

NEWS & LETTERS

THEORY / PRACTICE

"Human power is its own end" —Karl Marx

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WORKSHOPTALKS

Chevron refinery's 'acceptable risks'

by Htun Lin

On Aug. 6, a huge toxic plume, caused by a massive fire from a leak at the Chevron refinery, spread over Richmond, Calif. Immediately afterward, the hot topic of discussion on the local TV news became what this would do to gas prices, not what it has done to the environment and the health of the community, which already suffers from chronic low-level toxic releases.

The next concern was the legitimacy of the claims, now over 9,000, filed by those who were harmed, or whose homes were damaged by the smoke, ash, and debris, which spread over tens of miles. Chevron executives and lawyers wasted no time setting up a claim center and a compensation process for the injured to get this cost behind them.

COST OF PRODUCTION

What happened was not an accident. While no one wanted to see an explosion, certain risks are deemed acceptable by the industry to keep production going. Chevron overruled their own engineers who, in a state-mandated safety analysis, had recommended replacing the pipe that exploded.

A refinery safety expert from the Steel Workers Union said, "When you have hydrocarbons outside the pipe, you are no longer running at a normal condition. It's time to shut the thing off and fix it, not to try to figure out a way around it."

But as one of Chevron's experts acknowledged, a

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EDITORIAL *Syrians* *against all odds*

Daraya, Aug. 25: the Assad regime continues its genocide, with 300-600 estimated killed in this Damascus suburb. The dead are unarmed men, women and children of the working class. This massacre was committed to terrorize the revolutionary people of Syria, and to guarantee the security of the nearby military airfield that Assad will use in the event he flees.

The area had slipped from Assad's control months ago, residents organizing their own lives free of the *mukhabarat* (secret police). This is no "civil war." It is a revolution that has reduced Assad's forces to something more like occupiers. What is left of his loyal military, and the terrorist *shabiha*, can pummel Syria's neighborhoods and villages with heavy weaponry and move in for lightning raids that invariably end in massacre. They can no longer hold the territory of Free Syria.

Even the claim to be a protector of "his own" Alawi religious group is vitiated by the fact, pointed out by an Alawi defector, that "In the Sunni community, if in every building there is an agent for the regime, in an Alawite community, in every building there are five." So terror there remains effective—the Alawi effectively hostages to the regime.

TEHRAN TO RIYYAD AND BEYOND

There is outside intervention in Syria. The Russian, Chinese and Iranian governments, in particular, have provided military aid and diplomatic cover for Assad. On the other hand, the reactionary rulers of Saudi Arabia have provided a stingy amount of aid to the Syrian revolutionaries. It hasn't been nearly enough, nor anything like what the Saudi rulers can afford. That is because they are not committed to a free,

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ONLINE: www.newsandletters.org

Reactionary U.S. election shows capital's contradictions

by Ron Kelch

"We built it!" roared the delegates at the Republican Party convention in Tampa. It was the perfect expression of the presidential campaign and of capitalist thinking in general. The truth is that workers built the social wealth. Capitalists take it from the workers, and the government gets a portion.

Mitt Romney and Paul Ryan launched their presidential ticket with a here-come-the-saviors-of-the-economy media blitz.

Except for assessing the present economic recovery as dismal, everything uttered was total deception. They call their plan "saving Medicare" when it would destroy it. Tea Party Republicans rode "Get the government's hands off my Medicare" to landslide success in 2010, and they are counting on the same lie again.

Far from balancing the budget, Ryan's budget will explode the deficit. The Ryan and Romney budgets grant huge tax cuts

to the super-rich and Ryan's especially rewards those like Romney, whose income comes from capital gains and who would pay almost *no* taxes. Creating bloated deficits by lowering taxes on the wealthy while expanding the war budget has been the way Republicans have forced cuts to social programs. This time they aim to demolish the remaining social safety net—food stamps, Medicaid, and education—even as their austerity measures would sink the economy into a deeper depression.

REPUBLICANS' WAR AGAINST WOMEN

The Romney/Ryan flimflam road show just got started when Todd Akin, a U.S. Senate candidate from Missouri, commented that women who are "legitimately" raped don't need abortions because their bodies will shut down conception. (See "Retgression's Stench," p. 2.) This disregard for the material facts of life is rife within the extremist base of the Republican Party, where demonizing women who want abortions, or deriding them for promoting birth control, is standard practice. Ryan co-sponsored a bill with Akin giving full rights of personhood to a fertilized egg, thus outlaw-

ing some forms of birth control and *all* abortion—even in the case of rape. This is enshrined as a plank in the Republican platform.

When Romney asked him to resign, Akin not only refused but garnered support from Christian Right politicians like former Arkansas governor Mike Huckabee. Shockingly, Akin had a comfortable lead over incumbent Senator Claire McCaskill and still may unseat her. It is hard to overestimate the retrogressive threat of a Republican victory in this election.

THE UGLY POLITICS OF RACISM

The Republican campaign has exploited and exacerbated the U.S.'s hideous racism where President Obama is presented as an "other," and, despite all evidence to the contrary, not born here. Republicans tagged him "the food stamp President" and swamped the media with ads showing Blacks lined up for benefits along with the comments "you paid for that" and the lie that under Obama "they just send you your welfare check" with no requirements.

The truth is that

Obama is enforcing the same anti-poor—especially targeting poor women—Gingrich-Clinton "reform" that gutted welfare. The racist, lying implication presented to poor whites in swing states that Obama is only out to help his "own kind," comes when poor and forgotten long-term unemployed of all colors desperately need more help to survive.

Republicans, who know the Black vote is solidly against them, are turning to despicable methods of selective voter suppression on a scale not seen since before the Civil Rights Movement, when Jim Crow laws effectively locked Blacks out of voting in the South. Governors in critical swing states like Ohio and Florida are trying to outlaw early and weekend voting used by many Blacks to avoid missing work or the interminable lines in concentrated urban areas. Florida has purged thousands of registered voters, including 12,000 who were erroneously flagged. Over 70% of those flagged voters were African American or Latino. At the same time, Florida's outrageous new restrictions on voter registration have cut new Democratic registrations by 96% as

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Feminist Majority

Protest in March against Virginia anti-abortion bill requiring invasive transvaginal ultrasound.

South Africa Marikana mine massacre

Marikana, South Africa—Aug. 18: It's now two days after the brutal, heartless and merciless cold bloodbath of 45 Marikana mine workers by the South African Police Services. This was a massacre!

Mining has been central to the history of repression in South Africa. Mining made Sandton to be Sandton and the Bantustans of the Eastern Cape to be the desolate places that they still are. Mining in South Africa also made the elites in England rich by exploiting workers in South Africa.

Julius Malema, former leader of the youth wing of the African National Congress and a corrupt and authoritarian demagogue who represents a faction of the Black Economic Empowerment elite, has been demanding nationalization. Progressive forces inside and outside of the alliance oppose Malema because he represents the most predatory faction of the elite and is looking for a massive bailout for his friends who own unprofitable mines. What we stand for is socialization, under workers' control, of the mines. We also stand for reparations for the hundred years of exploitation.

Things are starting to change, but not for the better. Khulubuse Zuma, the president's nephew, and Zondwa Mandela, the former president's grandchild, and many others with close family ties to politicians have become mining tycoons overnight. China has joined the band-

wagon as well, plundering our resources.

The National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) is rapidly losing all credibility. The betrayal of the workers by Frank Baleni, the General Secretary of NUM, has made him a very rich man who condemns and tries to suppress the struggles of the poor. It is no surprise that workers are rejecting NUM, trying to build an alternative union or acting on their own without any union representing them.

The Marikana Mine is the richest platinum mine in the world, and yet its workers live in shacks and earn only R4,000 (\$475) a month. Through their blood and sweat in the mines they do not only produce wealth that is alienated from them, they also produce the fat cats, who wine and dine on naked bodies and call that sushi.

We celebrate every Rand that the workers have taken back from the capitalists and fully support their demand of a salary of R12,500 (\$1,488) a month.

If the strikers were protesting under the banner of the tripartite alliance (ANC, South African Communist Party and COSATU) they wouldn't have been slaughtered. COSATU strikes have often been violent, but their members are not shot like animals. In fact the campaigns to support Zuma in his rape and corruption trials were full of threats of violence, and yet Zuma

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WOMAN AS REASON Retrogression's stench

by Terry Moon

Everyone has heard—and a great many rightly condemned—the unconscionable statement by Missouri Republican Congressman and Senate hopeful Todd Akin: "from what I understand from doctors, that's really rare," he said, referring to pregnancy from rape. "If it's a legitimate rape, the female body has ways to try to shut that whole thing down." It is not only horrifying that he is factually wrong. Akin's statement, plus the bill he co-authored with Republican Vice President wannabe Paul Ryan, attempted to narrow and redefine rape to "forcible rape," as a way to limit federal funds for abortion barely available to women made pregnant by rape.

All rape is forced. What they really mean is that a woman has to put up a struggle, show some bruises, a black eye or two, maybe a few broken bones. Then, *maybe* they'll believe her. Akin, Ryan, and their ilk reveal an attitude to women that would erase 40 years of struggle.

FIGHTING THE SAME FIGHT—AGAIN

The expression "forcible rape" takes us back to the days when women had to be beaten, had to take pictures of the bruises to have some kind of document, some "proof" of her charge, to have even the slimmest chance of bringing a rapist to justice—or be believed.

When I became active in one of the first Women Against Rape groups in the country in the early 1970s, rape was viewed as always the woman's fault. It was what you were wearing, where you were, who you were with, what you said—no matter what, it was your fault. That was if you were white. If you were a Black woman, you were assumed to always want sex and could not be raped at all.

The attitude revealed by Akin/Ryan is that women are liars. If she hasn't been beaten bloody, she's lying, lying about the rape, lying to get some innocent guy in trouble, lying to get that money for an abortion—as if that would be an easy thing to do.

BACK, BACK, BACK TO THE 1920S

It's ironic that this putrid retrogression is appearing when, finally, the Uniform Crime Report's definition of rape—what police and the FBI use to collect information and prosecute rape—was revised. How far back Republicans want to take us is to 1927, when rape was legally defined as "the carnal knowledge of a female, forcibly and against her will." That left out men and boys as victims of rape, it left out rape of women who might be drunk or drugged, it could leave out those who submitted because there was a gun to their head or a knife at their throat—it left out all rape except the most violent. The new definition, more inclusive and realistic, came only after decades of struggle as well as research: "The penetration, no matter how slight, of the vagina or anus with any body part or object, or oral penetration by a sex organ of another person, without the consent of the victim."

Akin, Ryan, and their cronies seem to see women as less than human, as creatures not to be trusted, who lie about the most serious things, who have no regard for what Akin/Ryan consider "life." Life to them is not the person standing in front of them who was brutalized, rather it is a fetus, the size of a fingernail, and the woman in need of help is a liar and a murderer.

While unlike some interpreters of Sharia law who

demand that a raped woman produce four male witnesses or the rapist confess, Akin/Ryan and those they represent are on a similar trajectory.

THE QUEST FOR UNIVERSALITY

What they ignore at their peril is that the revolutionary core of the Women's Liberation Movement is not just gaining rights or political reform—that's only a part of it. A large segment was looking and fighting for a whole new and different world—fighting to be whole human beings.

All aspects of what it meant to be a woman were in question. It was that struggle that included everything from equal pay to women taking control of our own healthcare. What gave the fight for abortion rights such depth and power was that we knew that without reproductive justice and when abortion is illegal, women die.

What's important about this now, when that movement no longer exists in that form, is that the Women's Liberation Movement revealed what Karl Marx called "the quest for universality." That is what drives all freedom movements from the U.S. Civil Rights Movement to Occupy and most especially Arab Spring today.

The cynical slap on Akin's wrist from Romney and other Republicans reveals nothing about what they think of what he actually said—most agree with him and his hateful attitude towards women. Rather, it reveals that they are very afraid that if they go too far, show too much of their real contempt for us, they'll touch off another movement for freedom that they will be unable to contain.

'Comfort women' speak

Los Angeles—Bok-dong Kim, an 87-year-old Korean "comfort woman," came here as part of her U.S. speaking tour on the fifth anniversary of House Resolution 121, which acknowledged Japan's war crimes against the comfort women. She met with Congressional representatives in Washington, D.C., spoke to 300 students at California State University Los Angeles, and addressed an audience of over 100 at the Glendale Public Library on July 30.

The insulting term "comfort women" came from the Japanese Imperial Army's "comfort stations" during World War II. Up to 200,000 mostly Korean but also Chinese, Filipina, Taiwanese, Indonesian and Malaysian women were kidnapped and forced into sexual slavery, some for years, forced to give sexual service to 20 to 30 soldiers a day. The horror lasted from 1932 to Aug. 16, 1945, when Japan surrendered. But, Bok-dong Kim said, "Korea was liberated but we were not!"

Bok-dong Kim stated that comfort stations were formed near where the Japanese Army was engaged in battles: in the Philippines, Manchuria, Burma, China, Borneo, Java, Taiwan, etc. She was sent to a comfort station in Guangdong in 1941 at age 15. After Japan surrendered, many comfort women were abandoned, some were killed in bombings and many others were killed and buried in attempts to cover up the atrocities.

The pain and torture of the rapes made it difficult for the women to talk about their past. Many could not have children. Kim was not welcome by relatives so she lived by herself in shelters. Most victims lived an isolated life. During the Korean dictatorship that only ended in 1980, people could not talk of human rights.

As another of the late so-called "comfort women," Duk-Kyung Kang (1921-2004), stated: "The war was over/ My youth and my whole life was filled with only pain/ Unable to reveal this horrendous story/ I wept alone."

In 1989, the late Ms. Hak-Soon Kim testified of her experience as a "comfort woman." This led to weekly protests at the Japanese Embassy in Seoul, South Korea, in 1992. Solidarity movements developed from Asia to North America, from Europe to even Japan.

The Japanese government refuses to apologize or pay reparations even though Japanese soldiers, too, testified against their government at the War Crimes Tribunal. The government claims it was done by contractors or they lie, saying that the women were not forced into sexual slavery but were "paid to come and take care of the troops."

Today, only 60 of these women survive in Korea. One said that the Japanese government wants all of us to die so they won't have to pay for their war crimes. She said, "We will not die." Bok-dong Kim said, "I would use the money to help victims of other countries. Other women of the world are going through the same thing."

—Japanese-American

Abortion victory is won in Mauritius



LALIT supporters at a March 6 ceremony for Sharonne and photographic journalist Marie-Noelle, two mothers who died from illegal abortions.

Port Louis, Mauritius—LALIT is the only political party that has, over the decades, campaigned for abortion decriminalization, and finally, in June, Parliament passed a new Abortion Law to replace the 1838 total ban. Everyone in Mauritius knows that this is a LALIT struggle, as our stand on abortion decriminalization had often been used "against" us. So, it is like getting accumulated "support."

The new abortion law decriminalizes abortion in the circumstances of serious ill-health of the woman or malformation of the fetus, rape, incest or statutory rape. It also means that women can speak openly about abortion, and can, when ill after a complication resulting from an illegal abortion, go to a hospital for treatment with more freedom. And the struggle continues.

The law came into the National Assembly two months after the women's organization, the Muvman Liberasyon Fam (MLF) whose leadership is mostly women in LALIT, held ceremonies in two cemeteries with the families of women who had died as a direct result of abortion being illegal. The MLF had accentuated its campaign for abortion decriminalization, and put into question the wording of the archaic law, which referred to the woman being "quick with child."

A woman had been charged in 2009 with illegal abortion, and the Director of Public Prosecutions had finally, after women's mobilization against the law as "not clear," dropped charges.

MLF called a Common Front on Abortion which became very strong. The death of a woman photographic journalist following an illegal abortion changed the balance of forces enormously, as all the reporters and other employees of the Press groups could no longer toe the line of the main companies that run the Press, which are historically close to the Catholic Church.

The law was finally passed with only 20% of MPs voting against. This massive support in Parliament was despite a campaign that would make you think "everyone" is against it, or, if not, then too weak to stand up to the religious lobbies opposing abortion.

Every time Parliament met, there were dozens of women in the galleries, holding press conferences, and even staying until after midnight. There was a candlelight ceremony in memory of women who had died from illegal abortions.

The mobilization was given strong vocal support by the Nursing Association, the biggest union in the health sector. The Union called for complete decriminalization, and for women to feel free to come to hospital. "We are here to look after the sick, not to judge you," union leader Ashok Callooa announced. He said nurses are the ones who see the suffering that results from back-street abortions, and he, like almost everyone else in the debate, put emphasis on the class issue. Poor women suffer disproportionately from the law.

Other unions also came out in support, adding to the growing support from human rights groups, family planning organizations and the women's movement.

A surprisingly large number of MPs spoke in favor of well-nigh total decriminalization, showing their reliance on the argumentation developed over decades of struggle, especially by LALIT and the MLF. Another surprise was the strong pro-secular approach amongst MPs of almost all parties. They put emphasis on the health and human rights issues, and the need for a secular state. The once opposition Mauritian Militant Movement (MMM) came out worst, with its anti-abortion MPs making fools of themselves in speeches so outrageous that the Press denounced them unanimously.

One MMM MP, Jean-Claude Barbier, actually told Parliament that God had personally spoken to him about what to say in "the august Assembly."

MMM deputy Lysie Ribot said that women who had abortions were also more likely to have road accidents and get cancer of the cervix. She said, in a grotesque statement, that women who were raped were unlikely to fall pregnant because their ovulation got "blocked." Adil Meea, yet another MMM MP, said religion was one of the last ramparts against degeneracy and depravity. Soon, he said, we will hear talk of same-sex marriages.

But, these were marginalized completely in the generally massive support for the law, not only in Parliament, but also outside.

—Lindsey Colleen for LALIT

WOMENWORLDWIDE

by Artemis

In July, Cairo, Egypt, launched a new TV channel called Maria employing only niqab-clad women. The employees use the rhetoric of empowerment, stating this is a response to discrimination in hiring women who wear the fundamentalist garments covering all but the eyes. However, the channel's owner, Abu Islam Abdallah, stated he founded it as a correction to the "pandemonium" of the democratic government allowing women to "dress immodestly, work as dancers and even be members of Parliament."

* * *

On Aug. 6, Philippine President Benigno Aquino addressed a multiparty group of 180 lawmakers, stating that 17 months of debates that have delayed the passage of a health bill promoting state-funded contraception must end. He linked contraception to responsible parenthood. The lawmakers agreed.

* * *

Over 6,000 Tunisians, mostly women, rallied Aug. 13 against wording in the proposed Constitution designating women as "complementary to men." They also demanded that a ground-breaking 1956 law that granted women full equality remain in the Constitution. Referring to the president of Tunisia's new ruling party, Ennahda, a banner read: "Ghannouch clear off! Tunisian women are strong." Another read: "Rise up women for your rights to be enshrined in the Constitution." One marcher spoke for many, saying: "We will not let Islamists turn our Spring into winter."

Black lung disease increasing in youth

Detroit, Mich.—An alarming increase in black lung disease (pneumoconiosis) among coal miners is raising serious questions about the effectiveness of coal dust suppression in the nation's mines. Since the 1980s, cases of the disease have quadrupled in West Virginia, Kentucky and Virginia. Whereas before it had primarily affected older miners, studies by the Center for Public Integrity, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health and National Public Radio reveal that there has also been a spike in the disease among younger miners as well—some in their 20s.

This comes as no surprise to federal mine safety regulators or the mining industry. They have known for at least two decades that miners were breathing dangerous amounts of coal dust. Regulations to control coal dust are very weak and coal operators tamper with coal dust detectors in the mines to register false lower results that they then report. Compounding this fraudulent reporting is that there are far too few federal mine safety inspectors to effectively monitor the thousands of coal mines in the country.

The importance of coal dust control had been horribly demonstrated in the 2010 coal dust explosion at the Upper Big Branch mine that killed 29 miners. Autopsies of the dead miners disclosed that of the 24 tested, 17 had evidence of black lung.

The extent of the increase in black lung is vividly described by a coordinator of a West Virginia health clinic, working there since 1989, who said that in her first ten years, she had four cases of serious black lung and now she has 50.

In addition to huge amounts of coal dust produced

in the mining process, there is also more toxic silica dust released. Federal mine records of 113,000 samples of dust taken since 1987 reveal that 52% exceeded federal coal dust standards and about 65% exceeded silica standards. Technological advances in coal production increase the release of coal and silica dust, making those standards woefully obsolete and in serious need of reform to reflect current mining dangers.

My closest friend when I worked in the mines in the 1950s was a young Black man about 6'4", weighing about 200 pounds and with muscles like steel. He got black lung while in his 40s and his health quickly deteriorated. My monthly visits to see him as he lay in bed became increasingly agonizing. I saw his once superb body decimated by the disease. He kept a big empty coffee can by his bedside and incessantly coughed up black slime that he spit into the can. He became nothing but skin and bones, and the oxygen he had to breathe provided little relief for the excruciating pain he suffered with every breath he took. At the end, he welcomed death.

—Andy Phillips

Solidarity with miners



Oakland, Calif.—On Aug. 24, 100 activists converged on Oscar Grant Plaza to express solidarity with the South African miners' struggle in Marikana and outrage over the police slaughter of 34 striking workers at Lonmin Platinum Mine there. Signs read: "This Was Not An Aberration" and "Capitalism Requires Violence." A banner declared "Workers' Lives Worth More Than Platinum." —David M'oto

Wage theft in Memphis

Memphis, Tenn.—Activists have formed a Stop Wage Theft Coalition in Shelby County, Tenn., to lobby the Shelby County Commission to create a Wage Theft Ordinance that will create a process for workers to file complaints against bad employers. The industries most responsible for wage theft are construction, landscaping, restaurants, those who employ farmworkers and temporary staffing agencies.

Presently there are only two Department of Labor investigators for all of West Tennessee and North Mississippi. Nationwide there is approximately one investigator per 140,000 workplaces or 700,000 employees. Memphians hope to get the ordinance passed this fall in line with Miami, Seattle, Austin, San Francisco and numerous other cities starting campaigns. To learn more about starting a campaign locally, email info@iwj.org and tip in cash.

—Mario Zuluaga

Jazz for justice

New York—It's in the air, an edgy current that awakens the spirit. When did it start? Was it the Arab Spring? The Occupy Movement? What? Where?

May Day 2012 was a day of expectation. New York musicians marched, played music, fed the soul with protest and pride, marched on the jazz clubs. What do the musicians want? Justice for Jazz Artists! What's that?

Fifteen years ago a movement, Justice for Jazz Artists, developed inside New York Local 802 of the American Federation of Musicians. In 2006 the sales tax was eliminated on admission charges at night clubs. The musicians' union agitated for this, believing that tax relief would free up money for musicians' pensions.

Instead club owners appropriated the money, leaving nothing for the pension fund. We leafleted six major jazz clubs, acquainting patrons with the "justice" of our demands for health, retirement, and other benefits.

The mundane minutiae of creeping craft unionism is as necessary as the stale air we breathe: we want to stay alive. But now we also dream, we think, we create and the memory camera in my skull plays back an image of Charles Mingus on the bandstand, intoning an angry opus: "Fables of Faubus."

His bass strings snap with righteous rage while Danny Richmond, cymbals hissing, sneers, jeers, conjures up a baleful image of Arkansas Governor Orval Faubus, who would deny an education to the children of Little Rock.

This is the legacy of jazz: the pain, the joy, the anger of the likes of Charles Mingus. We must continue this wherever we perform.

—New York musician

Marikana massacre

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supporters were not gunned down.

Before the miners occupied the hill, they made a vow that no bullet would deter them. They were willing to fight and die to get a fair share of the wealth of this mine for themselves and their families. This demonstrates that these were people who were aware of the risks that their decisions entailed, who thought about such risks carefully, guided by their conscience, and concluded that they were willing to face the consequences that could arise.

The ANC government has killed workers for demanding a salary increment from a notoriously exploitative and very, very rich company. The ANC president and cabinet ministers earn not less than R2 million (\$238,047) per year. On top of that there is corruption everywhere. Our politicians are part of the global elite. The president of the ANC recently built a mansion that cost taxpayers not less than R200 million (\$24 million).

It is the ANC government that shoots and kills protesters when they are fighting for the assertion of their humanity. They recently killed community activist and journalist Andries Tatane. They have killed at least 25 others in protests since 2000. If you are poor and black, your life counts for nothing to the ANC.

What lesson can be learnt from the Marikana mine workers' massacre? The ruthlessness of this government does not diminish, but on the contrary increases with the number of workers and unemployed who starve. They are criminalizing our struggles and militarizing their police. It is clear that anyone who organizes outside of the ANC, in communities or in the workplace, will face serious and violent repression from the party and the police.

The NUM and the SACP have made it very clear which side they are on by supporting the massacre and calling for further repression against the workers. Their reactions to the massacre are a total disgrace. No credible left formation in South Africa or anywhere in the world can work with the NUM or SACP again.

War has been declared on the poor and on anyone organizing outside of the control of the ANC. We are our own liberators. We must organize and continue to build outside the ANC. We must face the realities of the situation that we confront clearly and courageously. Many more of us will be jailed and killed in the years to come. What they have done can never be forgotten nor forgiven.

—Ayanda Kota

Abahlali baseMjondolo shackdwellers movement

Con Ed lockout ends

New York—On July 24 at historic Union Square, 8,500 workers with Local 1-2 Utility Workers Union of America, UWWA, who had been locked out by Consolidated Edison, were surrounded by 5,000-10,000 supporters, similar to the numbers from the big unions who had marched a week earlier.

They told *News & Letters*: "It's about the pension. We've had this pension for 75 years. They want to take it away from the younger workers. That's not right; it should be for all or no one. Utility workers are the last ones to have good benefits. If they break us, everyone loses."

The lively, spirited march, with enthusiastic support from bystanders along the route, was part of the nationwide "Workers Rising Day of Action" centered on low-wage workers.

Mingling in the crowd—many who were happy to receive a copy of *News & Letters*—were workers from Communications Workers of America Local 338 (CWA), LiUNA (Laborers' Local 79), the United Federation of Teachers (UFT), United Food and Commercial Workers Local 1500, RWSDU, plus substantial number from Occupy, the IWW and community organizations including a group from the Brooklyn-based Make the Road Straight.

Workers from Walmart, JC Penney, airport workers, taxi drivers, supermarket workers and library workers declared their solidarity with each other and the locked-out Con Ed workers. Local politicians and clergy added their voices. Everyone enjoyed the inspiring rap performed by—who else—Communications Workers of America.

The very next day, Governor Andrew Cuomo, who had up to then refused to intervene in the three-week-old lockout, brought the two sides together for an emergency return to work plan as a line of severe thunderstorms approached the city.

The tentative contract announced the following day was approved two weeks later by 93% of the members. There will be no changes to the pension plan for workers hired before July 1, 2012, for 25 years, but future hires will have pension terms not yet specified.

Beyond the festive atmosphere, we need to think about how to continue the momentum for future labor battles. Will the participants act to support each others' struggles? Will traditional unions continue to embrace community organizations and low-wage, non-unionized or unemployed workers as allies?

—Participants

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"normal condition" is to let production go forward even as these leaks regularly appear. Every consideration of risk for Chevron is merely to calculate not the human cost, but the cost of doing business.

BUSINESS AS USUAL

As the Steel Workers Union rep explained, Chevron had not only known about this incident hours before the explosion, but routinely put workers' lives at risk in "business as usual" daily "work-arounds."

The Chevron toxic eruption reminded me of my own shop, even though healthcare and petroleum are different industries. Patients' health as well as workers' safety are put at risk daily by our own "work-arounds." Often, healthcare professionals, who are hurried, harried, and harassed, do work-arounds in order to meet company goals set by the computer. The computer has become the omnipresent virtual boss on the shop floor.

Occasionally, these work-arounds cause mishaps that have serious consequences. The employees who use them know management will ultimately hold them at fault if these violations are exposed. Department bosses don't discourage these work-arounds, because they save labor time.

When a patient files a complaint, management scrambles to order immediate "service-recovery" actions, in order to prevent the patient from filing a formal complaint with state agencies. This is only a band-aid on the problem in order to cover up ongoing inadequacies. State regulators, for their part, give the company only "slap on the wrist" fines.

SPEWING POISON DAILY

A demand that Chevron pay for their mistake fails to address the price already paid by workers and neighbors. As one Richmond resident put it: "Whatever they pay me, it will not cover the cost of living here for 40 years, breathing their foul emissions daily, and having my kids suffer from asthma." The asthma rate for children in Richmond is twice the national average.

Workers are ordered daily, with a nudge and a wink, to take many chances, putting not only others' but our own lives at risk. Safety experts are repeatedly overruled, as in the 2005 explosion at a Texas BP refinery, which killed 15 workers. The same goes for the 2010 explosion at BP's Transocean rig, which killed 11. As an industry, coal and oil may be safer than healthcare, since the casualty rate caused by HMOs is estimated to be 100,000 per year.

Long before any demands for industry to "pay up," corporate honchos had already designed fiduciary disaster plans, to set up pre-fab claim centers, with ready-made arbitration waivers in hand, in order to speedily dispose of expected claims.

For the company, this is merely a cost already factored in their plan. They will indeed pay, but on their terms. In short, nothing which happens in the shop, (not even a tragic accident), is purely a mistake.

They will continue to commit these "mistakes" unless and until workers gain control not only of their labor-power, but the meaning of their laboring activity—making labor, at last, not a mere means to an end, but an end in and for itself.

FROM THE WRITINGS OF RAYADUNAYEVSKAYA

Editor's Note: Originally the lead article in the June-July 1964 issue of News & Letters, this article analyzed trends and events of retrogression and the resistance to it that are still remarkably current in today's Tea Party-infested USA. Footnotes are added by the editors.

by Raya Dunayevskaya

The easy victory of Barry Goldwater as Republican presidential candidate is more—a great deal more—than a defeat of the alleged Republican "moderate mainstream." The illogic of the extremism of the Far Right is the logical end to "traditional" conservatism. **It is the cancer of a new form of fascism attacking the lifeblood of thriving American capitalism.**

BELATEDNESS OF "STOP GOLDWATER" DRIVE

The belatedness of the start of any "stop Goldwater" drive not only was no accident, but it would never have started at all if it weren't for the outcry **abroad** at Goldwater's Republican primary victory in California. The indecision of General Dwight Eisenhower was an indication of how deeply inbred in the Republican Party is the Far Right. But it wasn't only that phenomenon which kept the Republican officeholders, who did fear loss of local elections in the industrial states of the North if Goldwater turned out to be the Republican presidential nominee, from starting a "stop Goldwater" drive.

The truth is that not only Republican officeholders, Far Right or moderate, but also "independent" Democratic journalistic pundits had, up to the outcry abroad, actually urged that it is time to give the conservative wing of the Republican Party its "chance at the polls," as if a general election in the mightiest empire is no more than a game to show "democracy" at work.

None of Goldwater's reactionary stands frightened them: after all, in 1952, "Mr. Republican," Robert Taft, had lost the Republican nomination, **not** because he had authored the anti-Labor Taft-Hartley Act, but only because General Eisenhower could be a "winner." But, this time, once the foreign press shrieked in horror, the pundits here suddenly "discovered" that the presidency of a country that could set off a nuclear holocaust wasn't something to be traded back and forth between "liberals" and conservatives. And it was first then also that they discovered that Senator Goldwater wasn't just "lending respectability to extremists"; **Goldwater himself was the extremist.**

THE BIRCHERS AND "THE MODERATES"

The height of immorality, however, was manifested among the so-called "moderate mainstream." From George Romney to Henry Cabot Lodge, and from William Scranton to Eisenhower's brother,¹ the predominant voice was: "Let's get a progressive program" so that we can say, the minute we capitulate to Goldwater, that he is running on "our program" and can be trusted to execute the Civil Rights Bill,² though he opposed it. In this respect at least, Goldwater and his Birchite³ supporters stuck to their "principles,"

1. These Republican politicians were allied with the Critical Issues Council set up by former President Dwight Eisenhower and chaired by his brother Milton. The 1964 Republican convention rejected their proposals to denounce the John Birch Society and to support the Civil Rights Bill.
2. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 was passed shortly after this article was written. Goldwater voted against it, claiming that it violated "individual liberty" and "states' rights"—a position echoed by Ron Paul today.
3. The extremist Right-wing John Birch Society, still active today, claimed that labor unions, the civil rights movement and Medicare were Communist conspiracies. One of its founders was the father of the billionaire Koch brothers.



A protester arrested during a 1964 civil rights action in Brooklyn, New York.

Historic roots of far Right threat to U.S.

whether that was the claim of unconstitutionality of the Civil Rights Bill, the open shop⁴ principle, or the "defoliation" of South Vietnam's jungle by "a little bomb."⁵ All we have to remember is that it is precisely such reactionary stands that laid the basis for the Civil War, which was initiated by the South.

The loss of votes in November at the polls won't be half as important to Goldwater as the retention of the tight, disciplined Birchite **organization** which won him the Republican Party machine, and stands ready to become the polarizing force for **all** Far Right groups, including that of the Southern racists and actual Nazis who opposed Goldwater because he is, partly, Jewish. Herein lies the greatest danger of all; the symbolism of Goldwater for all the Far Right, from the Democratic Party as well as the Republican Party, the many lawless organizations thriving in the South as well as the young fanatics in the North who are so brainwashed in our colleges that they take, at face value, the "principles" of "rugged individualism," "states' rights," "private initiative vs. Federal bureaucracy," and opposition to "a soft on Communism policy" though it would end in nuclear holocaust.

This Goldwater symbolism, this organizational ability of the Birchers to become a polarizing force for the neo-fascist elements just below the surface can lead to nothing short of civil war in the U.S. and all-out war abroad for conquest of the world.

McCARTHYISM AND GOLDWATERISM

Anyone who dares call this "the American way" must be made to face the new barbarism which puts McCarthyism in the shade. Even at his heyday that demagogue, Senator Joseph McCarthy, who wreaked so much havoc in our lives, was a man without an organization. His fighting of "the soft on Communism" policy was concentrated on **individuals**—in the State Department as in the entertainment world, it is true; in the Defense Department as in academic institutions—but

nowhere did that demagogue take on a whole race.

Here, on the other hand, we have an **organization**, the Birchers, infiltrating the Republican and Democratic Parties, attracting all other Far Rightists, from the KKK to the insignificant American Nazis, **bringing the full weight of the Southern totalitarian states to bear upon the Negroes who number no less than one-tenth of the population—at the very moment when the Negro Revolution has shown it means not to be stopped though capitalism is on the rampage, and the Southern face of this Far Right is running completely amok in the magnolia jungle of Mississippi. Moreover, the new form of fascism is not satisfied to stay South but is invading the North both with racism and openshopism, not to mention war jingoism.**

THE ELECTION AND NEW FORMS OF REACTION

It is true that Goldwater's open anti-labor stand has, judging by the conversations in the shop, finally awakened white labor, even where it too is racist, to the dangers of Goldwaterism, or the attempt to revert to the open shop. But there is no point whatever in lulling ourselves to sleep with the complacent statement that Goldwater cannot win the election. After all, runs that argument, he is minority even within his own Republican Party, and when the electorate has expressed itself, Goldwater will be just another also-ran who will soon be forgotten.

Will he? It is true that he is making it easy for that conservative Texan now occupying the White House and playing the role of liberal poor country boy to get straight back into the White House. But Lyndon Johnson's election will not basically change the objective situation of capitalism on the rampage any more than Senator Everett Dirksen's "fight" for the Civil Rights Bill changed his vote for Goldwater.

The cancer of reaction is already in the bloodstream of American capitalism. It has been there for a long, long time. It will not disappear with the defeat of that most reactionary capitalist representative, Goldwater.

FEARS OF THE MIDDLE CLASS

The point is that American capitalism, though its profits have never been higher, is on the rampage. The point is that, although the middle class has not suffered the economic rout they experienced during the Depression, it too, is suffering from having won the war but not seeing the spoils of victory. It is full of fear—fear Auto-

4. In an open shop, workers do not have to join a union that represents them. This year, 20 states passed or proposed right-to-work laws that outlaw closed shops.
5. Goldwater advocated "defoliation of the forests by low-yield atomic weapons" in the Vietnam War.

mation will next rid itself of the middleman as it already is depopulating the factories; fear that it will be "outvoted" in the UN by all the "underdeveloped" countries "it" is supporting; fear its favored place in white Protestant America is being undermined by the Negro Revolution, the Jew, the Catholic, the "foreigner"; fear that the Russian ICBM's have scored a nuclear stalemate; fear that the Chinese guerrilla victories would extend themselves throughout Southeast Asia, and perhaps also in Africa and Latin America; fear that "one man, one vote" might lead to **it no longer being the majority in legislative halls of these United States of America.**

"Affluent" America is being swept up by the whirlwind of a revolution left unfinished for 100 years. The Negro Question, which has always been the key to U.S. image and development, has torn the facade of democracy to shreds. **There is, indeed, no need to travel behind the Iron Curtain or the Bamboo Curtain to see totalitarianism at work; all that is needed is to go down to Mississippi.**

As a **world** phenomenon, the new, prosperous neo-fascistic face of capitalism appeared when prosperous automated capitalism and the OAS brought Charles de Gaulle to power in France in 1958.⁶ But at least de Gaulle, before going glory-hunting to more spacious fields than Algiers (such as challenging U.S. political and atomic "leadership" of Europe) did end the war in Algeria. The American Republican phenomenon wants to begin with an atomic adventure—and not tomorrow, but today, anywhere at all, preferably the "foliage" of South Vietnam. **Goldwater is a great deal more moronic than de Gaulle, and his power would be so much vaster and terrifying that he could, with his trigger-happy finger on the nuclear "button," unleash a nuclear holocaust without waiting for a tomorrow.**

There is no point to consoling ourselves with a very probable Goldwater defeat at the polls. A defeat at the polls will not rid us of the **organization**—the Birchers—that made it possible for him to "capture" the Republican Party, and is already bracing itself for other battles. Just as the Dixiecrats in the Democratic Party continue to arm themselves, with or without Federal aid, to fight the unarmed Freedom Fighters,⁷ so the Birchites in the North become the polarizing force for reaction. **The significance of the Goldwater phenomenon will outlast the November election.**

PHILOSOPHY OF FREEDOM NEEDED

Self-activity of the masses can overcome this reaction, after as before the election. The Negroes have no intention whatever to continue the horrible co-existence with the George Wallaces and Ross Barnetts—or Goldwaters. But it is also true that **unless** there is **unity** of the movement to freedom with the philosophy of freedom, the forces for world war will swallow up everything. A Goldwater hand on the atomic trigger, even if it is only his wish thus far, is too close for comfort.

The capitalists have always been militantly class-conscious, have always known how to divide and rule, and are now growing so impatient for world domination that they are ready to do business with the new Hitlers. Appearances change. Quiet Goldwater types replace the ranting maniacs. But quiet or otherwise, new appearance changes nothing in the content. We must remember that **automated prosperity will always have unemployment as a concomitant and war as the only alternative. The one thing that is new is that state-capitalism has become so degenerate that it turns to "extremes" even though there is no economic depression for it.**

The spectacle of Walter Reuther and Henry Ford II sharing seats of honor at the \$1,000-a-plate dinner for President L.B. Johnson is a forerunner of the type of election campaign the labor bureaucracy intends to conduct this year. Once again labor will be chained to one of the capitalist parties; the civil rights organizations will do the same. Yet it is clear to all that an integrated society cannot be achieved under capitalism. All that will happen will be that the long, hot summer will extend itself into the cold, hard winter; the terror in Mississippi spread itself North, **unless** the freedom forces face with sober senses not only their continued struggles to realize freedom, but the unfolding of comprehensive philosophy for the reconstruction of society on totally new beginnings.

6. The same current of French officers, former officers, paramilitaries and Algerian colonizers who brought de Gaulle to power through a 1958 coup formed the OAS ("Organization of the Secret Army") to stop Algerian independence through another coup attempt, bombings and assassinations.
7. "Freedom Fighters" refers to the Black-led freedom struggles also known as the civil rights movement.

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DISCUSSION ARTICLE

Voices from Occupy

Port shutdown & forms of labor struggle

by Javier, Advance the Struggle

The defeat of International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) Local 21 at the highly automated Export Grain Terminal (EGT) in Longview, Wash., shows how capitalism is transforming the workplace. It is a part of capitalism's permanent offensive. So what happened?

The Local 21 rank and file was incredibly militant against the attacks on them as EGT sought to hire non-union workers, while the ILWU International played a treacherous role in isolating Local 21. The International forced a contract that took away a lot of the gains of the 1934 general strike.

The Dec. 12 West Coast port shutdown initiated by the Occupy Movement did shake up the political landscape. The Governor of the state of Washington created a situation for a deal between the leadership of ILWU Local 21, bringing in the international leadership of ILWU, and the CEO of EGT.

At the meeting, the International made clear it would not back Local 21's call for easing the million-dollar fines that the majority of ILWU Local 21 members were subjected to when they were arrested. The leadership of Local 21 was under such pressure that on Feb. 27 it had to accept a contract about which the president of the ILWU International said, "This is a win for the ILWU, EGT and the Longview community. The ILWU has eight decades of grain export experience in the Northwest, and we look forward to developing a positive working relationship with EGT."

ILWU AS STRIKEBREAKER

But that was one of the most regressive contracts we've seen, and not just for longshore. The union lost control of the hiring hall and, as one provision states, "The union agrees to support the employer in maintaining operations, including promptly advising the employer that any work stoppage is unauthorized...and promptly ordering its members to go back to work notwithstanding the existence of any wildcat picket lines." This contract language is clearly a reaction to the Dec. 12 port shutdown.

A rank-and-filer wrote as a response: "No wonder it's been difficult to get a copy of the contract. It gives away the store, or in this case, a union shop. Management can do longshore work until the jobs are filled. It's in the sole discretion of management to discipline and fire workers immediately with no protection on the job... A top-down sellout."

This can't be ignored. It puts the organized working class in a much weaker position in the class struggle. This contract will be generalized and imposed throughout the West Coast. This is already in motion.

Some point out that it may not have been a total defeat, that the strategy may have been to not allow non-ILWU workers. That was accomplished. ILWU maintained their jurisdiction. But this contract is not a success!

In the last 30 years of automation, the classical conception of unionized workers struggling against capital has been outmoded. Many in the working class have been kicked out of their position in the workplace. The formation of the movement against EGT that came out of Occupy is related to the surplus population insurgency.

OBEYING RULES OF 1%

The union leaders, stuck in the old ways of obeying the rules of the 1%, are unable to support the demands of the non-unionized workers. We, as the Occupy Movement, carry none of that legal baggage. We are the new face of the workers' movement.

This theoretical perspective comes out of a friendly critique of the Bay of Rage activists, who have done a lot of work in maintaining Occupy Oakland, ensuring it remains anti-state and anti-capitalist.

They write, "Though they [the ILWU] employ the tactics of the historical workers' movement at its most radical, the content of the Longview struggle is quite different: they are not fighting for any expansions of pay or benefits, or attempting to unionize new workplaces, but merely to preserve their union's jurisdictional rights.

"It is a defensive struggle, in the same way that the Madison, Wis., capitol occupation was a defensive struggle—a fight undertaken to preserve the dubious legally-enshrined rights to collectively bargain."

When we put the situation in Longview with the Wisconsin struggle, we see most severe attacks on organized labor as part of capitalism's vicious attacks on the laboring class as a whole. Unions, as inherently reformist, can no longer provide reforms. There is a more

profound crisis in the union structure, creating political currents that re-theorize the working class as the subject of struggle outside of the classical workplace.

This was a serious trend within the Occupy Movement—that we are no longer bound by the legalistic framework of the union, that we can self-organize surplus population within the Occupy Movement with insurgent characteristics against capitalism itself. There is a logic to it, but also political limits as it cannot get to the process of capital's attacks against organized labor.

SOCIAL MOVEMENT UNIONS

Another current, which I'll call social movement unions, has a broader perspective of uniting the labor movement with the Occupy Movement. This was most pronounced in a quote from Clarence Thomas, a prominent leader of ILWU: "When Gov. Gregoire intervened a year ago, nothing was settled. Non-ILWU workers were still working in the port. It wasn't until rank and file and Occupy planned a mass convergence to blockade a ship that EGT suddenly had the impetus to seriously negotiate.

"Labor can no longer win victories against the employers without the community. It must include a broad-based movement. The strategy and tactics employed by the Occupy Movement in conjunction with the rank-and-file ILWU members confirm that the past militant traditions of the ILWU are still effective against the employers today."

The original 1934 strike committee was organized beyond the ILWU leadership. Thomas' statement argues

that the protests at the port, uniting with the currents in the Occupy Movement to do direct actions such as the port blockades, represent those past militant traditions, which I do not think is the case at all.

The terminal in Longview will reshift the productivity of the labor in the port, specifically the non-ILWU labor. One view of it is as a jurisdictional fight. But it is in the context of automation, the constant capital, the machinery permanently domineering over labor. The movement toward automation as seen in other ports, Liverpool in England or on the East Coast, has been permanently expelling longshore workers, which creates a precarious proletariat, the surplus population as a new revolutionary subject.

ORIGINS OF DEC. 12 PORT SHUTDOWN

The Dec. 12 West Coast port shutdown came out of the immigrant rights movement in Los Angeles. Dec. 12 is celebrated in Mexico as the fiesta day of the Virgin of Guadalupe. The port in Los Angeles has had an interesting history of class struggle. Since 1982 10,000 truckers have been decertified as union employees and treated as independent contractors. We have not seen serious solidarity from the over 13,000 members of ILWU Local 13 with the truckers.

The great majority of the truckers I met during a wildcat in 2004 were Mexican and Central American. One, from Honduras, had experienced strikes there as a bus driver. In 2005 gas prices went up by 12% and there was another wave of wildcats.

The truckers I met at the Port of Oakland during a six-day wildcat in 2006 were also from Honduras, though there were a lot of ethnic and linguistic divisions within the 2,000 truckers. And there were also class divisions. Some own their truck and perhaps three other trucks, which they rent out, while others have to rent their truck.

People connected with the Teamsters held a meeting with the Port and called off the strike, even though they didn't win any of their demands. A lot of workers were really pissed at these three self-appointed leaders.

In Seattle there was very little solidarity from longshoremen when the mostly East African truckers there had a strike in mid-January. But communities of color, and certain currents of Marxists and Anarchists are able to keep down infighting and have a united front against liberalism and against non-violence. People came out of the woodwork to join the action on Dec. 12, moving toward a blockade, though facing a bit of hostility from the ILWU.

So we can see that there is tension between organized labor in a strategic position within the economy, and the other wing of the working class, truckers, that ship these commodities farther. Because of permanent automation, there is an ongoing reduction of longshoremen, making more people more like independent contractors.

I argue that if you look at the origins of working class gains, they come out of class-wide committees. In 1877 workers took control of the whole city of St. Louis for three days through their strike committee, which included those who had been members of Marx's Inter-

national Workingmen's Association (The First International).

1934 GENERAL STRIKE

The 1934 general strike centered in San Francisco was another watershed of unfolding class struggle. The Albion Hall group put out a newspaper called *The Waterfront Worker*, which put forth a perspective beyond unionism by having ties to the unemployed, and an orientation toward Black churches. They knew they would not beat the employer unless they had a much larger section of the working class politically organized into a class offensive.

The longshore workers were able to generalize clashes with the police into a rank-and-file political committee of struggle, and the general strike won serious advances for the union movement, including a union-run hiring hall, right to work stoppages and a political culture of solidarity. ILWU, since, has had a monopoly over hiring at West Coast ports.

We want to defend the gains of 1934, the union hiring hall, the right to work stoppages and the rule of the economic organization of the working class, while recognizing that we're in a new historical position where the strategies of the union leadership have only led to a domino of failures.

Therefore we need to organize radical groupings of rank-and-file members who will fight against the austerity measures and have a specific analysis of the movement of automation. This is the moving contradiction where machinery is constantly dominating over wages, over what is called variable capital.

WAR SITUATION

The other contradiction is outside of the unionized workplace. If the ports are one of the key institutions of U.S. capitalism, and we have 60,000 longshore workers, we have a war situation. That is when you set up a picket line. If the picket line stays strong, you are in a favorable situation against your employer. If the picket line breaks down, then you're not. This is when surplus population can help, if it's organically integrated with the rank-and-file workers going on the offensive. The truckers are key.

The best offensive against the capitalist concentration at the ports would be class-wide committees able to unite these two different sets of workers. This, obviously, is difficult. No one has done it. This is what Occupy pushed forth, moving beyond the legalisms that create baggage for union leaders.

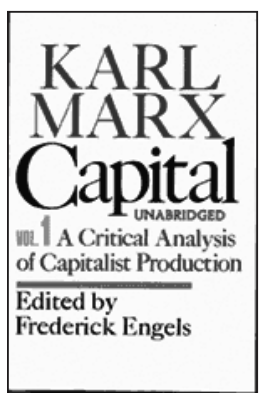
It can set up the political foundation to go on a revolutionary offensive against the major capitalists, absorbing the lessons of previous class struggles, yet taking seriously the new situation of changing class composition and the permanent movement towards automation.



Longview, Wash. Longshoremen stopping a train headed for Export Grain Terminal.

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CAPITALIST CRISIS AND REVOLT

I appreciated Franklin Dmitryev's Lead article in the July-August *N&L*, on "Spain, Greece, Europe: Capitalist crisis and revolt," for showing how the so-called "radical Left" is not really so radical. They think they can solve things through managing the economy and redistributing wealth, and channel energy into politics.

The boldfaced paragraph in the section on "the rate of profit," however, is hard to get if you are new to Marxist-Humanist ideas. What is the "dialectical inversion"? The heart of the explanation is to show how what everyone calls independent, the economy, is actually a particular way of looking at our lives. It is a particular approach to reality that gives the "economy" this independence. What does it mean for an economy to be "weak"?

**Strong Supporter
Bay Area, Calif.**

The article on "Spain, Greece, Europe: Capitalist crisis and revolt" has good information! I love to read in other languages about what happens in Spain and in Asturias.

I have been feeling for a long time that the politicals and bankers are kidding us and it seems that we are unable to stop it. *They do not listen to us.* How to do it? With violence? They are getting richer thanks to the little money of each normal family in Spain. They tell us there is no money to pay doctors, teachers, scientists. But there is. They want this money for themselves and their friends, for the big bosses of companies and banks, for the Catholic Church, for the royal family. No budget cuts for them.

I am ashamed of having to be represented by Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy, and ashamed that people voted for him as they did. But I'm proud of the Asturian miners. I have hope that they will move the people to change something.

**Young woman
Asturias, Spain**

In the July-August *N&L*, Franklin Dmitryev writes about the housing situation in Spain with families still owing on the mortgage even after being kicked out. Li Congjun—the president of Xinhua News Agency, the official press agency of the People's Republic of China—wrote in the Op-Ed section of *The New York Times* (7/18/2012), about a joke popular in China in recent years, which tells of an old Chinese woman and an old American woman who meet in heaven. "Just before I died, I could finally afford to buy a house," the Chinese lady says. The American responds, "Just before I died, I finally paid off my mortgage."

Did this mean freedom only comes with death? I'd like to think we can do better.

**Jerry
Chicago**



ISRAEL/PALESTINE/USA FREEDOM FIGHTERS

I just got home from the Rachel Corrie trial. It was disgraceful. The judge ruled that the Israeli Defense Force behaved impeccably, and that Rachel had deliberately put herself in harm's way. "Any reasonable person would have moved out of the path of the bulldozer," wrote the judge, completely misconstruing the point of nonviolent protest and the protections afforded human rights activists by international law.

The judge never uttered a word of sympathy to the family facing him in the front row, never used the word "victim" in his description, never said "tragedy" or "tragic"—it was as if the state of Israel had written the verdict, and the judge read it out loud.

**Gila Svirsky
Israel**



Rachel Corrie

The photo of three determined Israeli youths holding signs demanding "NO WAR!" was a welcome surprise in the Aug. 24 *Chicago Tribune*. Its caption described "Israelis at the coastal city of Tel Aviv protest against a possible Israeli attack on Iran. Israel is thought to be contemplating a military strike to thwart Iran's nuclear capabilities." The picture looked exactly like the numerous U.S. youth protests during the Vietnam War.

My great surprise was not to see such a protest going on in Israel today, but to see it finally being reported in the *Chicago Tribune*. The existence of such protests has otherwise been kept very quiet, to say the least, in all the media! Youth keep the anti-war movement alive everywhere in the world.

**Octogenarian Anti-war protestor
Chicago**

TO VOTE OR NOT TO VOTE



You cannot vote modern capitalism out of power. A social and economic revolution will be necessary for that to happen. What participation in the

farce of the elections amounts to is upholding the lies and deceptions of the ruling class. Mobilizing people to become involved in electoral politics is to mobilize them to become "pawns in their game," as Bob Dylan sang, and simply diverts people from the serious task of building a revolutionary movement from the base of society, a movement that demands, not just reforms, but a revolution in permanence.

**Michael Gilbert
New York**

Many argue that we should not bother to vote in the presidential election. But you have to argue on the grounds of what is happening objectively. If you are concrete, you know that if Romney/Ryan win the presidency, many more women will die. Even if we just look at the question of abortion and forget about the gutting of Medicaid and Medicare, the slashing of food stamps and the savaging of healthcare, that is no exaggeration. Romney/Ryan will immediately reinstate the global gag rule, which will lead to thousands more women dying in other countries. They will make abortion harder to obtain here and they will have the opportunity to appoint several more judges to the U.S. Supreme Court, ensuring the demise of *Roe v. Wade*. Obama losing the presidency is a nightmare for women and the poor. But Obama is not our savior. Our support for him has to be to keep kicking his ass.

**Women's Liberationist
Midwest**

We are in the midst of an unprecedented nationwide assault on the fundamental right to vote! The flyer the NAACP has been distributing, as the November elections grow closer, makes it known that "Five million Americans could be disenfranchised this year by restrictive voting laws passed since the 2008 presidential election."

What was most startling of all was the map, showing in different colors, not only how many states (9) already require voters to show a photo ID; how many (7) request it; but how many (19) are considering proposed legislation to require it. It did, indeed, look like what the flyer was titled: "The return of Jim Crow."

**Registered Voter
Philadelphia**

Obama being president is not a product of bourgeois politics but of decades of struggles from below. That's why burning voter cards is culturally insensitive. Middle East people have been saying that it's an insane idea when people in the Middle East are dying for that right

READERS' VIEWS

to vote right now. The demonization of Obama comes from the Right because he's a Black president, and, therefore, is not considered a legitimate president. A lot of these people don't consider Black people legitimate citizens. This is what the hard core of the Right today wants to go back to.

**Activist
Illinois**

During the summer I taught English as a Second Language at Columbia University. When my students expressed a desire to read more in class to improve their English, I used the Editorial in the July-August issue of *N&L*. The students were interested in the discussion of elections in the U.S. and a number understood why workers need unions, how elections can be bought and sold, etc. Several related experience with sham "democratic" elections in their native countries. The discussions energized the class and, hopefully, aided their understanding of the true nature of American "democracy": bought and sold to the highest bidder.

**ESL Teacher
New York City**



FIGHTING PATRIARCHY



I'm part of the far Left and have found that issues related to women are not considered as important as other issues such as workers' rights. I've had so-called revolutionaries tell me I'm a worker first, then a woman, and I don't appreciate someone defining me. At Occupy, women's issues are not really being brought up. I recently started an Occupy Patriarchy in Chicago. Some other cities already have one. Women in it are activists. We've been talking about different events we want to plan, including Pussy Riot solidarity.

**Feminist Occupier
Chicago**

I'm so glad *N&L* has a wonderful writer, Adele, who brought up the need to bring back radical feminism in her article in the July-August *N&L*. "Radical Feminism Redux" is exactly what is needed today.

**Bi activist
Illinois**



RACISM, SEXISM, AND THE OCCUPY MOVEMENT

The first meeting we had on race in Occupy brought some people back who left Occupy because of sexism. One told of how women were put in the clerical position, while men had the megaphones. A lot of young women in Occupy don't know the history of how the Women's Liberation Movement in the 1960s emerged from the sexism of the Left. I thought it was important that it was at a meeting on race where this critique of sexism came out. She came back the next week to the General Assembly and initiated an Occupy Patriarchy group which is not open to men.

**Occupier supporting the sisters
Chicago**

I'm struck by the incongruities between social elements. We have a Black president but Black issues are off the national agenda. There really isn't an anti-war movement, at least not my definition of one. The labor movement has been minimized. There are objective economic changes that make getting real traction on these aspects very difficult. We need theoretical discussions of what these objective barriers are that I would call being at an impasse. There is a lot of energy, but no forward movement I can determine.

**Librarian
Midwest**

The Occupy Movement has a lot of potential and yet contradictions. It's a question of how to work them out. From the beginning much of the Left ignored the sense in the movement of trying to actually work out democracy. At the early General Assemblies it was clear people were looking for new forms of organization and new relationships. A form of organization by itself—even this one, which is deliberately anti-hierarchical—doesn't solve the problem and can be transformed into its opposite. The biggest obstacles are not just racism and sexism, but the downplaying of theory and raising up action over everything else. We shouldn't underestimate the importance of that attitude of activism, activism, activism.

**Occupier
Chicago**



KILLING THE POSTAL SERVICE

The Post Office has to make advance payments on future retiree health benefits. This is what is driving it towards bankruptcy. It sounds like funny government accounting, and our clown Congress is treating it as a hot potato that they do not want to touch as they try to get re-elected.

All military veterans who take the Post Office civil service exam get extra points added to their exam score. Therefore veterans make up a higher percentage of the postal population than they do the general population. The ruling class did not want all of these people that it had trained to kill to be wandering the streets, so they made sure they could get a job in the Post Office. Now the shortsightedness of our bourgeois legislators has them abandoning this policy and in the process planting the seeds of destruction of the corrupt capitalist system. If the politicians manage to finally kill, i.e., privatize the postal service, it will certainly prove to be a gold mine for whatever vulture venture capitalist firm takes it over. It will also mean the end of universal service—the glue that bound this country together.

**Ex-Postal Worker
Battle Creek, Mich.**



HUMANISM AS CORE OF MARXISM

Re-reading Marx's "Paris Manuscripts" and "On the Jewish Question" has rekindled my interest in the supposedly "early" humanism of Marx. Then reading additional works on Marxism and ethics like James Daly's *Marx: Justice and Dialectic*, alongside reading Raya Dunayevskaya, I began to appreciate the humanist core of Marxism—all the more to the extent that I have distanced myself a great deal from orthodox Trotskyism.

Although the Degenerate Workers' State theory never sat well with me, the focus on the actual human subject intertwined with the social relations inherent in the productive process led me to further distance myself from the Trotskyist obsession with distribution, nationalization and other superficialities. There was some excellent material on the website of the International Communist Current deriding the notion that there is a "break" between the young and mature Marx on alienation/abstract labor etc, which further pushed me in a Marxist Humanist direction. I still believe in the necessity of a workers' political party, however, although that does not involve the assumption that it will constitute the sole leadership of the class simply because it wishes it.

**Marxist Thinker
Britain**



**REVOLUTIONARY SYNDICALISM
DISCUSSION CONTINUES**

The discussion article on "Revolutionary Syndicalism" (July-August *N&L*) reminds me of when it was considered a major force of revolution. There was a syndicalist party, the Socialist Labor Party (SLP), that thought we could vote in socialism. They attempted to unite syndicalism and the political arena. We forget high points of labor history. If the Industrial Workers of the World slogan, "an injury to one is an injury to all" was taken seriously, it would mean a lot!

**Old Radical
New York**

The syndicalist vision of unionization across national and craft boundaries is important, but unions like the UAW and the Teamsters—with many kinds of workers—create a "unity" which is meaningless. So the discussion moves to "what kind of unity?" What is the purpose, the reality and especially the philosophy of the "unity?" Traditional big unions are part of the power structure, which the author of the discussion article counterposes to "self-organization of the working class wherever it may be." Let's not overlook genuine opposition and a vision of a better society that has arisen within those unions, too. Today, the recession, Occupy, and global revolutions are breathing new life into the question of "economics only" vs. "social justice" unionism.

**Retired Teacher
New York**

Advocacy of "Revolutionary Syndicalism" has become quite fashionable in recent years, especially in Europe, where a bewildering array of organizations insist that they are "anarcho-syndicalists" even when they clearly are not! Here in Minnesota I have heard more than one person involved with the Communist Party insist on a personal identification with "anarcho-syndicalism." In late 2008, it was revealed that the chief witnesses in court against the protesters arrested in St. Paul for actions against the Republican Party National Convention were none other than the "leaders" of the anarchist Black Bloc themselves, each of them an on-duty undercover po-

lice officer who had been heard to say that they supported "revolutionary syndicalism."

What is most of all missing, however, is any sense of ultimate basics—namely, that the first and foremost task of "revolutionary syndicalists" today *must* be that we challenge and contend with the capitalist establishment. Otherwise the ideas of Revolutionary Syndicalism become just more talk-talk-talk radio. The "mechanics" of Revolutionary Syndicalism are *not* important *if* we do not remember what it was all supposed to be about in the first place: dimensional human freedom! If there is no *liberating* thought and action, then we collapse back into a mindless state of "mechanical" inertia and vapidty!

**Séamas
Minnesota**

DISABILITY RIGHTS



We do need the Americans with Disability Act (ADA) but most of all we need to change consciousness. Part of the aim of our movement is to free bodies from institutional settings. Another need is to free minds and souls. There's so much public insensitivity about disability. There's cultural bias in special education.

The pendulum is swinging to a Nazi-esque pattern of behavior, for eliminating and purifying and releasing society from the burden of these "defects." Hitler was inspired by the U.S. eugenics movement.

**Disability rights activist
Midwest**

When I was in South Africa I spoke to disability rights activists who said that even before the end of apartheid they were all colors working together because the difference of disability was greater than that of race. It's all about the power of difference. There's oppression but also power in difference.

As a caseworker in Illinois, I saw people with incredible talents and skills but no opportunity to develop and use them. One was a very talented blind puppeteer, but he never had an op-

portunity to perform regularly for an audience. U.S. history has been one of expansion of rights, but people with disabilities have been left out.

**Disability rights radical
Illinois**

**FIREFIIGHTERS ARE NOT
EXPENDABLE LABOR**

While climate change is increasing the reach and dangers of wildfires, what is happening to the people who fight these fires? Politicians praise their bravery, then refuse the funds needed for safe working conditions and adequate benefits. Many of them are prisoners, some pressured into the work to avoid paying firefighters. Another 8,000 are seasonal federal employees who had to fight for access to health insurance and only just received it when it became national news.

Fighting fires is inherently dangerous, but workers' lives are sometimes unnecessarily risked by poor planning and corner-cutting. In August an elite group of "Hotshot" firefighters walked out at the Steep Corner fire in Idaho, warning their bosses of "huge concerns" about "extremely unsafe" conditions and gave them a list of safety concerns and methods to follow. The next day other firefighters were sent in. One, 20-year-old seasonal employee Anne Veseth, was then killed by a falling tree.

As long as capitalism continues, the rulers—like the logging companies who call the firefighting shots in Idaho—will keep sacrificing workers to protect themselves and their interests.

**Environmental justice activist
Escondido, Calif.**

DISCOVERING AMERICA

I don't think the world should be honoring Columbus on Oct. 12, the date that marks the 520th anniversary of his supposedly "discovering America." How can you "discover" a place that already has people living there? What was started was the never-ending cycle of oppression, slavery, dislocation and carrying

diseases to other parts of the world.

Instead of Columbus Day the world should change the holiday to International Indigenous Peoples Day, honoring those who should be honored. It is up to us whether we choose to change it and honor what is right, or continue going down a path of endless retrogression.

**Dan P.
Detroit**

VOICES FROM WITHIN

My own answer to a writing I have titled "Who's Afraid of the PIC?" is: "Not me, because there's no such thing as a 'Prison Industrial Complex (PIC).'" It's a bogeyman, whose myth serves to disguise the fact that most prisons are little more than warehouses used to store and torture the victims of state oppression (i.e., the justice system) in the form of racism and class warfare.

However unwittingly, by disseminating the PIC myth, a section of the Left is misleading people into thinking that the prison system is a productive industry that may benefit them, when it produces little or nothing and simply soaks up public funds that would be better spent on education, healthcare and the general well-being of the community.

**Rand Gould
Lapeer, Mich.**

I thank each and every one at News and Letters Committees for helping me to learn and grow in this world, despite being in prison. The mainstream news never speaks on all the issues you give me in your paper. Give my appreciation to the donor who helped me. In the name of justice, I will always be for everyone who struggles and continues to fight.

**Prisoner
Represa, Calif.**

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

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Climate chaos and capitalism

Climate chaos takes an ever increasing toll. In this year of extremes: the sea ice in the Arctic Ocean is at a record low; July was the hottest month on record for the U.S.; almost 80% of U.S. agricultural land is in a drought comparable to the 1930s Dust Bowl; this year is on track to break the record of acres burned in U.S. wildfires, including the two most destructive fires ever to hit Colorado and the two worst in New Mexico.

World grain reserves will decline for a third year as the U.S., Europe and India suffer drought. Corn and soybeans are at record prices, with other grain prices likely to rise. Yet 40% of U.S. corn is destined for fuel production rather than food or fodder. The world food crisis that began in 2007 is still with us and threatens to worsen again, increasing both suffering and revolt.

Both extreme heat and extreme storms have increased. The heaviest rainstorm to strike Beijing, China, in over 60 years caused floods and led to the deaths of more than 70 people.

In the latest weather disaster to hit The Philippines, monsoon rains flooded Manila, submerging half the city and killing 60 people. This follows last year's Tropical Storm Sendong, also known as Washi, which killed 1,268 people in The Philippines—characterized by massive flooding on a level that had been predicted but was dismissed by government as "too alarmist."

Nowhere is the political system more delusional than the U.S., where Obama and Romney are busy accusing each other of being too slow in extracting every last drop of oil and coal.

On the global level, the Rio+20 conference repeated the sham of the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 20 years ago. Incredibly, climate change was not one of its main themes, though it was central to the 1992 Earth Summit. Thousands of people protested inside and outside the summit, pointing out that the "green economy" theme, like the theme of "sustainable devel-

opment" that was in both summits' official names, is a cover-up for new forms of capitalist accumulation and displacement of more people from the land.

The location of the summit in Brazil brought to mind another ominous record: the 106 people killed in 2011 in environmental struggles—environmental activists, Indigenous people, peasants, workers. Many such struggles are directly related to climate change:

- Eight days of the Coal Export Action in Helena, Montana, Aug. 13-20, with hundreds of participants, led to 23 arrests in civil disobedience.

- On Aug. 17, members of the Tar Sands Blockade blocked bulldozers in Texas to resist TransCanada's construction of the Keystone XL pipeline to carry Canadian tar sands.

- First Nations in British Columbia, Canada, are fighting the proposed Enbridge Northern Gateway pipeline that would carry tar sands bitumen to the Pacific. Stewart Phillip, Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs president, warned they will fight the pipeline with legal means and "on the land itself," including blockades.

The same dynamic keeps happening. Projections by scientists are dismissed by politicians, ideologues, and other corporate representatives as "alarmist," or even as some sort of conspiracy. Nothing is done to prevent disaster or to prepare for foreseen events. Then the projections turn out to be true. Yet the deniers keep spouting their nonsense, and it keeps getting better coverage than the science, whose uncertainty is played up. In reality, the general trend is that the scientific projections have been found to be too conservative—not "alarmist" enough. But those who represent the movement of capital keep undermining action, pushing us toward a more and more perilous future. Until we can abolish capital, we will have no chance of avoiding climate chaos.

—Franklin Dmitryev

Assange: Law, politics and human rights

London—Protest can be violent. Yet whilst violence towards demonstrators often goes unremarked even in an avowedly democratic nation such as Britain, police violence towards foreign officials, as may have occurred during an attempted storming by British police of the Ecuadorian Embassy, seems a little too much to handle.

Foreign Secretary William Hague has since attempted to downplay claims from the Ecuadorian Embassy that he threatened to have police officers attack the embassy building in pursuit of Wikileaks founder Julian Assange. Assange has been a resident of the Ecuadorian Embassy since mid-June, when he submitted a request for asylum. Mr. Hague has since stated there was "no threat" to the embassy, despite an earlier warning to Ecuadorian officials of the possibility of revoking the embassy's diplomatic status due to their harboring of Assange.

Assange himself sees things differently, claiming that police officers have been seen "swarming" over the building's interior fire escape in an apparent attempt to intimidate the occupants. Whatever the case may be, Assange's recently successful bid for asylum in Ecuador, alongside the possibility of the UK government using force to retrieve him, opens up wider questions on international law and its implementation by nation states.

Assange is wanted for questioning by Swedish authorities regarding alleged sex offenses. This, and his subsequent violation of parole, are the reasons behind the British government's attempts to seize him.

However, according to a recent article in *The New Statesman*, there are certain "legal myths" surrounding Assange's case which would suggest the non-political, and apparently legally valid, attempts to detain him.

The author, David Allen Green, claims that Assange's demand that, if placed in their custody, Sweden deny any extradition request by the USA is "asking the impossible." Assange also apparently has nothing to fear in regards to extradition, given that he is protected by the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), which forbids extradition to a country if the person concerned is at risk of torture. International law, it would seem, should provide Assange with all the assurance he needs that he would be treated humanely if somehow delivered into U.S. custody.

Yet Bradley Manning is also due legal protection under both U.S. domestic law as well as the International Declaration of Human Rights.

The U.S. is also party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention against Torture. It is also a signatory to the American Convention on Human Rights. Yet this has not stopped the UN special rapporteur on torture, Juan Mendez, from accusing the U.S. of "cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment" following an examination of Manning's case. In the very same report, Mendez laments British intransigence on the issue of one "Mr. X" who, if returned from the UK to Burundi, was deemed vulnerable to persecution, including torture.

Writing for *The Guardian* on Aug. 24, Glenn Greenwald attacked the notion that, if extradited to Sweden, any decision to send Assange to the U.S. would be determined solely by "an independent Swedish court." Ac-

ording to Greenwald "Swedish extradition law is written to ensure that if an extradition is to occur, Swedish government officials, not its courts, are the final decision-makers on whether that should take place."

In both the British and Swedish cases, law does not exist in a separate vacuum from politics and the affairs of politicians. Legal decisions, especially when involving matters of international law, are characterized by the political objectives of the contending state powers.

The accusations against Assange are indeed troubling. Yet no rational supporter is claiming that Assange cannot possibly be guilty of the accusations leveled against him by Sweden. The primary concern is that he may not face a fair trial and that, given the rather troubled history of the ECHR in association with the very real threat of political intervention in any legal proceedings, extradition to the U.S. cannot be ruled out.

Indeed, in an article published, again in *The New Statesman*, John Pilger successfully highlights Swedish cooperation with U.S. extradition requests in the past, most notably in the 2001 case of two political refugees, Ahmed Agiza and Mohammed el-Zari, who were handed over to the CIA and rendered to Egypt. They later claimed to have been tortured by security forces.

Law, and the violence practiced in its pursuit, is inherently political. The decision to issue ominous threats to the Ecuadorian Embassy over its hosting of Julian Assange highlights Britain's political interest in partaking in the "witch hunt" against whistle-blowers. Pursuing a purely legal argument as if the law itself constitutes an irrefutable defense, as Green appears to have done, is therefore deeply problematic and can potentially spell disaster when it comes to the protection of human rights.

—Dan Read

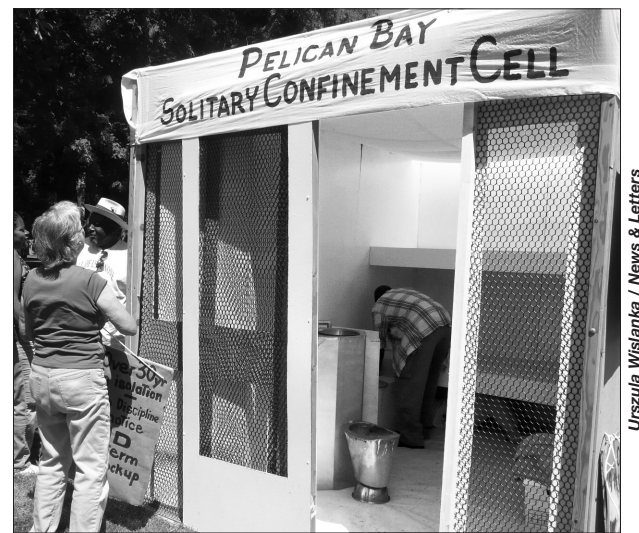
From Hiroshima/Nagasaki to Fukushima

Evanston, Ill.—On Aug. 5 a unique and wonderful commemoration related the nuclear bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki to the ongoing nuclear crisis at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant in Japan. Titled "Hiroshima commemoration presentation: From Hiroshima to Fukushima," it was sponsored by the Nuclear Energy Information Service (NEIS), North Shore Peace Initiative and Chicago Peace Coalition.

Dr. Norma Field of the University of Chicago's Japanese Studies department spoke of anxious feelings among many of being caught off guard by nuclear disaster because of deployment of nuclear weapons and nuclear accidents. She reminded us that the first nuclear chain reaction was set off at the University of Chicago. Before Hiroshima, 155 scientists in the Manhattan Project presented a petition to President Harry Truman asking that the U.S. not use the A-bomb unless the Japanese were told of the effects of an atomic bombing and the terms of surrender were not accepted.

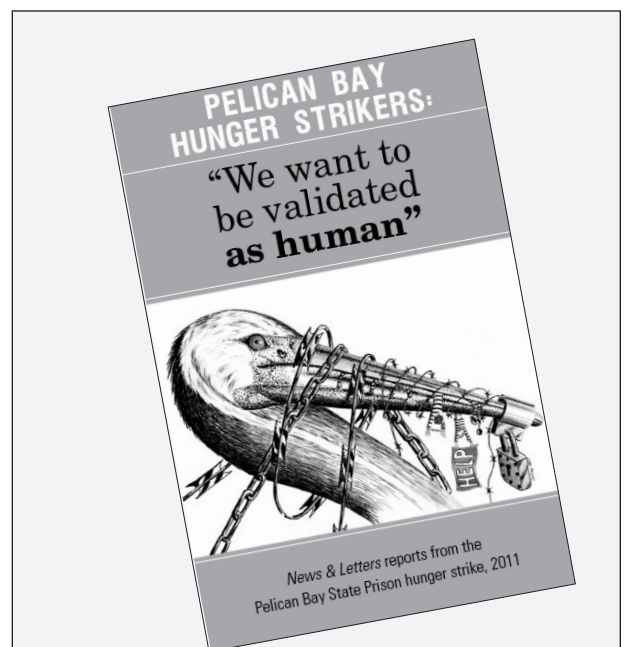
Dr. Field introduced Yamada Yasuteru, a retired metals engineer and founder of the Skilled Veterans Corps for Fukushima (SVCF). SVCF was formed for volunteers to "work at Fukushima Daiichi to reduce radiation doses for younger workers." Younger workers

Mock SHU draws crowds



Urszula Wislanka / News & Letters

San Francisco—The San Francisco Mime Troupe invited the Pelican Bay Hunger Strike Support Coalition (PBHSSC) to put up a mock Security Housing Unit (SHU) cell at their performances of "The Poor of New York," a satire on bankers. The SHU is where prisoners are kept in perpetual solidarity confinement under conditions internationally recognized as torture. The first performance on July 4 drew a huge crowd in Dolores Park in San Francisco. PBHSSC worked for months constructing the cell. Putting up this performance art for the first anniversary of the hunger strike was like an Amish community barn raising. Many visited the mock SHU to learn about the issues in the hunger strike and the views of the prisoners as reflected in our new pamphlet (see below). —News & Letters Participant



From the belly of the beast: Pelican Bay prisoners speak
A new pamphlet

\$3 per copy, \$5 to also send one to a prisoner

Mail to: News & Letters
228 S. Wabash Ave., Room 230
Chicago, IL 60604

are more vulnerable to radiation, while older workers will probably die from something else first. Younger workers also risk the health of their future offspring.

Mr. Yamada told of the known damage and the uncertainties at Fukushima. Reactors 1 through 3 are stable for now, but if another earthquake hits before the 40 to 50 years it will take to clean up and repair those reactors, that stability is in peril. Suspicion is strong that things are still very bad at Reactor 4. He presented tasks that should be done to clean up and repair the reactors as well as preventive measures that should be taken. The Japanese government has said it would be fine for SVCF people to enter the reactors and work, but Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO) refused.

Mr. Yamada asked us to write to the federal government asking them to persuade the Japanese government to carry out SVCF proposed tasks: independent from TEPCO, employ worldwide expertise, including Three Mile Island and Chernobyl engineers and scientists; integrated project management; bring in an international inspection team. TEPCO has too much power and is hiding things to protect its own business interests. I have already written a letter to Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton.

—E.B.

Québec: elections in midst of revolt

Montréal—On Aug. 22, at least 50,000 students, workers, and social justice activists marched peacefully from Place du Canada through the streets of Montréal to Place Jacques-Cartier in "joyous protest." Some estimates were as high as 100,000. Demonstrations have been held on the 22nd of each month since March. This was the largest of the summer. However, Radio-Canada (the French-language service of the CBC) lied about the numbers and claimed to have hired "experts in crowd evaluation" who had determined that only 12,500 had been there. Their "experts" were a marketing research firm. Radio-Canada, once accused of "radicalism" by former Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, is now firmly under the iron fist of Prime Minister Stephen Harper, and has lost credibility as a source of information.

It is in this context of social unrest that the Québec provincial elections will take place on Sept. 4. By the time you are reading this, you will know the results, but at this time, nine days away, there are some general projections that can be made.

The present ruling Liberal Party of Premier Jean Charest is not expected to remain in power because of the corruption scandals of the past few years (see "Québec 'Maple Spring' Repression," July-August 2012 *N&L*). Nonetheless, it is still a contest between three parties: the *Liberals*, the *Parti Québécois* (PQ), and the *Coalition Avenir Québec* (CAQ). They are each expected to receive 28 to 33% of the vote, which means that no party will have a majority, and that a minority government of two parties is probable.

New in Québec politics is the level of animosity between the leaders of the three parties. It is so great that such a government might be unable to last six months.

The CAQ is a new party with no elected members but is expected to do well because of disillusionment with the *Liberals*. Many describe it as a new version of the old *Union Nationale* party, basically Right-wing, with mild nationalist overtones, an attitude often called "soft federalism." François Legault, its leader, is a former accountant and thinks like one. CAQ members prefer to call themselves "coalisé(e)s," but are popularly called "caquistes," a nasty scatological pun ("caca").

Pauline Marois of the PQ might form the next government and is popular among some protesters, but is seen by others as being neoliberal. The PQ supports a secular Québec, through a "charte de la laïcité" by which religion will be kept from the political sphere entirely, though this is already the general practice in Québec. It also is pro-sovereignist and social democratic.

There is a fourth party, *Québec Solidaire* (QS), which has one member of the National Assembly, Amir Khadir, and which has little chance, but a lot of sympathy amongst the youth. It supports labor, feminism, same-sex marriage, the social safety net and sovereignty, but many believe that its goals are not attainable under the present social order. Still, party co-leader Françoise David did well in the televised debates, and more QS candidates may win seats, herself included, which would give them a greater voice in the Assembly.

The present demonstrations show a lot of passion,

QUEERNOTES

by Suzanne Rose

Yaounde, Cameroon—Human rights leaders from Africa united to denounce "Gay Hate Day," which took place on Aug. 21 in Cameroon, and the ongoing arrests of people suspected of being Gay. The Archbishop of Yaounde contributed to this homophobic backlash calling homosexuality "shameful" and "an affront to the family, enemy of women and creation." He also said homosexuality belongs with pedophilia and bestiality. The Aug. 21 date marks the savage murder and alleged rape of Narcisse Olivier Djomo Pokam. And in Aug. 2011, Roger Jean Claude Mbede' was arrested for "homosexual behavior" and sentenced to three years in prison.

* * *

Harare, Zimbabwe—Police arrested 44 members of the Gays and Lesbians Association of Zimbabwe (GALZ) at their offices the weekend of Aug. 10. According to the members, some of the police were visibly drunk and assaulted them using baton sticks, open hands and clenched fists before detaining them without charge. Some people required hospitalization from their injuries. The group had earlier launched a book chronicling human rights violations against them. Everyone was released on that Sunday.

* * *

Grand Rapids, Mich.—A clash with those protesting the inaugural Gay Day led a local human rights group to call for Grand Rapids police protection of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender people. Rape and death threats were made against those celebrating the community's diversity. Police said that "nobody came forward with a specific complaint, no charges were filed and the report has been closed." The National Organization for Women stated that the police's "failure to take action to protect our community from such horrendous threats of violence is alarming and unacceptable."

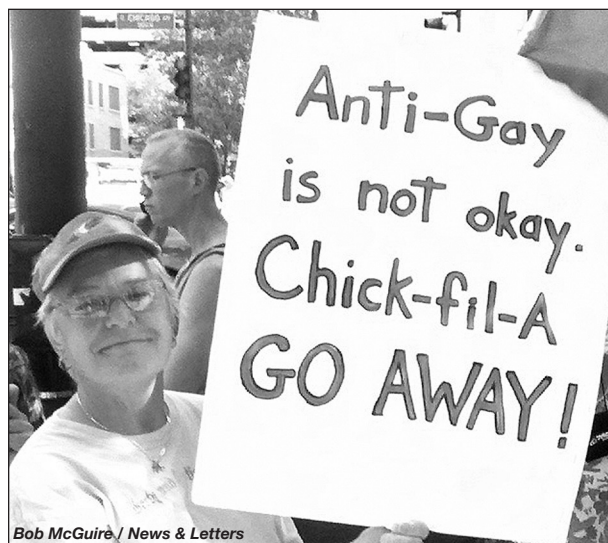
but the picket signs and discussions are not very specific. There is a sense of a need for greater ideas than those which have been articulated so far. There is much talk and passion for a "more just Québec," but without an idea of how to get there. One sign in the march said simply, "I'm so angry that I wrote this sign." What is new is that after so many years of stereotyping the youth of "Generation X" and "Generation Y" as being indifferent to social change, youth are once again associated with social revolution.

Another new development, is that the movement has spilled across international borders into New England and New York State, with discussions and support groups in several places. On June 13, four members of Occupy Albany were arrested for "disorderly conduct," as the group marched in a solidarity demonstration with Québec students. Charges were dismissed, since Albany County DA David Soares refused to prosecute the cases. Occupy Albany then decided to hold solidarity marches starting at 7:45 PM every Wednesday.

After Sept. 4 a lot may have changed in Québec. Still, this passion and movement for a totally new society will continue to grow, and will continue to inspire people across national boundaries. The idea of freedom is contagious.

—Ti-Ouistiti, P.J. D. Chêneville,
Aug. 26, 2012

Boycott Chick-fil-A



Bob McGuire / News & Letters

Chicago—Picketers gathered in front of the only Chick-fil-A in Chicago to protest the company CEO using his chicken joint as a bullhorn to attack marriage and other civil rights for Gays. We were outnumbered by the customers who had streamed in for Chick-fil-A "Customer Appreciation Day," an anti-Gay campaign concocted by avowedly Christian groups and Fox News. Some customers actually changed their minds after talking to picketers.

The restaurant is at Loyola University Law School. One young woman law student let us know that she and fellow students in the campus chapter of the National Lawyers Guild had protested leasing to Chick-fil-A even before it moved in. Loyola is a private Jesuit university and was not compelled to rent to this franchisee with a national reputation as a supporter of anti-Gay causes.

—Picketeer

Shameful lack of services for Trans seniors

Chicago—The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recently banned discrimination based on gender identity or expression. All healthcare facilities which accept federal money, including Medicaid and Medicare, cannot discriminate against Transgender nor gender-variant patients.

This only underlines how pervasive discrimination remains. The Services and Advocacy for LGBT Elders' (SAGE) report, "Improving the Lives of Transgender Older Adults: Recommendations for Policy and Practice" and the Growing Old Gracefully (GOG) art and news program point out widespread discrimination towards Transgender seniors.

There is a lack of competent healthcare and caregiving providers specifically for Transgender seniors. Health insurance plans, including Medicare, do not cover the healthcare needs of Transgender seniors. Like many younger Transgender people, many Transgender seniors either do not seek care when they become ill or delay seeking care until there is an emergency.

Mainstream senior centers are often not places where Transgender seniors feel welcome or comfortable to be open about their lives. As a result, many Transgender people live in isolation from their families of origin, their children, their friends and communities. It is no surprise, then, to learn that the suicide rate is high in the elder Transgender community.

There are so many things the U.S. government and

EDITORIAL

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revolutionary Syria at all. That would threaten their own rule. Rather, their game plan is to weaken Assad as Iran's ally, and if possible to facilitate either Israeli or U.S. air strikes against Iran.

This has long been the game played by Israel, Iran and the Saudis. Much of it has previously been for domestic consumption, but the prospect of revolution in Syria has turned it into an existential crisis for all three regional powers. In this situation, it is only the Syrian revolution that represents a genuine hope for peace. Half-measures are guarantees of future wars.

Battles that erupted over Syria in Lebanon show the retrogressive nature of these games. There the fighting between Sunnis and Alawis has sometimes echoed the rhetoric of Lebanon's Civil War, including appeals to religious hatred. Thus old and discredited ideas and practices try to attach themselves to living revolutions.

THE SYRIAN PEOPLE ORGANIZE

The bases of a Free Syria have sprung up where the Assad regime's thugs have been eliminated. For example, Daraya had "been run with quiet efficiency by opposition activists and volunteers from the local community...With no security forces on hand...activists would stand at major intersections and hand out leaflets designed to educate residents on the key principles of the revolution, as drawn up by committees of local men and women. The leaflets said there must be equality between all religious and ethnic groups...and stressed the importance of ensuring justice and rejecting revenge.... They also spelt out that with new freedoms would come enormous responsibilities and duties...including caring for the environment and conserving scarce water resources." ("Daraya: The Defiance that led to a Massacre," Phil Sands, *The National*, Aug. 27.)

Similarly, in al-Bab near Aleppo, "Within days, the makings of a civil society could already be glimpsed, especially at night. It was then that locals and rebels poured out into the streets, trading their cell phones and Kalashnikov rifles for garbage bags, white gloves, and brooms....One young boy told me he was on cleanup duty because for his whole life to do anything spontaneous or willful in Syria required government permission. Another joked that the garbage bag in his hand was where he wanted Assad to go." ("Ramadan in Aleppo," Michael Weiss, *Foreign Affairs*, Aug. 13.)

'THE TWELVE' AND THEIR KIND

It is the most brutal irony that so many of the state powers that support Assad claim "revolutionary" pedigrees. Besides Russia and China, the 12 countries that give Assad UN cover include Cuba and the "Bolivarian" states; the unreconstructed Stalinists of North Korea and Belarus; and Zimbabwe's dictator Robert Mugabe. All will eventually have to answer to their own people.

Leftists, who support Assad, show that they can't imagine a people's movement apart from state power—from state terror. They begin from the point at which previous revolutions have become transformed into their opposites, oppressive state-capitalist regimes, and uphold their failures and crimes as ideals. Only this explains the hysteria with which some have defended Assad and willfully ignored the genocide in Syria.

The profound courage, dignity and humanity of Syrian men, women and children remain intact. In the words of one woman activist in Daraya, "What we are saying to the regime is, 'you destroy, we build, you destroy again, we will build again.' That is our revolution and that is why it will succeed in the end."

society can do to help Transgender seniors. Currently, the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual IV (DSM IV) states that Transgender people have gender identity disorder. The Transgender community and their allies are strongly proposing that the upcoming DSM-V drop that term and replace it with the non-medicalizing term gender variance.

There is a dearth of research data and funding for Transgender healthcare. Healthcare workers must be trained to meet the needs of Transgender seniors.

It is encouraging that there are organizations working to ensure that Transgender seniors have all the services they need and gain full, legal equality. SAGE has affiliates in 15 states, and the District of Columbia, and the National Resource on LGBT Aging informs and connects LGBT seniors with agencies and services.

Well aware that research shows, again and again, that people benefit from being in settings where they feel welcome and able to be themselves, including being out about their lives, these organizations include social, healthcare, housing, return-to-work, counseling and home visiting programs for all Transgender seniors. The only affordable housing facility for Queer seniors in the Midwest is being built by the Chicago Center on Halsted and the Heartland Alliance, an international human rights and services organization.

—Elise Barclay

Reactionary U.S. election shows capital's contradictions

continued from p. 1

against 2008, while Republican registrations rose.

Pennsylvania is one of ten states that passed voter ID laws requiring state ID like drivers' licenses, a requirement which disproportionately affects the poor and minorities who ride buses. The law was cynically designed, as a leader of the legislature put it, to "allow Governor Romney to win the state." The Brennan Center for Justice estimates that new laws put barriers to voting in front of more than five million people, mostly African American and Latino. In addition, True the Vote, a Tea Party group, is recruiting "poll watchers" to harass voters across the country, as they did in Texas in 2010. Their targets are "illegal aliens" and the "food stamp army." Aware of people of color's high levels of voting in 2008 and the growing Latino population, the Republicans aim to be the party through which future white minority rule can be guaranteed, and labor unions and the welfare state dismantled.

The solidity of the Black vote is part of a long history in which great sacrifices were made to gain the right to vote to help curb the racist forces in society and the government. The Right is counting on demoralization and ideological obfuscation to depress the Obama youth vote even as it plays to this society's pervasive racism to turn around the many white workers who voted for Obama in 2008.

LABOR'S SEARCH FOR NEW BEGINNING

A handful of anonymous and known billionaires are funneling a tsunami of cash, designated by the retrogressive U.S. Supreme Court as "free speech," into Super PACs in order to take control of all three branches of the government. Romney has a 35 to 1 advantage over Obama in this stealth money race and is counting on a replay of the Right's victory over the initially popular recall of Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker. Walker had sparked massive protests after destroying the right of public unions to negotiate contracts. Labor unions in the U.S. are on the defensive, trying to hold the line against capitalist demands for ever more takeaways.

Though a massive infusion of money into the media during the election spectacle has reshaped the prevailing discourse, the specter of Occupy is still alive in multiple forms after having been brutally removed from the public square. Women, Blacks, youths and immigrants have as well made their voices of protest heard. An Occupy highpoint was when unemployed and immigrant labor took the initiative in a mass strike which, in conjunction with the longshore workers of the ILWU, closed the West Coast ports last November. (See "Port shutdown & forms of labor struggle," p. 5.)

Yet when West Coast Occupys descended on Longview, Wash., in February to help ILWU Local 21 in their struggle for recognition at the new Export Grain Terminal (EGT), the ILWU International imposed an agreement on Local 21, violating the ILWU constitution.

A fundamental issue raised by the new highly automated grain loading system is the prerogative of capital, the machine, to both dominate living labor in the workplace and create more permanent unemployment.

The labor union bureaucracy has been transformed from a force that once fought for increasing the standards of living of workers into a force that now opposes the workers and trumpets its cooperation with management. In the past decade dozens of contracts have been rejected by the workers, only to see the union bureaucracy mobilize to force the approval of the rejected contracts. The uniting of Occupy with the Longshoremen in Longview reveals another way.

The inability to break the mental shackles—the illusion that capital employs labor, although it is actually labor that "builds it"—is the root of all the rotten compromises, the failure to find a path out of this economic crisis, as well as the retrogressive Romney/Ryan economic plan.

OBAMA'S PRAGMATISM JUST WON'T DO

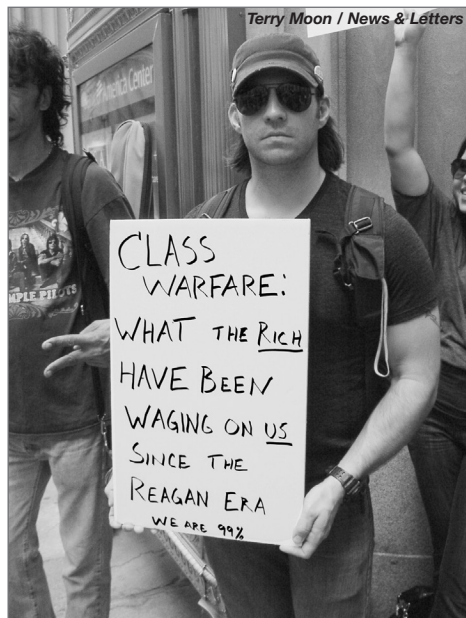
President Barack Obama's non-ideological, pragmatic bipartisan approach, which has so disappointed the remarkable coalescence of social forces that elected him in 2008, won't do. In 2010 Republicans trapped Obama with their self-created debt ceiling crisis. They were willing to push the world economy over the abyss to get their way. Obama is finally using his own leverage to not back down on letting the Bush tax cuts for the super-wealthy expire in the face of the year-end "fiscal cliff"—yet another manufactured crisis set up by Congress, which will include cuts in defense spending cherished by Republicans. (See also "Political spectacles cannot hide the reality of deranged capitalism," Sept.-Oct. 2011 *News & Letters*.)

Marketing Romney on the economy is the far Right's plan to take over the whole government, downplaying at times some of their less palatable extreme sexism, racism, and hatred of immigrants. Romney was even more extreme than Gingrich in being opposed to letting any undocumented immigrants stay in this country no

matter how long they've been here. The Right's simple math is that no president in an ordinary election ever gets reelected amid 8% unemployment. Unemployment is really over 15% if calculated according to the level of participation in the economy. The Republicans have done everything they can to make unemployment worse but are counting on the idea that the economy is owned by the president, not them.

LABOR AND CAPITAL

The best that is expected is that the economy will continue to slog on with over 8% unemployment, but it may get much worse. European-style austerity advocated by Republicans is dragging down the world economy but, if European nationalism precipitates a collapse of the eurozone, the global depression will escalate. The



One of the many faces of the Occupy Movement, from Occupy Chicago, 2011.

severe U.S. drought, the new normal because of global warming, has raised global food prices to levels that triggered the hunger riots and rebellions of 2007-2008. Ideologues like Ryan, who have no regard for empirical facts, are outright climate change deniers. However, the most basic pernicious inversion of thought and reality is the self-delusion that capital creates jobs, that it employs labor, even when it plainly does not.

Capital doesn't exist to employ people but to make a profit and accumulate more capital. When the financial collapse revealed a dramatically lower rate of profit in the real economy, capitalists began sitting on trillions of dollars, driving interest rates down to nearly zero by parking their money in government bonds. As a whole, the rate of profit is determined by the amount of dead labor, or machines, it takes to put in motion living labor. The ratio between those two has a tendency to rise because capitalists are constantly trying to eliminate living labor through new technology. Since profit can only come from living labor, the rate of profit tends to fall. Capitalists insist that too much of the social product is going to living labor for them to make a profit and thus they push for ever more austerity. The result is deep, intractable permanent unemployment, which further exacerbates the depression.

Non-Marxist economists have, at least since John Maynard Keynes in the 1930s, confronted the problem of deep permanent unemployment that isn't corrected in a normal upturn in the business cycle. Today's Keynesians like Paul Krugman are somewhat flummoxed that what was learned in the 1930s is now totally ignored. For him it is very simple to "end this depression now" through massive government spending putting people to work. He recently co-authored a Keynesian "manifesto" against those pushing austerity, saying their ideas have been rejected by nearly all economists since the 1930s. ("Time to speak up: a manifesto for economic sense," *Financial Times*, June 28, 2012.) Krugman thinks this difficulty is a transient one and, after a big push from government spending, capital-driven growth will return. Even if that were true, the supposed temporary difficulties in the 1930s disgorged the holocaust and WWII, barbarities that were fueled by ideas that are similar to ones appearing in our retrogressive political environment.

Four years ago Congress signed over a whopping \$700 billion to President George W. Bush's Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson to stave off a total collapse of the capitalist system. It was a remarkable moment when the masters of global capitalism, spouting an anti-government ideology of self-reliance, became in a flash what Marx dubbed "capitalist communists." Since being rescued, this tiny minority of financiers, who are at the top of the capitalist food chain, are mouthing their old ideology while the so-called "controlled depression" they precipitated drags on for everyone else.

Now they have their own candidate, Mitt Romney, a poster boy for finance capital's disregard for employment reflected in story after story of once viable businesses and local economies being destroyed when "Bain came to town." Romney can't release his tax returns because it would further expose, beyond his foreign bank accounts, the special privileges of financiers to escape taxation. Romney is not only appealing to the most reactionary elements in society but persistently personifies money. In this election, where "money talks" above all other voices, money keeps repeating, "Give us more, for we are the job creators." The facts speak otherwise,

pointing to a growing army of unemployed, which Marx said would be capitalism's gravediggers.

Why have most economists lost all objectivity, making a religious conviction out of the idea that capital will produce jobs and anything else is socialism? They have a point in that once they let go of their fantasy, the opposite idea of workers running production together through their own cooperation can come to the fore. If there is a total break with capital as that which employs the human being and if the content of new production is filled by freely associated labor, even the financial arena can, as Marx put it, be an important lever for reorganizing production.

The Occupy movement, women's liberation, the Black and immigrant rights struggle and their concerns seem to have been pushed aside and overshadowed by the election spectacle. But despite all the concessions workers have been forced to take, they revolt against them daily and in many ways—from creating problems on the production lines to forming groups to oppose and reform their bureaucracies. Beneath the surface of their oppression—employed and especially the unemployed, women, Blacks, Latinos, immigrants and youth—there is a seething cauldron of explosive proportions created by the dehumanized existence they are forced to live. It is from this seething cauldron that the new forms of a human future will be emerging.

Review: *The Conflict...* debating motherhood

The Conflict: How Modern Motherhood Undermines the Status of Women, by Elisabeth Badinter

The Conflict is a brief overview of its subject that occasionally makes poorly supported generalizations, but it has sparked an important debate within feminism. Badinter criticizes not motherhood itself, but the new trend of "attachment parenting" (AP) which involves spending as much time with the infant as possible and includes breastfeeding, co-sleeping, cloth diapering and natural childbirth.

Most of the burden of AP falls on the mother, creating a conflict between motherhood and her paying job or career. She supports women making their own choices, but she wants them to think about the effects of their choices on their lives and society.

While Badinter is concerned about women wasting their potential and endangering themselves financially, she is also concerned that women who want to have children are discouraged, aware of the stress involved in trying to reach this ideal of perfect motherhood. While she respects those with no desire to have children, she says lowering the birth rate too much will endanger nations and their ability to pay pensions. I am not sure this is a threat because of immigrants adding to populations, and it needs to be balanced with the issue of global overpopulation.

AP has been championed by some feminists as a way women can change society through rearing smarter, more emotionally and physically healthy children. This has an eerie resemblance to Right-wing propaganda that women must stick to nurturing roles in the private sphere or risk injuring their children and destroying society. (This propaganda has been used to bash single mothers and LGBT marriage and parenting.)

Badinter shows that accepting that infants need constant nurturing—and only from their mothers—comes from animal studies whose relevance to humans has been debunked.

She discusses why feminism and the Left became attracted to the philosophy of "naturalism"—the idea that anything considered "natural" is better. She believes it is completely negative, but I think some of the issues she raises need more exploration. She states the ecology movement created paranoia about scientific advances, including artificial chemicals, modern medicine, and genetic engineering. While, as Badinter says, these have improved our lives, capitalism has contributed to their misuse.

She thinks the natural world is not endangered, but climate change and pollution are real problems. She uses women's fear of the side effects of the birth control pill as an example of pharmaceutical paranoia, but, although liberating, it does carry some serious risks, and was only made safer because women made its limitations public. She complains that "the vulva came to represent woman," but it is possible and necessary to love all aspects of our bodies and sexualities while still recognizing that all genders are more alike than they are different.

Badinter's book has started a debate about whether AP is anti-feminist, but it raises other issues that feminists and the Left need to consider. We need to examine what we mean by "nature" and what it symbolizes. We also need to study repressive ideologies so that the philosophies and practices we develop to liberate ourselves don't lead us back in a reactionary direction.

—Adele

Tensions over race in Occupy Chicago

Chicago—Tensions over race came to a boiling point within Occupy Chicago (OC) in August. A working group making plans for four days of protests at President Obama's campaign headquarters here, to coincide with the Democratic Party convention in North Carolina, included in the plans the burning of voter registration cards. This was opposed by a majority of people at more than one General Assembly (GA), with a number of people—Black, Latino, and white—invoking the bloody struggles that it took to win the vote. To many of us it was shocking that anyone would propose this. Yet the proponents were intransigent and it was described as approved by OC. We have also heard that Occupies in some other cities are going to do the same thing.

Agreeing with all aspects of the protests except for the voter card burning, Occupy the South Side called for a counter-protest, declaring, "This action comes only after People of Color and White supporters of People of Color voiced great concern in regards to the message that the OC 'endorsed' action will send...."

"We are not Obama-ites, quite the contrary...."

We are people who believe that the people who risked so much to gain this right deserve better....

"This is a Movement that is supposed to include ALL of the 99% but has done a poor job.... This action is practically guaranteed to undo the progress that those who are in the streets have been fighting for for almost a year.

"This country has a history deep in the terror and Hell thousands of African-Americans, women, and others had to suffer to get this right for all! A voter card burning is NOT a light matter!

"Please join us as we give Occupy Chicago a history lesson and proclaim: HELL NO WE WILL NOT BURN OUR VOTERS CARD!"

The issue was debated at several more GAs, sometimes way past the usual end time. Unfortunately, the real ideas at stake were obscured by personal remarks, misinterpretations, misrepresentations, and a totally abstract, ahistorical way of posing revolution vs. reform.

The reality is that the Republicans are working very hard to deprive people of color of the right to vote. This is not just about the two main capitalist parties



Occupy Bartlett

Occupy Chicago May Day march

competing for offices. It is about driving the politics of this country in a counter-revolutionary direction. It is about smashing Occupy, labor unions, abortion rights, contraception, and all freedom movements. Yet some of the "revolutionaries" actually hope for a Romney victory in much the same way the Stalinists in 1930s Germany hoped for a Nazi political victory as the pathway to Stalinist power—"after Hitler, us."

The "more revolutionary than thou" spout dogmatic abstractions: "voting makes no difference"; "elections were foisted on the people to fool them"; "voting props up this racist and sexist system." At least one anarchist said that if everyone stopped voting the system would collapse and we could create a new one. Someone even said that "Minorities, as a whole, could change everything in a second if THEY DIDN'T VOTE!" What lies behind these absurd fantasies?

There is a segment of Occupy so desperate for a shortcut to revolution that they totally separate it from the actual history of revolutions and mass movements, taking refuge in abstract revolutionism. What limited democracy we have was not handed down from above to dupe the masses, but was won in struggle, from the revolution in the War of Independence, to the second revolution of the Civil War, to women's suffrage, to the Black revolution of the 1950s and 1960s. The narrowing of democracy was counter-revolutionary, from the enshrinement of slavery in the Constitution to the betrayal of Reconstruction, to the last few decades' explosion of imprisonment and disenfranchisement. Black masses have ever been the vanguard of U.S. freedom struggles.

Disconnection from this history goes hand in hand with being overwhelmed by the power of the ruling class and its state. Thus, some activists are looking for revolution from out of their heads—how else do you explain such fantasies as that people not voting would somehow overturn the power structure?

We need to see that the Black dimension is testing the Occupy Movement. It's not too late for the abstract revolutionists to correct their mistake, but it has to start with some listening.

—Occupier

Disabled are human, deserve transplants

A 23-year-old man was denied a heart transplant by the University of Pennsylvania Hospital because of his autism, says his mom, Karen Corby. Paul Corby has autism and a mood disorder. He has a good quality of life and a social network to support him after the surgery. Paul was diagnosed with a deadly heart condition that requires a transplant, but was kept off the transplant list.

The phone call from Paul's cardiologist denying him placement left Karen numb. "Before she hung up, the doctor told me to have a nice day." Karen says. That doctor wrote her, "I have recommended against transplant given his psychiatric issues, autism, the complexity of the process, multiple procedures and the unknown and unpredictable effect of steroids on behavior." "I was devastated," said Karen, "I don't see why anyone would think his life is less worthy of saving."

Paul takes 20 drugs a day without problems and his medications have not caused behavior problems. She started an online petition on change.org to convince the hospital to change its mind.

This case is similar to one in Philadelphia concerning three-year-old Amelia Rivera, who was born with a genetic condition that is characterized by a distinct facial appearance, delayed growth and development, intellectual disabilities and seizures. Her mom, Chrissy, says the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia won't let Amelia get a life-saving kidney transplant because she is "mentally retarded."

When Rivera told the medical team who denied the transplant that a family member would donate the kidney, the doctor said Amelia would still not be eligible because of her mental delays and quality of life. They said transplant drugs would interfere with Amelia's anti-seizure medication and that she might need another transplant later in life. "So you're saying in six months to a year when her kidneys fail you want us to let her die?" Chrissy asked, and he said, "Yes." Outraged, Rivera also started a petition on change.org that has more than 21,000 signatures.

These two horrible examples bring up the question: what does it mean to be human, and who is deciding? The doctors and hospitals in both these cases are deciding these two people are defective human beings and don't deserve having scarce organs "wasted" on them.

Pam Wood, the mother of two children with disabilities, one of whom had a liver transplant but later died, doesn't completely disagree with the hospitals' decisions. "Yes, I had to bring Quantell's school records in and show them to the hospital to prove that he could progress mentally and that pissed me off. But I understand the reasons." She continued, "Transplants are hell to go through, as is the rigid and complicated regime of medications afterwards. What if Paul Corby refuses to take his medication? Just missing one can cause problems. Transplant teams are looking for adults that can take care of themselves. There are too many possibilities for mistakes. The hospitals are making these decisions because there are not enough organs to go around. They want to give the organs to the person who would have the best outcome...."

"In an ideal world, whether or not someone has a disability should not make a difference in anything, including transplants. But we are not in that world."

We have to start treating all people, including those with disabilities, as the complete human beings they are.

—Suzanne Rose

Homeless chalkers demand recognition

Los Angeles—On June 28, 75 people from the Los Angeles Community Action Network (LA CAN)—a Skid Row organization that agitates for the homeless—and Occupy LA demonstrated outside the downtown Sheraton Hotel where the Central City Association (CCA) was holding a conference. They chanted: "CCA, you won't push us away!" and held a banner: "If you're on Main Street, it's progress. If we're on Main Street, it's criminal!"

At one point, some protesters started to chalk messages on the sidewalk as CCA security guards took notes and photographed the protesters. Twenty minutes later, three police cars arrived and the police arrested, booked and jailed the chalkers. The fine for misdemeanor vandalism can be as high as \$20,000. Police had arrested and jailed other youths for chalking on sidewalks at previous demonstrations.

Two weeks later, 11 Occupy LA chalkers were physically tackled and arrested at the monthly evening LA Art Walk. Art Walk attracts thousands of youths of all races from all over LA. It occurs on Main Street and Spring Street which divides Skid Row from the affluent downtown business area.

As protests against the police grew, riot squads were called in and several hundred Art Walkers joined the protesters in opposing the police making arrests. They were slowly pushed out of the Art Walk zone, which was televised live.

The following month's Art Walk on Aug. 9 got a lot of publicity. Occupy Oakland, Code Pink, and others announced they would be in LA to help chalk at Art Walk. The police captain on the Skid Row Division declared that chalking "is a violation of the law, it's vandalism and we're going to make arrests." The Art Walk CEO told the Occupiers to go chalk somewhere else.

Occupy LA and their supporters decided to remain at Pershing Square, three blocks from the Art Walk zone. They chalked many messages covered live by television news. None of these chalkers were arrested.

The previously arrested chalkers had no charges filed on their court date. The arrests, jail time and bail was nothing but police harassment. It's an example of a

Skid Row police state.

An LA CAN statement said in part: "LA CAN and others are reclaiming public space and dialogue in the 'New Downtown' to make it clear that the CCA (and their big business developer members) is not the only voice in downtown LA. Instead of continually calling for more police that can do nothing to end homelessness or poverty, the CCA should advocate for and invest in solutions that serve everyone and uplift all of us in downtown...We can all share downtown, but not if CCA's policies are solely intended to remove, ignore, and criminalize us."

In the 1920s men, women, and children were sitting and sleeping on the sidewalks of Manhattan. Skid Rows, ghettos, barrios and homelessness are a part of U.S. capitalist society that has to end.

—Basho

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<p>DETROIT</p> <p>P.O. Box 27205 Detroit, MI 48227</p> <p>MEETINGS Sundays, 2:00 PM Write for information</p>	<p>OAKLAND</p> <p>P.O. Box 3345, Oakland, CA 94609 banandl@yahoo.com</p> <p>MEETINGS Sundays, 6:30 PM Niebyl-Proctor Marxist Library 6501 Telegraph Ave., Oakland</p>
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Teachers vote to strike

Chicago—The Chicago Teachers' Union (CTU) has notified the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) of its intention to strike on Sept. 10, the second week of school, after an unprecedented 90% of teachers had voted to authorize a strike.

Thousands of teachers took to the streets to march in a Labor Day strike rally around City Hall, along with other public workers and a dozen other trades in solidarity. They have countered the poorly-crafted "deforms" from the Rahm Emanuel administration with "The Schools Chicago's Students Deserve," calling for reduced class size; restoration of physical education, the arts, and libraries with librarians; support services such as counseling, transportation, and bilingual and special-needs staff; "age-appropriate (not test-driven)" early education; and partnerships with parents.

Mass rallies and widespread community support have rolled back the CPS demand for a longer school day without adequate compensation for teachers. Teachers and community want curriculum content that engages and enriches students. As a result, the Board of Education says it will hire additional staff for the program.

Negotiations between CPS and the CTU continue. Immediate issues include class size limits, compensation, evaluation, and working conditions. Long-term concerns include the length of the school year, pension changes, and closing community schools while opening more charter schools.

—Susan Van Gelder

WORLD IN VIEW

by Gerry Emmett

Three members of the punk band/art collective Pussy Riot were each sentenced to two years in prison on Aug. 17, accused of "hooliganism motivated by religious hatred." On Feb. 13, they had entered the Cathedral of Christ the Savior in Moscow and cried out "Our Lady, chase Putin out!" They were removed by security guards with no further incident, then arrested on March 3, a day before Putin was re-elected President.

There is no question that Putin's regime has singled out Maria Alyokhina, Nadezhda Tolokonnikova and Yekaterina Samutsevich to intimidate a growing, and *thinking*, opposition to his authoritarian state-capitalist rule. The Pussy Riot collective and others like it have attempted to create new art forms that will reclaim the revolutionary ideas so long abused in the mouths of Stalinists. As Moscow-based critic David Riff has described this project, it aims at an aesthetics of resistance that can't be appropriated by the post-Communist elite, which is "using the entire arsenal of history to legitimize its position."

'THE WORD WILL BREAK CEMENT'

Putin's rule depends, in part, on the theoretical weakness of his opposition. The new generation of revolutionary thinkers is attempting to connect with larger masses, including heavily exploited workers. Listen to Pussy Riot's moving statements to the court.

"We expect a guilty verdict. Compared to the judicial machine, we are nobodies, and we have lost. On

S. African miners

The Marikana platinum mine massacre of 34 miners near Rustenburg, South Africa, has outraged the revolutionary working class (see "Marikana mine massacre," p. 1). Outrage is likely to reverse the government's decision to charge 270 survivors with the murders of fellow workers, shot by police. The workers, dragged to court, many still bloodstained, are threatened with the notorious "common purpose" doctrine that was used against the anti-apartheid movement.

Charges have been "suspended." The Marikana miners are demanding a pay raise and recognition of a new union, the Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union, as opposed to the government-aligned National Union of Mineworkers. No police officer or other official has been charged.

How can anyone place their faith in the government's promised "impartial investigation"? The moral and political decline of the ANC is evidenced by the fact that Cyril Ramaphosa, floated as a possible candidate for the ANC presidency, and former head of the NUM, is a major stockholder in Lonmin. He is also on the boards of numerous international firms, including Coca-Cola, accused of anti-worker atrocities in Colombia.

Nelson Mandela's words to South Africa's unions, from 1993, come to mind now: "How many times has a labor movement supported a liberation movement, only to find itself betrayed on the day of liberation? There are many examples of this in Africa. If the ANC government does not deliver the goods you must do to it what you did to the apartheid regime."

Free Pussy Riot!

the other hand, we have won. The whole world now sees that the criminal case against us has been fabricated. The system cannot conceal the repressive nature of this trial. —Yekaterina



Pussy Riot members perform.

"Just like Solzhenitsyn, I believe that in the end the word will break cement...Katya, Masha and I may be in prison but I do not consider us defeated. Just as the dissidents were not defeated; although they disappeared into mental institutions and prisons, they pronounced their verdict upon the regime." —Nadezhda

"All you can deprive me of is 'so-called' freedom. This is the only kind that

exists in Russia. But nobody can take away my inner freedom...This freedom goes on living with every person who is not indifferent, who hears us in this country. With everyone who found shards of the trial in themselves, like in previous times they found them in Franz Kafka and Guy Debord." —Maria

BATTLE OF IDEAS IN STREETS

The original Christ the Savior Cathedral was torn down by Stalin, to make space for his absurd (and impossible to build) Palace of the Soviets. (That building would have seen a giant statue of Lenin on its roof, bestriding Moscow like King Kong.) The cathedral was reconstructed in the 1990s, in large part to co-opt the Orthodox Church as a pillar of the new state-capitalist order after the fall of Communism, the *old* state-capitalist ideology.

Since the verdict that role has been confirmed by repeated incidents in which crews from Russian state television have accompanied Church activists as they harassed supporters and family members of Pussy Riot. Their "religious outrage" is entirely an instrument of the state.

This war of symbols—and ideas—is part of the struggle to revive a genuine revolutionary movement in Russia. *Free Pussy Riot!*

Hurricane Isaac & Haiti

Hurricane Isaac only skirted Haiti, but was a huge blow to 390,000 people still living in tent cities since the devastating 2010 earthquake. Only a small portion of the housing destroyed then has been rebuilt or repaired. Witnesses report homeless camps being turned to fields of mud and sewage. The figure of 24 people killed will likely increase through disease and hunger.

The nation is already fighting a cholera epidemic that has seen hundreds of thousands fall ill, and over 7,000 die. The current government has been more interested in rebuilding the army, and enriching the usual Haitian and U.S. elites, than in reconstruction, much less in connecting with the revolutionary solidarity that sustains Haiti's poor.

Hurricane Isaac also threatened Louisiana, eerily, on the anniversary of Hurricane Katrina's 2005 devastation of New Orleans, an event that exposed U.S. government racism. And it heralded the more active hurricane season associated with global warming, which threatens the poorest populations. These are not simply natural disasters, but a measure of the disaster human relations have become under capitalism.

Shifang protest

Chinese officials in Sichuan province bowed quickly to mass protests and withdrew plans on July 3 for construction of a \$1.6 billion molybdenum copper processing plant in Shifang town. Thousands of demonstrators faced tear gas and police batons beginning on July 1, surrounding government buildings and installations in Shifang to stop the project and the predictably high level of heavy metal carcinogens it would spew into the air.

Despite facing injury and arrest at the hands of elite anti-riot police, the protesters continued until the government and Communist Party did a rapid about-face. They moved in two days from selling the processing plant as a job creator within the interior province of Sichuan to publicly scrapping it.

The crowds demonstrating had continued to swell, but the notable participation of high school students had obsessed the Party and the official media. Calls went out at the beginning to get high school students to not join in protest, and even afterward punishment was promised for those who they might blame for recruiting students. One can almost sense the fear of a challenge to the regime from the youth.

Those who see in the successful protest in Shifang a sign of a kinder, gentler response to the, on average, 400 mass incidents a day, need to recall that last year's Wukan village revolt and expulsion of village Party officials did not end future land grab protests from being settled with police power. Even as local and provincial Party officials maneuver for power in advance of the upcoming 18th Party Congress, the regime's first allegiance is to state or private capitalists who will insist they need the molybdenum and copper.

—Bob McGuire

Neville Alexander

We mourn the passing of South African revolutionary and scholar Neville Alexander. Born in the rural Eastern Cape, Alexander moved to Cape Town in 1953 to attend university. There he was introduced to revolutionary ideas. As he said, "I was forced to grapple seriously with the works of Marx and Trotsky...If you did not know Hegel, Marx, Shakespeare, the poets and English literature you were simply left out of things." His political education was furthered during studies at the University of Tübingen in Germany.

After the Sharpeville massacre of 1960, Alexander returned to South Africa and began teaching. In 1964 he was sentenced to Robben Island prison after being accused of conspiracy to commit sabotage. This became his second and more profound university experience.

Alongside Nelson Mandela and other prisoners in the "University of Robben Island," he said, "We taught one another what we knew, discovering each other's resourcefulness. We also learned how people with little or no formal education could not only themselves participate in education programs but actually teach others a range of insights and skills."

Alexander applied the lessons of both "universities" to the South African freedom struggle. He made serious efforts at dialogue with the Black Consciousness Movement, criticizing what he saw as possibilities for it being co-opted by capitalism. Post-apartheid, he tried, through the Workers Organization for Socialist Action, to influence the African National Congress to deepen the "democratic project."

Most importantly, though, the vision of freedom remained Neville Alexander's goal.

NEWS AND LETTERS COMMITTEES

Who We Are And What We Stand For

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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