the days of making alliances of convenience with human rights abusers, so ably demonstrated in the case of Thatcher and Pinochet—whom she credited following his 1998 arrest for human rights abuses as having "brought democracy to Chile"—have been continued.

Indeed, Britain maintains strong relations with a number of states well known for violating international human rights law, from the current governments in Iraq, Afghanistan and Indonesia to the autocratic House of Saud; the latter pair being favored customers for the UK arms industry. Additionally, in 2011 former Prime Minister Tony Blair, in his capacity as an "advisor" allegedly on how to win the Nobel Peace Prize, picked up a paycheck of 13 million pounds from President Nursultan Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan, a nation that journalist and author Nick Cohen describes as an "oil-rich dictatorship, which shoots strikers, burns the offices of opposition parties and kills their leaders."

In this sense it's difficult to find a point where "Thatcherism" ceased to exist as a political practice, whether the Iron Lady herself was in or out of office. Now that she has ceased to be, celebrations may seem premature, assuming of course we are not merely celebrating the death of an individual, but the end of a form of politics that brought misery and suffering to millions.

—Dan Read

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WOMEN'S LIBERATION

The March-April 2013 *N&L* centers on Women's Liberation. At each stage it owes so much to the Black movement. When you cut that history off from recollection of your movement, you risk losing the idea of the movement. The Abolitionists gloried in being the means through which a movement against slavery expressed itself. They saw that as part of their own freedom.

David M'oto
Bay Area

I escort at a clinic in Chicago that provides abortions. One day I noticed it was not even 7:00 AM and half the cars in our parking lot are from out of state: Michigan, Indiana, North Dakota. No one should have to travel so far for necessary healthcare.



Clinic escort
Chicago

A plan was adopted in the UN to combat violence against women. Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood strongly objected to it as clashing with Islamic principles and being against their culture. What they didn't expect is that the head of Egypt's delegation, Mervat Tallawy, had her own idea: "I believe in women's cause. I don't take money from the government. I work voluntarily. If they want to kick me out they can...Women are the slaves of this age. This is unacceptable, particularly in our region." Culture is no fossilized object but undergoes living development, especially in the process of revolution.

Reader
Oakland

Pope Francis just rubber-stamped Ratzinger's attack on U.S. nuns, confirming that three bishops—men, of course—supervise an overhaul of the largest group of American nuns. All this crap about a new Pope—he is the old Pope and the one before that, just in new clothes.

Revolutionary
Mexico

Dunayevskaya's essay, "The Black dimension and Women's Liberation as revolutionary Reason" (March-April *N&L*), does not use the expression she created: "The movement from practice is itself a form of theory." Yet the women's history she relates proves its truth. In stressing the importance of the "Black dimension" to Women's Liberation, Dunayevskaya makes the point that if that is not understood, then all "have failed entirely to grasp what is the root of theory, its true beginning." Theory begins with the movement from practice and it is Dunayevskaya's understanding of that fact that makes history, in her hands, an exciting and necessary experience.

Women's Liberationist
Chicago

LABOR AND FORCES OF REVOLT

The Chicago teachers' strike last September and the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) marching with parents in March against closing down neighborhood schools while opening charter schools has gotten the attention of teachers far from Chicago. We understand that more unions were prepared to join them in solidarity if the strike had continued, which was a major reason the mayor blinked. What impresses us is that the CTU leadership was a rank-and-file committee that has not turned against its members.

Teacher
Kansas

Labor reporter and activist Harry Kelber (1914-2013) passed away in March. He was active for over 80 years in the labor movement, often as a critic of the bureaucrats in charge, most recently as publisher of the internet newsletter *The Labor Educator*. With his own

READERS' VIEWS

history reaching back to Depression-era strikes, Kelber was able to keep his eye on the new as well. He said in a recent interview with *The Nation*:

"Organized labor should learn from Occupy that working people have to be involved in their own fate...I mean the fight against inequality has now erupted, and what the occupation of Wall Street has done at a very minimum is to make that an issue that will continue forever until there is some reasonable solution...I have in mind the Egyptian Spring. Workers will stand so much, and then rebel. I do have confidence that we will see that day. We are seeing some of it today."

Tim Finnigan
Illinois

Changes are occurring in popular mass struggle in the U.S. Young Latinos are increasingly voicing dissatisfaction with the so-called "Dream Act" and are demanding full amnesty. Latino workers are playing a vigorous role in working-class struggles. Many organizing drives are being spearheaded by Latinos, in the food industry, among carwash workers, and the occupation of Republic Windows and Doors in Chicago. Immigrants are losing their fear of deportation and are becoming a leading force in the class struggle.

Activist
Queens

ROGER EBERT

Roger Ebert was an important spokesperson for the disabled. Just by being himself he changed the negative perception of what it means to be disabled. Shortly after cancer surgery took away part of his jaw and his ability to speak, eat or drink, Ebert wrote in "I'm Not a Pretty-Boy Anymore":

"I was told photos of me in this condition would attract the gossip papers. So what?...I have been very sick, am getting better and this is how it looks. We spend too much time hiding illness. There is an assumption that I must always look the same....Being sick is no fun. But you can have fun while you're sick."

Suzanne
Chicago

AT THE MOVIES

I agree with Michael Gilbert ("Django Unchained," March-April *N&L*) that Quentin Tarantino has brought to light the barbarity of the slave system, but I don't see the movie as revolutionary. I always watch Tarantino's movies holding my nose, because his depiction of graphic violence makes me feel brutalized to the point of dehumanization, not revolution. It's important for revolutionaries not just to know, but to feel the violence that permeated slave society. But Tarantino does not take us beyond that. Our challenge is to transform that brutal culture into one where everyone's humanity is recognized and nurtured.

Susan Van Gelder
Detroit

I could not disagree more with Michael Gilbert's review. The length of *Django Unchained* is only the beginning of its faults. The violence vacillates from the cartoonish to the realistic. The enthusiasm with which Tarantino subjects his audiences to the brutalization of Black people is characteristic of his career. Slavery is the perfect backdrop for his obsession with violence and the brutalization of Black bodies. The first plantation scene was hard to distinguish from the set of an instant ice tea commercial: well-clothed Black people strolled arm-in-arm or swung from swings suspended from grand trees. The film's strong suggestion was

that brutality and racism were the fault of ignorant—read poor—whites, the sole source of such social evil. As a Black American, I object to this tale of revenge. Our struggle for liberation is one which seeks to extend liberty to all peoples everywhere. Despite how bloody awful this movie is, it was positive to position a Black woman as so valued that one would risk one's own freedom to go back for her. That kind of solidarity is what animates true revolutionaries. The question is why are movies being made by Spielberg and Tarantino on this period of U.S. history? We have yet to grapple with this ugly fact of American history. Both works are attempts to control the narrative around race, who Black and white people are. It is no coincidence that they were released during President Obama's second term.

Dee Perkins
Phoenix

The movie *42* about Jackie Robinson's ordeal as the first Black major league baseball player of the modern era in 1947 with the Brooklyn Dodgers, premiered in Kansas City, the location of the Negro Leagues' Museum and because Robinson had played for the great Kansas City Monarchs.



The movie publicity on Robinson's strength overcoming racist attacks still shortchanges his achievement by keeping history hidden. Blacks played in the majors until excluded 60 years before Robinson's debut, when Jim Crow laws negated Black gains achieved under Reconstruction. The postwar civil rights movement that pushed for the opportunity given to Robinson also forced the Los Angeles Rams in 1946 to hire Kenny Washington and Woody Strode after the National Football League had enforced segregation for 20 years.

Sports fan
Kansas City

BLIGHTS IN GAZA

Garbage collection in the Gaza Strip has become a real stinker of a problem. The mechanized portion of collection is hampered by the fact that 22 bought-and-paid-for garbage trucks have been held in Ramallah for three years because the Israeli government won't let them motor in Israeli territory. In addition, Palestinians are denied access to dumps near the border fence. Maintenance of the landfills and maintenance of machinery cannot take place because Israel will not allow building materials, tools or auto parts to be brought in.

January
Chicago

WHAT'S THAT SMELL?

The Memphis Police isolated the KKK who tried to rally downtown on March 30 to protest the removing of racist names of local parks. Cops also prevented the counterprotesters from getting near them. There were only about 50 KKKers, it was raining and their megaphone died so no one could even hear them. So it went well.

Jim M.
Memphis

FOLLOW THE MONEY

It came as no surprise that the Democrats in Oregon voted to assault the pensions of state workers. After all, this is the era of austerity. Everybody but the rich is being forced to live on less and receive less in social services. Here

in New York, there is only one hospital left which will do serious dental work such as extractions, and that is a public hospital with a very dubious reputation. Half the time when I contact my health insurance company to find out if they will pay for a procedure, the answer is no. Every day in the news all I read about is the Obama-proposed attacks on services for the poor.

Mother
New York

I work for a personal injury (plaintiff's side) law firm as a clerk. Recently the lawyers published an article stating that in a malpractice medical case, one piece of advice is to "follow the money." For instance, does a physician get the mandate to hold off certain medical care from low-income patients while being forced to do many expensive care procedures for wealthier patients? Are nursing home caregivers told to not spend time figuring out what is really wrong with a patient and just treat what is likely to be the cause? Isn't this another reason we should ask, "Why don't we have socialized medical care"?

Woman worker
Chicago

WHY READ N&L?

The truth is in the method. Many in the Left seem to have abandoned the revolutionary journalistic method of allowing the class to express itself via the paper. Their notion is that the paper expresses the views of the party to the class, as opposed to airing the views of the class itself as a means towards cultivating a revolutionary consciousness, which is my understanding of the *Iskra* method. That's what I think I see in *N&L*.

Friend of Marxist-Humanism
Britain

The review of *Escape from Camp 14* created heated discussions in Oakland. When some Leftists insisted that all anti-North Korean writings are just fabricated propaganda, I asked, "Since when do we call dynastic transfer of power 'socialism'?" During a meeting on consumerism another Marxist noted (sarcastically) that North Korea must be socialist, since there is no consumerism there.

Bob P.
Oakland, Calif.

VOICES FROM THE INSIDE

News & Letters is my "source" on the struggles of prisoners and workers here in America. We have more people behind bars than any other nation in the world. Yet we try and dictate to other countries about their prison issues. Wow!

Woman prisoner
Gatesville, Texas

Enclosed please find ten dollars for the book *Crossroads of History: Marxist-Humanist Writings on the Middle East* by Raya Dunayevskaya, and please renew the subscription to *N&L*. I regret learning that *N&L* is now published every two months as opposed to monthly, particularly during this present economic crisis which should be a main topic of discussion within its pages.

Latino prisoner
Terre Haute, Ind.

I hope my letter arrives and a donor is found so that I may continue to receive *N&L*. I always enjoy reading it. Please keep bringing to light those issues that the powers that be want left in the dark. Please keep getting the word out as to what is being done to the real power in America—the worker. Please keep being a thorn in the side (or back side) of all those that would stand on the heads of others. Your friend and comrade.

Man in a cage
Amarillo, Texas

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.

Capitalism's violence, masses' revolt show need for total view

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labor rights, firing government workers and cutting minimum wages. From Ireland to Greece, Spain to Portugal, each of these countries has experienced sustained revolt against austerity. In Italy a government cannot be formed, with no party ready to take responsibility for the austerity program after the people overwhelmingly rejected it. In Bulgaria protests and blockades toppled the government in February. In Portugal mass demonstrations on March 2 declared that the government does not represent the people and raised the slogans of the 1974 Portuguese Revolution.

Cyprus is the latest example, where last year the "Communist" then-president worked out a bank bailout deal. Leaked documents from the European Commission forecast that, under austerity, the Cyprus economy will shrink 8.9% this year and 3.9% more next year. The country is likely to plunge into depression with no foreseeable end. Large, angry protests forced the government to back down on its plan to seize 10% from everyone's bank accounts. Bank employees held a brief strike to protest likely pension and job cuts.

Slovenia may be the next country forced into a bailout. After the government started imposing austerity—at about the same time that evidence of official corruption began to surface last year—protests have spread across the country.

While discontent and revolt continue to be widespread in Europe, leaders of parties and unions have held back their full development by working to channel the opposition into narrow electoral politics and one-day strikes and protests.

C. Automation, joblessness in U.S.

Although the U.S. has not slipped back into recession, unemployment remains high. Poverty has skyrocketed, with 19 million at less than half of the official poverty line. Also, 70% of the 3.5 million jobs that have been created since June 2009 are low-paying, while half of the 7.6 million jobs lost during the year and a half before that were mid-range, paying \$38,000 to \$68,000.

It isn't just a matter of jobs being moved to China and India. Automation is taking its toll, and it isn't finished. Capitalist figures from former Treasury Secretary Lawrence Summers to Silicon Valley businessman Martin Ford warn that advancing automation is likely to result in 50% to 75% unemployment. Ford adds:

"It must be acknowledged that this idea is quite similar to the predictions that were made by Karl Marx in the mid to late 1800s. Marx predicted that capitalism would suffer from a relentless 'accumulation of capital,' resulting in massive unemployment....If the arguments in [my] book prove correct, then we may be in the somewhat uncomfortable position of conceding that Marx was, at least in some ways, perceptive about the challenges the capitalist system would eventually encounter."¹

Foxconn in China—manufacturer of choice for companies like Apple and Amazon—deployed more than 10,000 robots last year, with a simultaneous hiring freeze, and has announced plans to deploy one million robots by 2014. Foxconn chairman Terry Gou famously declared about the company's 1.5 million-strong workforce, "As human beings are also animals, to manage one million animals gives me a headache."²

At the same time, ideologues are presenting automation as a solution to unemployment. "Robots have the potential to bring manufacturing jobs back to the U.S.," according to a March 2013 report to the Congressional Robotics Caucus. Some manufacturing has indeed been brought back to the U.S. However, the high level of automation implemented to compete with China and other low-wage countries reduces the number of jobs involved to a handful.

The broad and continuing impact of automation portends long-term high unemployment, decimation of better-paying jobs, downward pressure on wages, and impoverishment of the masses.

The latest trend in fragmenting and alienating workers is microtasking. Companies break down tasks that are not yet fully automated, posting small subtasks on web marketplaces where piece-workers anywhere in the world sign up to perform one for a few cents. The main marketplace is amazon.com's Mechanical Turk. Working from home and sometimes not knowing who has hired them, quick workers may make \$1.50 an hour with no benefits or protections.³ Mechanical Turk handles over 500,000 workers in 100 countries, about 70% of them women, isolated from each other and from their employers, performing little bits of tasks on invisible assembly lines.

Under capitalist relations, technological advances have the perverse effects of alienating and fragment-

ing work and throwing people out of jobs. This results from the dialectical inversion Marx pointed out: in capitalist production, it is not the worker who employs the instruments of labor, but the instruments of labor that employ the worker; dead labor dominates living labor.

Since the financial crisis hit in 2008, the capitalist press has had to keep admitting the cogency of Marx's analysis of capitalism, from *Business Week* to *Forbes* to *Time*.⁴ Still repeating their ritual denunciations of Marx and still trying to save capitalism from itself, though, they cannot allow themselves to grasp what Marx designated the absolute general law of capitalist accumulation—the accumulation of capital at one pole, with wealth for a minority, and of misery, unemployment and revolt at the opposite pole. Its operation is seen in the army of the unemployed and in the fall in the rate of profit. The fact that there is no prospect of any more than a weak recovery on the horizon is precisely because of capitalism's degeneracy brought on by its absolute general law. But the inevitable revolt does not automatically develop into social revolution that topples capitalism and creates the foundation for a new social order.

II. The politics of degenerate capitalism

The rulers are not about to sit back and let revolt freely develop. All sorts of reactionary ideas and attitudes have been ushered into the mainstream of politics and the media.

State governments like Wisconsin's and Michigan's have taken the lead in ramming through reactionary laws (see "Undoing Michigan election," Jan.-Feb. *N&L*). Recently passed anti-labor laws have already led to a sharp drop in unionization in states like Wisconsin and Indiana. Nationally, only about one in 15 private sector workers are in unions now. The state-appointed emergency manager of Detroit joins others in Michigan not only to deny democracy for majority-Black cities but to attack labor, African Americans and Latinos by dismantling union contracts, pensions, environmental protection and public education—as inadequate as all of those already were. (See "Detroiters organize," p. 11.)

On a federal level, the sequester's drastic cuts gave the Obama administration political cover to join the Republicans in imposing austerity on the U.S. President Obama followed up by writing cuts to Social Security and Medicare right into his budget proposal—before compromising with Congress.

Smarting from their losses in the 2012 elections, Republicans did appear to be in retreat on homophobia and the demonization of Latin American immigrants. A number of politicians changed their stance due to the historic shift in attitudes. Polls show that a majority favors legalizing Gay marriage, up more than 20 percentage points since 2004. However, the Catholic Church and the Christian Right are still crusading against LGBTQ people, and politicians still equate Gays with murderers and pedophiles. The mythical "traditional family" serves as a rallying point for patriarchal reaction that opposes any kind of liberatory movement.

Attempting to co-opt the Latino vote, many Republicans have muted their anti-immigrant rhetoric, though far Right groups like the Federation for American Immigration Reform remain influential enough to be featured on Fox News. Yet the record number of deportations—1.5 million in Obama's first term—reveals that, if anything, the treatment of undocumented immigrants has become more vicious under Obama than under Bush. Detention of immigrants also hit record levels, with 429,000 held in 2011. Human rights groups have lodged protests over the widespread use of prolonged solitary confinement on immigrants who were not even convicted of crimes. It is a form of torture.

Now a bipartisan immigration reform bill has a chance of passing. The bill, a compromise hammered out by power players in Washington without consult-

4. See "Marx to Market," by Peter Coy, *Business Week*, Sept. 14, 2011; "Karl Marx Explains the Problem with the Apple, Google No Poaching Conspiracy Allegations," by Tim Worstall, on *forbes.com*, April 6, 2013; "Marx's Revenge: How Class Struggle Is Shaping the World," *Time*, March 25, 2013, which held, "Marx's biting critique of capitalism—that the system is inherently unjust and self-destructive—cannot be so easily dismissed....the workers of the world may just unite. Marx may yet have his revenge."

ing with the millions of people actually affected by it, lays out an absurdly long path to citizenship, which would take 13 or more years. Or maybe never, since that would only be implemented if tightened "border security targets" are met. It would not dismantle the repressive deportation and detention machinery. A number of rallies took place in March and April from San Francisco to Miami, with thousands in Washington, D.C. The demands were to legalize immigrants, reunite families, and end deportations and detention.

Immigrant workers' revolt has a new visibility and force in the last several years, not because the Republicans are worried about their votes but because immigrants showed their resolve in strikes and protests from the May Day 2006 strike/boycott to the 2010-13 eruption of "undocumented and unafraid" youth speaking out publicly at the risk of deportation. Immigrant workers from Latin America have been key to much recent labor militancy.

One example is the Coalition of Immokalee Workers' campaign to pressure Publix and Wendy's to sign Fair Food Agreements to help stop exploitation and slave labor of farmworkers. Their

200-mile March for Rights, Respect, and Fair Food ended March 17 with a rally of 1,500 farmworkers and supporters at Publix headquarters in Lakeland, Fla.

Despite lip service to Latinos and Gays, Republicans' hostility to women's freedom continues to deepen. Women not only are the first to suffer from the cutbacks in social programs, but are the specific targets of a whole raft of mean-spirited legislation aimed at controlling their lives. The blatantly unconstitutional anti-abortion laws passed by Arkansas, Kansas and North Dakota are just the tip of the iceberg. New laws have been cutting women's access to abortions in many states. Mississippi, Alabama and Virginia have passed TRAP (Targeted Regulation of Abortion Providers) laws that threaten to shut down all abortion providers in those states by imposing incredibly expensive regulations, hypocritically justified as "protecting women's health" by politicians who would rather see women die than be able to get abortions. Most often, clinics that perform abortion also provide other vital health services for women, such as checks for cancer, birth control and AIDS testing. Anti-abortion ideologues do not care that closing down abortion providers means poor women are left without access to lifesaving healthcare.

Women are fighting the normalization of violence against women, as seen from their reactions to the Steubenville, Ohio, rape trial and the suicide of 15-year-old Audrie Pott in Saratoga, Calif., after being raped while unconscious. (See "Violence 'normalized,'" p. 2.) Whether in the U.S. or in the Arab countries, women are pointing out the need for fundamental social transformation and challenging actual revolutions to deepen. They are driven by frustration over continuing oppression and retrogression—and by the way women in the Middle East and North Africa have taken the historic stage in the uprisings and strikes of the last several years and then suffered a brutal backlash against their gains. (See "From India to Egypt to U.S., women fighting for freedom," March-April *N&L*.)

A. American civilization on trial

"In a word, the new human dimension attained through an *oppressed people's* genius in the struggle for freedom, nationally and internationally, rather than either scientific achievement, or an individual hero, became the measure of Man in action and thought."

— Raya Dunayevskaya,
American Civilization on Trial

The re-election of the first Black President could not hide the hollowness of U.S. democracy. Black masses have exposed that hollowness from the beginning, and indeed have put *American Civilization on Trial (ACOT)*, which is the title of one of Marxist-Humanism's foundational works, first published 50 years ago.

On the U.S. scene, the reality under Obama, as under Bush, is that, in everything from poverty to unemployment, to imprisonment, to police brutality, to health, to attacks on women's autonomy, to the rapid restructuring of the educational system, African Americans are worse off than whites. While we celebrate the 150th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation, one cannot help but notice that slave labor still exists in this country, both inside and outside of prisons; that the structure of our economy still depends on a superexploited layer of immigrant workers of this country not given the rights of citizens, as well as superexploitation of workers from China to Honduras to Bangladesh; that families are still being torn apart by armed agents of the state; that resisting this system of exploitation can

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The 200-mile March for Rights, Respect, and Fair Food by the Coalition of Immokalee Workers in March 2013. Above, the first day of the march. Below, the last day.



CIV civ-online.org/march/index.html

1. Martin Ford, *The Lights in the Tunnel: Automation, Accelerating Technology and the Economy of the Future* (W. Sheridan, 2009), p. 237.

2. "Report: Foxconn Boss Compares His Workforce to Animals," by Damon Poeter, *PC Magazine*, Jan. 19, 2012.

3. "Dawn of the Digital Sweatshop," by Ellen Cushing, Aug. 1, 2012, *East Bay Express*, <http://www.eastbayexpress.com/oakland/dawn-of-the-digital-sweatshop/Content?oid=3301022>.

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land you behind bars, deported, or even dead.

From the police force to courts to prisons, the criminal injustice system remains a machinery of oppression and a focus of revolt. Youth of color, often targets of "stop and frisk" actions as well as killings by police (see "New Yorkers protest police murders," p. 11), are in the forefront of opposing them.

One of the 2012 election's features was the voter suppression effort aimed primarily at Blacks and Latinos, and the resistance it sparked. Coupled with that, Republicans used a phony narrative of victimization of whites plus gerrymandering to maintain partial control of the government. Now the Supreme Court appears to be on the verge of helping suppress votes by gutting the Voting Rights Act of 1965, with a decision anticipated in June. Many of last year's voter suppression efforts were only temporarily blocked by courts, and the expected Supreme Court ruling would restore other measures while sending a signal to racist local and state authorities to open the floodgates of disenfranchisement.

What ACOT shows throughout this country's history is that the real moves to establish true democracy and a fully new society have come from below.

Across the U.S. there are determined struggles over school closings, housing and healthcare cutbacks. In Chicago, Mayor Rahm Emanuel proposed to close 54 public schools, on top of years of school closings, mainly affecting Blacks and Latinos. Angry parents, students and teachers have rallied, sat-in in the streets and demanded answers in hearings. In many cities schools are being closed or privatized.

Obamacare has not ended struggles over healthcare. In Chicago communities are still fighting the Mayor's closure of several mental health clinics. Sit-ins have also protested the closure of emergency rooms on the South Side. Four activists were violently arrested by University of Chicago police in January at a sit-in by Fearless Leading by the Youth, demanding the University's hospital reopen its trauma center to adults. They have been fighting for a trauma center on the South Side for three years since FLY founder Damian Turner was shot four blocks from the University of Chicago Hospital but taken ten miles away to die at another hospital.

As evictions and foreclosures continue at a fast clip, so do the struggles against them. Detroit, where the foreclosure rate is about one in every 500 homes, is one of several cities where anti-eviction groups, aided by Occupy, have successfully kept people in their homes when threatened with eviction.

All these struggles reflect the onslaught of austerity and privatization that hurts people of color the most.

As ACOT put it: "The elements of the new society, submerged the world over by the might of capital, are emerging in all sorts of unexpected and unrelated places. What is missing is the *unity* of these movements from practice with the movement from theory into an overall philosophy that can form the foundation of a totally new social order."

The question arises: Where is the total view? Again and again, struggles arise from the grassroots but are carried out without raising a banner of a totally new society, with new human relations in production, between the sexes, and more. Those who would limit the movement's reach have taken advantage of this to mislead.

Union bureaucrats succeeded in diverting the struggles in Wisconsin and Michigan into electoral channels. The "lesser evil" ideology shared by so-called Marxists and anarchists destroyed Occupy's solidarity with the Syrian masses. And at the very time that large numbers of U.S. Blacks and Latinos came out to resist the Right's attacks on voting rights, these same Left tendencies undermined Occupy's solidarity at home by substituting abstract revolutionism (claiming that "voting makes you complicit with the imperialist system") for the needed historic link to actual struggles—past, present, future—by Black masses to transform society.

B. Wars of the U.S.

Militarism has ever been one of the rulers' favorite tools to sap revolt by the masses. There is no end to war in sight so long as capital drives society.

President Obama has set 2014 for the end of the war in Afghanistan. The Afghan people have every right to fear a recapitulation of what happened after Russia's withdrawal in the early 1990s: no end to war, but a deadly struggle for power among multiple war-

lords, including the Taliban; and more exploitation and violence directed at women, youth, workers, and national minorities. Yet many look forward to the departure of an occupying force that has committed all too many atrocities, including bombings that killed children with their families, and the yet-to-be-punished massacre by Staff Sgt. Robert Bales of nine children and seven adult civilians in Panjwai one year ago.

There is no shortage of new vistas for war as the U.S., with bases in 130 countries already, undertakes its military "pivot to Asia" and at the same time expands its reach in Africa. With special forces and drones already based in East, West, and Central Africa, the new war in Mali accelerated the long-planned entry of the U.S. military into a number of African countries. (See "State of the U.S. wars," March-April N&L.)

Iran's approach to nuclear weapons capability remains a serious flashpoint. Saber-rattling over Iran by elements of the ruling classes of the U.S. and Israel is ratcheted up and down as politics demands, yet, as with North Korea, the danger of brinkmanship remains, as underscored by Obama's trip to Israel, preceded by his adoption of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's "red line" rhetoric.

The trip itself highlighted the administration's unwillingness to take substantive action on the biggest spur to Middle East conflict: Israel's imperialist occupation of Palestine. Words about a "peace process" were drowned out by the U.S. demand for Palestinians to drop their modest demand for a freeze of settlements as a precondition of talks.

Iraq, more than a year after Obama declared the war over, remains the poster child for the ruinous effects of U.S. war and occupation. Iraq still suffers from the sectarian and ethnic violence stimulated by the U.S. invasion ten years ago, giving an example of the kind of "peace and stability" that imperialism can live with in Afghanistan and Syria. The occupiers pushed Iraq toward an ethnic/sectarian-based politics. Prime Minister Maliki has exploited those divisions and shut out Sunnis to centralize power around himself.

The country is torn by violence, with frequent attacks on religious processions, political gatherings, and independent media. On the eve of the 10th anniversary of the invasion, 56 people were killed in 19 bombings in Baghdad. Fifty people were killed in one day leading up to the April 20 elections. Al Qaeda, which had little or no presence in Iraq before 2003, regularly murders rivals now. Power outages are frequent. Access to safe drinking water and sanitation has plummeted since the invasion. In cities like Fallujah and Basra, the incidence of cancer and birth defects has spiked.

III. Climate change and development

Another devastating sign of capitalism's degeneracy is its failure even to slow down climate change, which the UN's 2013 Human Development Report warns could plunge 3.1 billion people into extreme poverty by 2050. Youth have spearheaded a new movement to control it. Blocking the Keystone XL tar sands pipeline from Canada is only their most prominent demand.

Burning all the oil in the tar sands would release 240 gigatons of carbon.⁵ That's close to half of the 565 gigatons that top climate scientist James Hansen says is the most the world can add to the atmosphere and still have an 80% chance of staying below the two-degree Celsius temperature rise that international agreements specify as a limit. Even that level is fraught with tremendous peril.

All of the proven fossil fuel reserves owned by private and public companies and governments are equivalent to 2,795 Gt of carbon. The International Energy Agency announced last year: "No more than one-third of proven reserves of fossil fuels can be consumed prior to 2050 if the world is to achieve the 2°C goal."⁶

The rate of emissions of greenhouse gases has climbed every decade, hitting a new record last year. The only thing that temporarily slowed the growth of energy use is the global economic crisis. And yet while the standard of living of working people has declined, the wealth of the 1% is still rising, as is energy use.

What should be clear is that, as Marx wrote, "Capital...allows its actual movement to be determined as

5. "How Much Will Tar Sands Oil Add to Global Warming?" by David Biello, Jan. 23, 2013, *Scientific American*.

6. See <http://www.carbontracker.org/carbonbubble/>; <http://www.iea.org/publications/freepublications/publication/English.pdf>.



Organizing for Occupation prevented the eviction of 82-year-old Mary Lee Ward of Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn.

much and as little by the sight of the coming degradation and final depopulation of the human race, as by the probable fall of the earth into the sun." What is needed is a new way of life, a new kind of development.

The UN framework for addressing climate change, however, only reinforces the capitalist type of development. Take one example of hundreds: the Barro Blanco dam in Panama, which is accredited for the UN's so-called Clean Development Mechanism (CDM). The Movimiento 10 de Abril has been resisting hydroelectric development on the Tabasará River for more than 13 years. Peasants and Indigenous Panamanians have held protests and blockades for years and have gone to the UN, despite lethal police repression. Just this March, another protester was murdered by the police, 20-year-old migrant laborer Onésimo Rodríguez.

Biofuels are sold to us as a clean, sustainable alternative to gasoline. Yet consider campesino communities in the Aguán river valley region of Honduras, who are resisting being driven off the land for the benefit of the Dinant Corporation and the Jaremar Corporation, which produce African palm oil from plantations. The corporations have employed death squads that have murdered 80 campesinos. A campaign has begun to demand cancellation of a \$30 million World Bank loan to Dinant. And yet CDM credits were approved.

A separate program called REDD ("Reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation") is not in place yet, but it too is designed around carbon credits. A broad coalition called the Global Alliance of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities on Climate Change against REDD and for Life released a statement titled, "NO REDD+! in RIO+20 – A Declaration to Decolonize the Earth and the Sky." It begins:

"After more than 500 years of resistance, we, Indigenous Peoples, local communities, peasant farmers, fisherfolk and civil society are not fooled by the so-called Green Economy and REDD+ because we know colonialism when we see it. Regardless of its cynical disguises and shameful lies, colonialism always results in the rape and pillaging of Mother Earth, and the slavery, death, destruction and genocide of her peoples. Rio+20's Green Economy and REDD+ constitute a thinly-veiled, wicked, colonialist planet grab that we oppose, denounce and resist."⁷

This is not just a plot by the 1%. It is capitalism's inherent law of development. Today, the fall of the rate of profit to new lows—resulting from capitalism's law of development—has only increased capital's desperation to expropriate and commodify new spheres that it had not previously incorporated into capital. When people are driven off the land and into the urban slums, it is not only the land that is being incorporated into capital. Human beings are transformed into labor power as part of the variable capital. It is the development of the domination of dead labor over living labor.

It is these actual social relations, relations of production, forms of labor, relationship to the land and other means of production, by which we can judge what must be uprooted, and to what extent any society has or has not moved to a path of development that breaks from capitalism's never-ending growth of capital, or, as Marx put it, production for production's sake.

Social movements from below have put to the test not only the openly market-centered mechanisms of CDM, REDD, the World Bank, etc., but also the statist national governments that claim to be building socialism. The South American countries of Venezuela, Bolivia, and Ecuador have stood up against U.S. imperialism's domination of Latin America and have reduced poverty through social programs. Yet they are pursuing development through mining and oil and gas drilling. In so doing they have come into conflict with Indigenous peoples. At the Rio+20 People's Summit, the Confederation of Indigenous Peoples of the Bolivian East went so far as to say,

"We have unmasked the double standard that [Bolivian President Evo Morales, himself an Indigenous Aymara] has in his discourse on the international level, making believe that he is a defender of Indigenous peoples, of the rights of the Indigenous peoples of Mother Earth, of the natural resources and the forest."⁸

One of their struggles is against the government's construction of a highway connecting Brazil with the Pacific Ocean, going through the TIPNIS Indigenous reserve. They say the government held sham consultations with selected people from the Indigenous communities, using deception, manipulation, and cooptation to gain the appearance of agreement.

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7. Read the whole statement at <http://www.redd-monitor.org/2012/06/19/no-redd-in-rio-20-a-declaration-to-decolonize-the-earth-and-the-sky/>.

8. <http://ww4report.com/node/11197>. For more on these struggles see <https://nacla.org/blog/2012/12/13/bolivia-end-road-tipnis-consulta>, <http://intercontinentalcry.org/venezuela-despite-overwhelming-problems-in-sierra-de-perija-the-yukpa-remain-hopeful/>, <http://intercontinentalcry.org/stand-with-the-shuar-oppose-the-mirador-mine-in-the-headwaters-of-the-river-amazon/>.

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If humanity is going to create an alternative, non-capitalist path of sustainable human development, we cannot afford to mistake yet another form of state-capitalism for socialism. Struggles from below show that many forces of revolution are reaching for those new paths of development and are not going to be satisfied with state-capitalism. What is needed is a full commitment to develop the philosophy of revolution that encompasses revolution and liberation as real human development that begins with the masses of people taking control of their own lives and in so doing breaking the domination of capital.

IV. Arab Spring and the missing link of philosophy

A. Syria

Tunisia, Syria and Egypt show the determination of the masses to continue their revolutions in the face of vicious counter-revolution. In Syria, the doomed Assad regime has intensified its air attacks on the country's liberated areas. The death toll continues to rise, with over 70,000 estimated killed and millions left homeless. In a civilized world, not one of the victims of these attacks would have had to die, not one person would have been tortured, not one child traumatized, not one woman raped by shabiha thugs, nor one woman or man driven to the hard choice of armed self-defense.

A civilized world would have solidarized with the long months of peaceful, heroic demonstrations against the Baathist regime. That moment tested the world. The revolution in Syria is entirely a creation of its peoples' passion for freedom, but the counter-revolution is a collective creation of this alienated, inhuman world.

Shabiha murdered over 100 villagers in Haswiya, near Homs in central Syria. In Aleppo 65 were murdered, their hands bound behind them. Sixty civil-



Rebel fighters launch a boat carrying two Syrian women fleeing across the Orontes River to Turkey near the northern Syrian town of Darkush.

ians, including women and children, were massacred in Sanamayn in the south. Civilians were killed in the neighborhoods of Jobar, Al-Qadam, Tadamon and Yarmouk in Damascus. Scud missile attacks wiped out whole families. The death toll is averaging over 3,000 per month. That is a higher monthly toll than during the Bosnian genocide.

This poorly provisioned, orphaned revolution fights on. The Syrian revolutionaries receive lip service and crumbs from the West, paid many times over in blood. Meanwhile the lie is propagated that a "civil war" is taking place, rather than the truth: that a revolutionary people is being targeted for genocide.

The presence of well-armed religious fundamentalists has helped to confuse the issues. Al-Qaeda opposed the Arab Spring from the start, and the revolutions marginalized its reactionary ideology more effectively than U.S. imperialism or Russian genocide could ever hope to do. The masses' humanism shamed all these powers. Now the fundamentalists are hoping to capitalize on the hypocrisy and inhumanity of the world—of which they are merely a concentrated expression—to create a new power base in Syria. They are trying to grab power away from the self-organization of the people.

Radical Islamists such as Jabhat Al-Nusra in Syria—powered in part by Iraq's decade of sectarian strife—are playing a role increasingly reminiscent of the way the Stalinists helped to destroy the Spanish Revolution from within in the 1930s, paving the way for the victory of Franco's fascism. The Stalinists in Spain systematically undermined the more radical aspects of the revolution, including the forms of organization by which workers and peasants exerted self-activity. Islamists in Syria are undermining the masses' self-activity in their zeal to impose their own counter-revolutionary vision.

As always, the counter-revolution that appears within the revolution serves to discredit the very idea of a different, better world, as it confirms the corrupt existing world's good opinion of itself. This situation, in fact, creates the starkest of dilemmas. To turn aside from facing the problem is to admit that one has ceased to be a revolutionary at all. Those who continue to fight for, as one revolutionary put it, a Syria "where every

human being—regardless of their ethnicity, their religion, or their gender—can live in freedom, without fear," must be supported. The continuing, daily demonstrations within Syria include protests against Al-Nusra by those fighting against the Assad regime.

To fight this counter-revolution from within requires not only the independent revolutionary organization of the masses but a revolutionary organizing principle, a banner of full liberation.

The need for that banner cries out in each country where the revolutions of Arab Spring are being fought out or struggling to get underway. It is therefore crucial to project concretely within all these struggles the indispensable selection of Raya Dunayevskaya's writings on the Middle East in our new publication, *Crossroads of History*, whose Foreword singles out how those writings relate to the question of revolution in permanence.

This question has become the most significant issue of the Arab Spring. Efforts to deepen and continue the revolutions include the targeting of Muslim Brotherhood offices for destruction in Egypt during mass protests. They include the national general strike carried out in Tunisia after the assassination of Marxist opposition leader Chokri Belaid, accompanied by running street battles and occupations or attacks on offices of Ennahda, the ruling Islamist party. As one protester declared, "The revolution continues! Chokri's death is a lesson for everyone!"

These actions reflect the determination of the masses not to allow a replay of the betrayal from within of the Iranian Revolution of 1979. Indeed, Iran's role in supporting Assad in Syria is a direct continuation of this betrayal, disguised by reactionary religious rhetoric. However, as in Mali, the movements' ambivalent relationship to the Islamists—as well as to other elements that would like to limit the revolution, including the liberals and parts of the old state, even the Egyptian military—shows yet again the missing link of philosophy that could give the movement a direction toward revolution in permanence.

What is involved is much more than simply stopping the Islamists and others from halting the revolution. Revolution in permanence is not just a first negation but a negation of the negation, and one that encompasses all the forces of revolution as reason, and philosophy as a force of revolution. Second negation, the negation of the negation which allows the positive in the negative to emerge, is the heart of the Hegelian dialectic. It is that which Marx recreated as the philosophy of revolution in permanence. Marxist-Humanism makes a category of the dual rhythm of revolution, the destruction of the old and the creation of the new society. That is the unique understanding of revolution in permanence developed by Dunayevskaya on the basis of the new moments of Marx's last decade. To bring all of this into today's battle of ideas remains the main point not only of *Crossroads of History* but of the forthcoming collection of Dunayevskaya's writings on Karl Marx.

B. Egypt

Two years after Egypt's revolution overthrew Hosni Mubarak, fierce battles continue. Jan. 25, the second anniversary of the Day of Revolt when Cairo's Tahrir Square was first occupied, was the occasion for protests across Egypt, and renewed calls for a "second revolution." The following day, Port Said rose up after a court sentenced 21 defendants to death for a 2012 soccer riot. In addition to doubting some defendants' guilt in an event thought to have been orchestrated by the military, citizens compared the death sentences to the impunity of police, soldiers and officials responsible for lethal repression aimed at the revolutionaries of 2011 and protesters and strikers over the past two years. By Jan. 27, 40 people had been killed in clashes with police and President Mohamed Morsi's Muslim Brotherhood government had lost control of the city.

The protests quickly voiced calls to bring down Morsi and the Brotherhood, and even a declaration of "the Republic of Port Said" as a repudiation of the incompleteness of the revolution. Workers, students, shop owners and even police officers joined in strikes and protest marches. Unrest spread to cities including Muhalla and Mansoura, with highway and railway blockades and campaigns to stop paying utility bills.

A nationwide wave of strikes and industrial actions broke out, advancing both political and economic demands. For 16 days in February 1,200 striking temporary workers shut down shipping—except for basic foodstuffs and tourism—at the port of Ain Sokhna, sleeping each night in empty shipping containers until they won their demand for permanent jobs. In the same town another 100-200 workers held their seventh sit-in in March, halting construction of a power plant, with a similar demand for full-time contracts.

In Alexandria 450 workers occupied the Portland Cement Factory in February to demand full-time contracts and payment of overdue bonuses, until the paramilitary Central Security Forces stormed the plant, attacking the workers with police dogs. One month later, 18 of the strikers were still being detained.

Egyptian workers have never considered the revo-

lution finished, holding more than 3,000 strikes or demonstrations over wages, working conditions and political demands since Mubarak's overthrow. More than 600 workers have been fired for union activities, with five independent union leaders sentenced to three-year prison terms for leading a strike at Alexandria Port Containers Co. But repression could not stop the class struggles from below, even though the new Islamist-written constitution treats strikes as criminal, calling them "aggression against the right to work." Morsi's replacement of over half the executive board of the state-sanctioned Egyptian Trade Union Federation with Brotherhood members only highlighted its division from the 1,000 independent unions that have sprung up in recent years.

After Morsi claimed extraordinary powers last November in the process of pushing through the new constitution, protests started targeting Muslim Brotherhood offices. On March 22, at least six offices were attacked in different cities. Protesters chanted "Revolution renewed," as well as 2011 Tahrir Square slogans such as "bread, freedom and social justice" from Muhalla to Cairo, where residents again formed neighborhood self-defense committees like those created in January 2011. They blocked dozens of buses transporting members of the Brotherhood from entering the area.

The deep contradictions within the opposition to the Brotherhood are seen in the fact that, at the very time the neighborhood committees, important forms of working-class self-organization from below, were revived, many protesters in Cairo, Alexandria and Port Said were calling for the military to oust Morsi and retake power. When activists are still fighting to ban military trials of civilians and to free those jailed by military tribunals, when the military's attempt to halt the revolution and its repression of strikes and protests are still fresh in the memory, such a call is a dramatic sign of the impasse at which the revolution has arrived.

Here the void in philosophy makes itself felt. Organizations of the Left, whether Marxists or the April 6 Youth Movement, allowed themselves to be reduced to choosing between tailending the military, the Brotherhood, or the pro-capitalist liberal opposition parties—just at the time when self-organization from below is resurfacing.

The neighborhood self-defense committees, the idealism of youth self-organizing their occupation of Tahrir Square, the workers' strikes organized in opposition to both bosses and state-recognized unions, the women defying sexism to exert self-activity in strikes and occupations and fight sexual harassment: these were and are beginnings—beginnings only, it is true, needing to be developed—toward the masses building the capacity to take power in their own hands, smash the rulers' state power, and break down capitalism, imperialism and sexism. But lack of confidence in the Idea of freedom goes hand in hand with lack of confidence in the masses' capacity to revolutionize society.

The group Revolutionary Socialists exemplified this problem when they advocated voting for Morsi as the lesser evil in last year's presidential election. Despite wishful thinking that the Brotherhood would be swayed by pressure from below to be revolutionary instead of counter-revolutionary, the fundamental reason for their opportunistic positions is their belief in the backwardness of the masses. The masses are not "ready" for socialist revolution, but "our position is always to be wherever the masses are." Even if they imagine that to be behind a reactionary movement that attacks the most advanced struggles of women, workers and youth!

In truth, while Left groups fail to make a category of just those struggles and the forms of organization arising from them, and instead blur the divide between revolution and counter-revolution, the masses of countries from Tunisia to Egypt, Syria to Yemen, are determined not to allow a repeat of the political Islamists' hijacking of the Iranian Revolution of 1979.

The concrete history of that revolution, philosophically comprehended, can shine a light on the current predicament, which is not unique to Egypt. The practicality of philosophy, as concretely worked out in confrontation with decades of revolution and counter-revolution in the Middle East, is the reason News and Letters Committees has just published *Crossroads of History: Marxist-Humanist Writings on the Middle East* by Raya Dunayevskaya.

"Iran: Unfoldment of, and Contradictions in, Revolution" (chapter 8 of the book) begins with the many new kinds of spontaneous organization taking on the form of a dual government and the mass outpouring of women that began on International Women's Day, 1979. But the Left in Iran and internationally largely advocated "critical support" for Khomeini as "anti-imperialist" and therefore downplayed or even opposed the women's fight for freedom. This once again exposed the narrowness of their vision of the future, which is at the same time a lack of theoretical preparation for revolution:

"Under these circumstances of ever new forces of
continued on p. 10

Capitalism, revolt show need for total view

continued from p. 9

revolution, for male revolutionaries to disregard how total the revolution must be if it is to uproot the exploitative, racist, sexist society, and once again try to subordinate women's struggles as a 'mere part of the whole' (as if the whole can be without its parts), is to play into the hands of the reactionaries, be that the 'secular' Bazargan government or the Ayatollah Khomeini who is trying to 'institutionalize' his Islamic 'revolution,' that is to say, confine it to where he can steal the fruit of the revolution—freedom—and leave the masses who made it at the bottom, as in any and all class societies....

"Unfortunately, Khomeini still remains very nearly unchallenged, that is, **seriously** unchallenged.... And unfortunately the Left, too, had unfurled no new banner of freedom, and some are willing to settle for much, much less: being part of State Administration, that is, part of the new ruling bureaucracy, while shouting 'anti-imperialism.'

"...we must not permit the indigenous Iranian counter-revolution to hide under the slogan of anti-imperialism, as some in the Left are trying to do by branding not only U.S. imperialism but Kate Millett and, indeed, the whole women's revolutionary movement as if they are 'agents of imperialism.' Nothing could assure the victory of the counter-revolution more than that kind of 'anti-imperialism.'...The great weakness of the movement now, and not only in Iran, is the lack of theory, a theory stemming from a philosophy of total liberation such as Marx's Humanism."

Soon, the dialectic of events called forth the remarkable piece "Not So Random Thoughts on: What Is Philosophy? What Is Revolution? 1789-1793; 1848-1850; 1914-1919; 1979" (chapter 10). It begins with Hegel responding to the French Revolution by elaborating the power of the Idea as "second negativity," and how Marx worked that out in theory and practice as revolution in permanence. Marx's insistence on the need for a total uprooting and for showing not only what we are against but what we are for was rooted in his recognition of "the dialectic of negativity as the moving and creating principle."

In the wake of the betrayal and collapse of the socialist Second International when World War I broke out, Lenin felt compelled to reorganize his method of thinking by returning to Marx's roots in Hegel. This turned out to be the indispensable preparation for revolution in Russia 1917, at which time his dialectical view of revolution/counter-revolution allowed him not to fall for "critical support" of the revolutionary government.

It is on this basis that Dunayevskaya analyzed the way the pseudo-revolutionary seizure of hostages at the U.S. embassy in Iran diverted attention from the completion of Khomeini's counter-revolutionary "Islamic Republic" constitution.⁹

So today it is not only a question of recognizing Egypt's new constitution as counter-revolutionary; it is not only a question of recognizing that calls for a new Constituent Assembly to replace that constitution are a diversion from the self-activity of the masses, which is the only force that can create a second revolution that could lead to "all power in the hands of the masses, their forms of organization, their control of production and the state, their smashing of the bourgeois state."¹⁰ It is a question of releasing the power of philosophy, of revolutionaries engaging in theoretical preparation for revolution and no longer allowing the separation of organization and a philosophy of liberation, and thereby working out a new relationship of theory to practice on the way to the establishment of new human relations.

Today that entails not only returning to Hegel and Marx, and comprehending the history of revolutions

9. *Crossroads of History*, p. 81.

10. *Crossroads of History*, p. 69.

from their time through the Russian to the Iranian, but returning to the philosophy of Marxist-Humanism, rooted in that history of thought and actuality and at the same time developing a new philosophical breakthrough for our era. Therefore this year we return to the philosophic moment of Marxist-Humanism, its birth in Dunayevskaya's 1953 Letters on Hegel's Absolutes, for purposes of releasing the missing link of philosophy. (See "On the 60th anniversary of Dunayevskaya's Philosophic Letters: Hegel's Absolute Idea is for workers," p. 4.) That philosophic moment made a category of the movement from practice to theory that is itself a form of theory, which posed a new relationship of theory and practice; and in embryo it posed the dialectics of organization and philosophy. Our central organizational task this year is to project and develop these ideas in concrete intervention into the ongoing revolutions and social movements as well as into the battle of ideas. All other tasks, from expanding our revolutionary journalism to organizational growth, flow from this task and serve as tests of how we carry it out.

What can help us is to recognize this year's other important anniversaries as not accidents of the calendar but the process of the self-determination of the idea. As our Constitution states, because the Marxist-Humanist trilogy of revolution, *Marxism and Freedom*, *Philosophy and Revolution*, and *Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution* "are rooted in and parallel the move-

ment from practice to theory of our age with our own theoretical development since our birth, they are the theoretical foundations for the Marxist-Humanist organization, News and Letters Committees. However, they are not a 'program.' They are a contribution to the theoretical preparation for revolution without which no revolutionary organization or grouping can match the challenge of our era."¹¹

It adds that *American Civilization on Trial*, completed 50 years ago, concretizes that body of ideas on the American scene and for the Black dimension.

Philosophy and Revolution, published 40 years ago this year, developed Marxist-Humanism's original contribution as Absolute Idea as New Beginning, which our Constitution relates to "the need of integrality also of philosophy and organization. As against 'the party to lead' concept, such integrality of dialectics and organization reflects the revolutionary maturity of the age and its passion for a philosophy of liberation."

Part of projecting and providing an entry into this body of ideas is completing the publication of our forthcoming book of selected writings by Raya Dunayevskaya on Karl Marx, which will help show how needed for today is his philosophy of revolution in permanence.

Philosophy as missing link means not just philosophy in general but dialectical philosophy of revolution. That means Marx's new continent of thought, which Marxist-Humanism comprehends as revolving around revolution in permanence. In our age the question of "what happens after the revolution" moved from the realm of theory to that of staving off counter-revolution, making the vision of a new society a weapon in that concrete struggle. Negation of the negation as self-determination of the idea of freedom is a material force, needed to make the new society real.

Just as failure to listen to the voices from below blocks the development of theory and philosophy, the philosophic void prevents would-be revolutionaries from hearing the voices from below. Working out the needed historically grounded philosophy of liberation and working out a new, Marxist-Humanist relationship between theory and practice are not two tasks, but one and the same. The urgency of the task is underscored by the multiplicity of the crises and the simultaneity of revolution and counter-revolution. The aim remains the total uprooting of this racist, sexist, heterosexist, capitalist order and the creation of a new society on truly human foundations.

—The Resident Editorial Board, April 17, 2012

11. See the Constitution of News and Letters Committees, available through the literature listing on p. 5, and online at <http://newsandletters.org/Constitution.htm>.

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Egyptian revolutionary speaks

Cairo, Egypt—While John Kerry was in Cairo in early March, he pledged support for President Morsi in the midst of the most brutal crackdown on protesters all over the country. Scores were arrested. Police invaded Tahrir Square, destroyed all of our tents, and arrested at least 90 people.

In Port Said, a city of a million people, there has been at least two weeks of 100% successful civil disobedience. They kicked out all police and are experiencing zero crime! They established their own **people's** patrols. When the police came back, killing citizens, the military tried to put themselves between the people and the police, and the police attacked the military.

WOMEN AND THE GOAL OF REVOLUTION

What was the goal of the Egyptian Revolution? It was **freedom**, social **justice**, **equality** and **dignity**. We never achieved any of these goals, which is why we are still fighting. Equality means equality of all peoples, regardless of their ethnicity, religion or gender.

On Jan. 25, 2011, the first day of the revolution, to my amazement, a girl I've never seen before led one of the many protests. The biggest rally, which came from Giza, was led by another woman, Mahitab el Gilani.

Egypt had a flourishing movement fighting for women's rights. One of the first demonstrations for women's rights in the world was in Egypt during the revolution of 1919. The revolution started on March 9, 1919, and continued until February 1922. This non-violent revolution taught Mohandas Gandhi about non-violence. Scores were killed every day, according to the records of the British occupiers, yet people didn't stop fighting for three years. We won the return of the exiled leaders, participation in the Versailles Conference and the independence of Egypt.

Egypt has always been a beacon of whatever happens in the whole Arab world. We have been fighting against dictatorship for a long time. I personally have been in the fight for over a decade, trying and failing. We formed organizations which were infiltrated and collapsed. We've been imprisoned and tortured. Many times we were down to a few. Every group of activists in the world has to face this.

THE REVOLUTION CONTINUES

We got rid of Mubarak, one dictator, only to get an even worse one, who is trying to turn Egypt into another Iran. We are fighting this. What you know as the "Muslim Brotherhood" are just opportunists, who will do anything—lie, cheat, kill—to get power. The people are calling them just "the Brothers," and lately everyone calls them "the sheep." To us, they are only following their leaders like sheep.

We have no leaders, just goals. If you are fighting for those goals, you are our brother and sister in arms. If you are not, you are not one of us. People are fighting the same battle together, without trying to speak about their political ideology, without propagating their political views. This is the only way to make a revolution, because it is the only way to avoid factionalism. We have many revolutionary groups, all fighting together. We are not trying to form a leadership, because as soon as you designate a head, they will chop it off. The least possible hierarchy and the most horizontalism is the way to protect the revolution.

—Ahmed Salah

Privatizing City College of San Francisco

San Francisco—Despite a lull in protests against the attempted privatization of City College of San Francisco (CCSF), there remains a sense of foreboding. People in the movement are trying to find out what is going on behind the scenes, and there may be legal action in the works to compel the release of information.

One thing that has come to light is that several organizations posing as charitable groups are part of this new manifestation of the "shock doctrine," the organized effort to privatize the college and public education in general. These include the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Lumina Foundation. The appearance of NGOs, non-governmental organizations answerable to no one but themselves and their sponsors, as private surrogates for public and governmental entities, is an ominous sign of the privatization of what had previously been government functions.

On the main campus, there are subtle signs of defunding and lack of financial support. Many of the buildings are taking on a dilapidated appearance. In Cloud Hall, the men's restroom was closed for most of a year. When it reopened, we found more than half of the facilities covered in plastic, as they remain today. The women's restrooms are in a similar condition.

Students are waiting to see what happens next. The hyper-rich privatizers do not seem to be concerned with the disruption and social unrest they are causing. The rest of us are very much concerned, and will work tirelessly to ensure not only that public education will survive, but that it will grow and become more accessible.

—D. Chêneville

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Memphis snubs KKK

Memphis—Suppose a hate group gave a party and nobody came? That's what happened here on March 30 when several hundred people attended the first People's Conference on Race and Equality, hosted by Memphis United. Originally envisioned as a creative, nonviolent alternative to a threatened appearance by the Ku Klux Klan (KKK), the Memphis United event evolved into a free multicultural, multiracial day-long celebration and public forum on creating a just and peaceful community in Memphis.

More significantly, it became apparent early in the organizing that participants hungered for more than "an event"—they wanted to connect with others to create an ongoing community for doing social justice work in Memphis.

Using the mantra of "Confronting our past, Challenging our present, Creating our future," the event featured "community conversation" panels and workshops on topics such as "Race, faith and movements," "Racial structures and racial realities in Memphis," "Environmental racism: Poverty, pollution and solutions," and "Discrimination and equality: The GLBT struggle continues." Common Ground conducted an abbreviated version of its signature facilitated conversations on race, racial identity and racism in Memphis.

The Tennessee Immigrant and Refugee Rights Coalition and Comunidades Unidas en Una Voz provided insight into the immigration process and the necessity for fighting for the rights of immigrants and refugees. Other speakers led workshops on the importance of valuing our individual stories, nonviolent communication and an open conversation on how to build a grassroots anti-racist movement in our city.

The dance group Danza Azteca Quetzalcoatl brought everyone to their feet with a stirring opening performance of traditional Aztec dances. They and other musical performers throughout the day reminded us that our many heritages bring us strength, and the work of social change needs vibrant engagement with the arts.

Community building was evident throughout the day and adults networked with representatives from numerous local progressive groups such as the Mid-South Peace and Justice Center, the Memphis Bus Riders Union, TN Immigrant and Refugee Rights Coalition, and many others. Children and youth contributed throughout the day to a huge Memphis United mural.

The event coincided with a non-political "Heart of Memphis" event organized by the city of Memphis and numerous other organizations that included children's activities, music and local vendors.

You can follow Memphis United at <https://www.facebook.com/MemphisUnited?fref=ts>. —Audrey May

QUEERNOTES

by Elise

Harley McGuire, a Bisexual sixth grader, killed herself because she was bullied at her Thorndale, Maine, school for her sexual orientation. Harley's middle school, Mount View, thought McGuire was merely being teased. About a year earlier, McGuire's brother, also committed suicide at the age of 20, because he was being bullied at school. Despite all this loss, McGuire's uncle, who was her legal guardian, said their family is not angry at those who bullied her because they are also children and need help.

* * *

One hundred parents of GLBT children in Guangzhou, China, sent a letter to delegates of China's National People's Congress demanding marriage equality. The members of China's affiliate of Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays cited the barriers their Queer children experience in China in adoption, inheritance and buying property.

* * *

Aaron Jackson bought, then painted in rainbow colors, a house across the street from anti-Queer pastor Fred Phelps's Topeka, Kans., Westboro Baptist Church. Jackson hopes to transform his new house into a Queer rights center and to fly a rainbow flag on a 30-foot pole outside his house. Fred Phelps and his followers protest the burials of U.S. soldiers claiming the soldiers died because the U.S. is pro-Gay.

* * *

A six-year-old Transgender girl Coy Mathis was suddenly banned from using the girls' restroom at her Fountain, Colo., Eagleside Elementary school, in the middle of her first grade year. Mathis' parents were surprised by Fountain-Fort Carson District's discriminatory decision because the school was very accepting of her while she had been in kindergarten.

New Yorkers protest police murders

New York—On March 9, 16-year-old Kimani Gray was shot and killed by two undercover police officers in the East Flatbush neighborhood of Brooklyn. Police alleged that he had a weapon, but the autopsy report showed that he had been shot in the back three times. Eyewitnesses report that he was shot even while asking the cops not to shoot him. As his mother put it, once he was down with the first shot, why were the second and the third necessary?

Both of the cops who killed Gray had civil rights complaints lodged against them. According to the *Daily News*, Sgt. Mourad Mourad had at least three suits brought against him when he was a plainclothes officer on Staten Island. Officer Jovaniel Cordova had two suits brought against him while he was stationed at Brooklyn's 70th Precinct. All of the suits alleged civil rights violations surrounding false arrest and illegal stop-and-searches.

The murder provoked a great deal of anger at the police, who are seen as an army of occupation in the neighborhood. The notorious stop-and-frisk policies of the NYPD, subject of a current civil law suit in Federal Court in New York, are common here. In the days after the murder, the neighborhood was saturated by cops in patrol cars, patrol wagons, on foot and on horseback. Police were stationed at every corner close to the location where the killing took place.

Mobile command centers with sophisticated surveillance equipment were stationed in the area, and convoys of squad cars and vans filled with police could be seen speeding along the streets. Groups of officers congregated in the side streets, and in adjoining neighborhoods metal police barricades were stacked on sidewalks. People of the neighborhood spoke of the high level of unemployment there (75% for young people) and constant police repression.

Gray's killing is just the latest example of a wave of police killings of young people over the last several years, including one last year in the same neighborhood. Religious figures in the community have tried to demonize the protesters as "outsiders" but as one person put it, in the struggle for justice there are no

End nuclear madness!

Chicago—At a Jan. 25 meeting of the Chicago Council on Science and Technology, the "smartest guys in the room," i.e., nuclear scientists and engineers, brushed off the ecological devastation and huge cost in human, animal and plant health caused by the development of nuclear weapons and nuclear power. Instead, they proudly touted themselves as inventors of a new generation of nuclear technology.

Gregory B. Jaczko, former chairman of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, said what everyone already knew: all 104 nuclear power reactors now in operation in the U.S. have a safety problem that cannot be fixed.

What's more, we are still hearing the old saw that the reactor failure in Japan at Fukushima/Daiichi was caused by the tsunami, not by the earthquake. Yes, it was the earthquake! Alarm sirens sounded when the earthquake hit because that was when the reactors were destroyed.

Many U.S. reactors are of the same make as the one in Japan. And some of them are located on earthquake faults. So let's get real.

1. We need to decommission the nuclear reactors in the U.S.

2. We need our scientists and engineers to pay attention to the real problems: a) how are we going to help the people and animals that have been so grievously impacted by macabre results of the isotopes already here, and b) what are we going to do about nuclear waste?

Getting rid of nuclear waste is what the new technology is about. Yes, we can use the waste to produce a new generation of reactors. That way the scientists and engineers will still be heroes, keep their jobs and the U.S. will have a continuing source of material for weapons of mass destruction. Not only that, we can continue to ignore the classes of people who will suffer from illnesses, especially birth defects, that are caused by increased "background" radiation.

Give all your money to cancer research but remember, your tax dollars are always at work creating new sources of cancer-causing radiation.

—January

outsiders.

Subsequent to protests on March 24 called by anti-incarceration activists, the propaganda machine went into high gear. Gray was described as a gangbanger, a socio-path, and "no angel."

Neighborhood residents speak of the fact that there are no parks or recreation centers, forcing young people to hang out on the streets where they are harassed and assaulted by "jump-out" squads of police who do not need even the slightest excuse to put young people against the wall, frisk them and enter

their names into an NYPD computerized data bank, even if no arrest is made. This is the "militant policing" of Bloomberg and Commissioner Ray Kelly.

Last year, only a few blocks from where Gray's shooting took place, the NYPD shot and killed 23-year-old Shantel Davis. She was unarmed. In October, an NYPD detective fatally shot unarmed 22-year-old Noel Polanco, who was allegedly driving erratically near JFK airport. Police shot and killed unarmed 18-year-old Ramarley Graham in his own apartment in February last year after they pursued him in an investigation. Graham's parents were among those who attended the vigil for Kimani Gray.

For now, the neighborhood is calm. The police presence is still heavy. And people are waiting for justice for Kimani Gray.

—Michael Gilbert

Detroiters organize

Detroit—In the very real class war being waged between capitalism and Detroit residents, a small protest demonstration is the tip of the iceberg of residents' discontent. Though they have been downplayed by the conservative *Detroit News* and local "opinion leaders," the protests are surrounded by heavy security. The leaders thus reveal their fear of grassroots opposition to the loss of local control in Detroit.

The entire state of Michigan voted against the harsh emergency manager law, Public Act 436, last November only to have the lame-duck state legislature vote it right back in before year's end. On the day, March 28, that Act 436 took effect, Detroit Public Schools Emergency Manager fired the interim superintendent of schools. The mainstream media raved about businessman Dan Gilbert's plans to buy up and renovate most of downtown Detroit.

Meanwhile, neighborhoods languish under mounting piles of trash, abandoned houses, stores, factories and vehicles. City services are reduced by mandatory budget cut "furloughs." The challenge for Detroit residents is: can we stand up and organize ourselves for quality living and working conditions, some of which includes wrestling support and services from our unelected new leaders? Can we articulate and realize a future Detroit developed for human needs?

Despite intermittent snow and cold winds, around 200 people rallied on March 23. Participants agreed that Emergency Financial Manager Kevyn Orr, who had negotiated Chrysler's bankruptcy in 2008, was not here to save the city but to navigate it through bankruptcy, destroying all labor contracts and "legacy" costs. This would end middle-class city government jobs and a decent retirement for former employees. Worse, it would lay the groundwork for new opportunities for capital accumulation and enrichment on the ruins of the city.

Speakers vowed to organize Detroiters to resist the continued abandonment and cheapening of residential and commercial property within city limits, and to resist the continued undermining of Detroit Public Schools by its own emergency managers and by the increasing number of charter schools in the city. (One item of good news: Cesar Chavez charter High School has just become unionized!)

Communities across the 139 square mile city continue to organize for a better future, in new or revitalized block clubs, and community associations and gardens. In parks and playgrounds that the city doesn't maintain, residents and volunteers are attempting to fill the gaps. Once the corporations revive downtown, they will look to take over the neighborhoods, forcing residents to leave. But most Detroiters want to stay and rebuild Detroit on our terms.

—Susan Van Gelder



Protest against the shooting of Kimani Gray on March 13, 2013.

WORLD **IN** VIEW

Rape and lies in Syria

by Gerry Emmett

Two years on, Syria's remains an "orphan revolution," and like many orphans it is seen according to the prejudices of the observer. The extent to which reality can thus be falsified is frightening, but as the con man knows, the mark's got to want it first.

Bashar Assad's status as an ally of Russian imperialism, both as arms client and as guarantor of Russia's only Mediterranean naval base at Tarsus, has had many consequences. Some are obvious, as the diplomatic cover provided by Russia's (and China's) seat on the UN Security Council. Some are quieter, as were the rubles smuggled in to finance Assad's shabiha terrorists.

Less noticed yet has been the way Assad has inherited the ideological apparatus, the corrupt ideas and willing propagandists, first developed in support of Russian ally Slobodan Milosevic's genocide in Bosnia. This apparatus was honed during Russia's devastation of Chechnya, then Serbia's invasion of Kosova. It finally found a massive Western echo chamber after Sept. 11, 2001. The Syrian Revolution has been met with attacks by this apparatus from the beginning.

ONCE AGAIN, RAPE...

It is instructive to compare the 1990s, when pretty much only the women's movement gave vocal support to Bosnia, with Syria today. Some of the same crimes are happening now.

The Women's Media Center's Women Under Siege project, together with Syrian activists, has been collecting data on the occurrence of rape as a weapon. This followed reports from refugees that led to comparisons with Bosnia. Jody Williams, co-chair of the Interna-



Chicago—The second anniversary of the Syrian Revolution is marked.

tional Campaign to Stop Rape & Gender Violence in Conflict, has said, "With every war and major conflict, as an international community we say 'never again' to mass rape. Yet, in Syria, as countless women are again finding the war waged on their bodies—we are again standing by and wringing our hands."

Perhaps it is actually more like Congo's ongoing wars, where such scant attention is paid that little hand-wringing takes place. But the statistics that Women

Under Siege has gathered show a definite use of rape (of both women and men) by Assad's army and militias. Sixty percent of attacks are carried out by government troops, and 20% by the shabiha. Another 6% involve both these forces working together. For the rest: 15% of attacks are by unknown or "other" perpetrators, and less than 1% attributed to the Free Syrian Army.

LIE CALLED 'NORMAL'

Along with the horror of mass rape as a weapon comes the big

lie that Assad is defending "secularism," presumably with the aid of both Iran's theocrats and Lebanon's Hezbollah, and is even defending women's freedom. It is equal to the lie that he is somehow defending the country's minority religious sects, despite his murder, torture and imprisonment of anyone who opposes him, whether Sunni, Alawite, Christian, Palestinian or Kurd. It would be hard to convince the bombed-out Palestinian refugees of Yarmouk, or the Kurdish villagers bombed in April, that he is their savior.

But again, there is a large body of propagandists who do assert this lie. They range from the many internet commenters, usually anonymous, who fill up news and web sites with pro-Assad comments (some that are known to me were also supporters of Milosevic) to a journalist like Patrick Cockburn who travels to Damascus and sees only what his prejudices incline him to see—mainly Assad in firm control with solid popular support.

Before the Arab Spring, Assad tried to project the image of a more "modern" ruler, and the world sent him architects, fashion designers, opera singers and musicians to create a Syria in its own image, without the torture chambers, or the massacres in Lebanon.

The celebrities are long gone. What remains is the desire not to see.

There are certain moments when the struggle for the soul of a revolution coincides with that revolution's struggle for the future of humanity. I believe this is a basic understanding of Marxism. Maybe the world has such a hard time looking at Syria today because it fears to see itself there a little too clearly.

Tunisia and the Left

The Feb. 26 assassination of Tunisian Marxist Chokri Belaid is a tragedy, not least because it denies this serious and courageous activist a chance to help work out the contradictions in his own movement. His funeral—perhaps a million people took to the streets—became a massive demonstration in favor of continuing the Tunisian Revolution.

The popular theory that the "moderate" Ennahda Party has used the Salafists to its far right as threats to the Left is credible. The historic demonstrations in memory of Belaid may help defeat reactionary Islamism in Tunisia.

Belaid, a 1980s student activist and lawyer, led the Unified Party of Democratic Patriots, a small organization in the Popular Front. But his call for social justice and critique of reactionary religion spoke to millions.

BELAID'S LEFT AND THE WORLD LEFT

At the World Social Forum in Tunisia in March, some tried to use that critique of religion for their own purposes, for example, trying to justify support for Assad in Syria, claiming the revolution there was motivated solely by religion. A group styling itself "Shabiha Forever" actually beat up a group of supporters of the Syrian Revolution and vandalized their display booth.

Others attempted to counterpose the Syrian and Palestinian struggles—falsely, since most Palestinians support the Syrians, and vice versa. When some Leftists shouted, "Jihad is in Palestine, you religious clerks!" the sentiment was as misplaced as it was senseless.

NEGATION AND HUMAN EMANCIPATION

Marx's critique of religion never stopped at this kind of first negation. His critique was based on revolution. It led him to recognize the greater personal freedom of North Africa's Muslims, the greater intelligence of Australian animists, and "the heart of a heartless world."

Marx began his search for revolution in permanence with second negativity:

"We do not assert that [the masses] must overcome their religious narrowness in order to get rid of their secular restrictions, we assert that they will overcome their religious narrowness once they get rid of their secular restrictions...The question of the *relation of political emancipation to religion* becomes for us the question of the *relation of political emancipation to human emancipation*" ("On the Jewish Question," 1843).

In his 1844 Manuscripts, Marx equally criticizes religious alienation and abstract atheism that fails to grasp history. Out of respect to Belaid's memory, the Left in Tunisia and elsewhere might want to grasp that principle of second negativity. It will bring them much closer to the thought and activity of the Tunisian and Syrian masses.

Boston bombing

The two bombs that exploded near the finish line of the Boston Marathon on Patriots' Day, April 15, have killed three people, about 180 more wounded, many shrapnel wounds leading to amputation. The bombs wreaked more damage than the previous notorious bomb set off in public space at a sports venue, at the 1996 Atlanta Olympics by Eric Rudolph, the serial bomber of abortion clinics and gay bars.

The Boston Marathon bombing follows mass killings in the past year in an Aurora, Colo., theater, at a Sikh temple in Wisconsin and at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Conn. The body count might have risen sharply if the bombs had been of dynamite like what killed four little girls in 1963 at a Birmingham church, or of the fertilizer type that killed 168 people and destroyed the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City in 1995, instead of relatively low-tech gunpowder bombs made by amateur bombers.

As we go to press, Dzhokhar Tsarnaev is in custody after a historic lockdown of the Boston area, one day after his brother Tamerlan Tsarnaev was killed in a police shootout. Even before he was captured, there were calls to treat him as an enemy combatant, to send him to Guantanamo, to subject him to a military tribunal. Those calls continue, but authorities have delayed giving him his Miranda rights.

In the Patriot Act era, it was no surprise that even before there were suspects, politicians and talking heads were screaming for rooting out the international conspiracy. Like the harassment of anyone taken for an Arab in the days after the Oklahoma City bombing before Timothy McVeigh was arrested, CNN ran with the "scoop" that a "dark-skinned male" had been identified with surveillance cameras and had been arrested, but they could not identify the suspect's accent.

The national chauvinists did not get the dark-skinned suspects they craved: the Tsarnaev brothers are U.S.-educated athletes and actual Caucasians—having lived in Dagestan and other areas of the Caucasus Mountains. Yet as Muslims they are treated as honorary brown-skinned people. Because they were ethnic Chechens, media demonization of Chechnya now sounds like what Russian President Vladimir Putin might say after another Russian massacre. Back in 1968 Sirhan Sirhan was one of the most hated men in the U.S. after he killed Presidential candidate Robert F. Kennedy, avowedly over Middle East policy, yet the assassination was considered his own act, not the act of Palestinians. No longer.

Everyone is an instant expert on the Tsarnaevs' life. Bush's Homeland Security boss Michael Chertoff urged special extra-constitutional surveillance for everyone like them (presumably youth from areas he does not like). But they seem to be true Americans—in the style of McVeigh. Studious over-achievers turning to mass killings is as American as apple pie. Gaining motivation from political Christianity or political Islam can result in even more depraved indifference.

—Bob McGuire

Chinua Achebe (1930-2013) and his legacy

Nigeria's Chinua Achebe, who passed away March 21, was probably the greatest African writer from the era of its anti-colonial revolutions. His novels, from *Things Fall Apart* (1958) to *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987), portray the elations and dilemmas of that era. The world has barely begun to grasp the importance of Achebe, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Camara Laye, and the

Venezuela election

The narrow victory of Vice President Nicolas Maduro over Henrique Capriles was a surprise. Hugo Chavez' endorsement had been expected to carry more weight. Both the Chavistas and the opposition made much of the demonstrations and street fighting that followed.

More significant for the long run was the vote itself. The close Venezuelan elections of recent years have likely represented the tensions inherent in Chavismo itself. While Hugo Chavez did do things to benefit many of the poorest Venezuelans, he also maintained a relationship with the business community.

There are limits to how far such a balancing act can be pushed, especially in the present moment of economic crisis. Doubtless, some among Chavez' bourgeois constituents will be attracted to the policies of Capriles, a more intelligent representative of the bourgeois opposition than the coup plotters of old.

Chavez' Bolivarian Revolution has largely been able to walk this tightrope, but the laws of capitalism still hold. At some point serious revolutionaries must come into conflict with them, and that moment of decision is fast approaching in Venezuela.

The support Maduro got from the other Latin American governments, post-election, shows the extent politics in the region have changed. Direct imperialist domination has weakened but capital has not been profoundly challenged.

other writers of Africa's freedom struggle.

Achebe could have coasted on his literary prestige, but he remained a dissident. He didn't hesitate to criticize classic Western authors for racist attitudes, most famously Joseph Conrad. Perhaps as a result, Achebe was denied the Nobel Prize that he easily merited. He also criticized, in and out of his novels, the many corruptions and failings of Africa's unfinished revolutions, especially in Nigeria. Nowhere did these contradictions appear more starkly than in the Biafran War.

Achebe wrote in a recent essay, "The Genocidal Biafran War Still Haunts Nigeria": "Almost 30 years before Rwanda, before Darfur, more than 2 million people—mothers, children, babies, civilians—lost their lives as a result of the blatantly callous and unnecessary policies enacted by the leaders of the federal government of Nigeria. As a writer I believe that it is fundamentally important, indeed essential to our humanity, to ask the hard questions, in order to better understand ourselves and our neighbors...there is precious little relevant literature that helps answer these questions. Did the federal government of Nigeria engage in the genocide of its Igbo citizens—who set up the Republic of Biafra in 1967—through punitive policies, the most notorious being 'starvation as a legitimate weapon of war'?...Why has the war not been discussed, or taught to the young, more than 40 years after its end? Are we perpetually doomed to repeat the errors of the past because we are too stubborn to learn from them?"

His last book, *There Was a Country: A Personal History of Biafra*, is an effort to engage those issues. At the end of his life, Achebe made a great statement of responsibility toward the future. His questions are only more significant because they resonate beyond the Africa of newly-won independence to a world struggling with the meaning of history and revolution. He remained true to the fundamental question of his revolutionary age: what does it mean to be human?