

# NEWS & LETTERS

THEORY / PRACTICE

"Human power is its own end" —Karl Marx

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## WORKSHOPTALKS

### *Patient, heal thyself!*

by Htun Lin

Banks that were rescued because they were deemed "too big to fail" after they caused the 2008 economic collapse want to sue the government for trying to regulate their reckless behavior. The unspoken corporate motto where I work at the nation's largest Health Maintenance Organization is, "We're too big to care."

Our CEO had a hand in helping write the Affordable Care Act in Capitol Hill's backrooms. The victims of the HMO interests inscribed in this law have been, and will increasingly be, the patients who paid us to care for them, especially those patients who have paid into the Medicare system all their lives.

#### DENY CARE WHENEVER POSSIBLE

Obamacare may be able to prevent denial of insurance based on pre-existing conditions. But HMOs have been implementing with a vengeance the denial of care to those who already have insurance.

We are told over and over, at one staff meeting after another, that the HMO is facing decreased federal reimbursement from Medicare as the full launch date of Obamacare in 2014 is looming. The HMO's mantra is that bottom-line finances demand that operations have to become more "efficient." That is code for cutting care-staff and further speedup.

The truth is that 30 million working adults who have no coverage will soon be mandated to have health insurance, which will mean more revenue. Just as we

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## EDITORIAL Undoing Michigan election

With lightning swiftness a super-majority of Michigan lame-duck Republicans passed a series of oppressive bills at the end of December. Defying voters' expressed views, they passed an anti-union "right-to-work" law, an anti-abortion bill and a dictatorial emergency manager act. This was accomplished despite a record number—over 12,500—of protesters who stormed and occupied the legislative chamber and rallied around the Capitol building for two days prior to the vote. These laws, while immediately impacting those who live in Michigan, offer a template to other reactionaries and must be exposed and fiercely opposed.

Michiganders watched in disbelief. This is Michigan, home of the powerful United Auto Workers (UAW) union which saw its birth in the sit-down strikes of the 1930s. Back then, UAW leadership was eager to challenge corporations and represent the aspirations of the rank-and-file workers in battles that raised the living standards of everyone.

#### ATTACK ON UNIONS IN A UNION STATE

But that was then, this is now. Now the UAW leadership has capitulated to the corporate mentality, which has become increasingly anti-union and anti-labor. The effort to oppose the right-to-work legislation didn't have as much support as it would have, had the unions maintained their pro-labor stance. So-called "right to work" makes it illegal to require a worker to financially support a union as a condition of employment. It's a legislative way to destroy unions and thus collective bargaining.

While in 2011 Michigan Governor Rick Snyder,

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#### ON THE INSIDE

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## Uprisings in Egypt and Syria confront counter-revolution

by Gerry Emmett

*"However partial the industrial revolt may be, it conceals within itself a universal soul: political revolt may be never so universal but it hides a narrow-minded spirit under the most colossal form."*

—Karl Marx, "On the King of Prussia and Social Reform"

The world's rulers would like to declare an end to the earth-shaking, world-historic events of the Arab Spring, that completely unforeseen social revolt that began in Tunisia in December 2010 and spread to Egypt, Yemen, Bahrain, Syria, and around the world. The seemingly limitless desire for a different kind of society that burned in the revolutionary hearts and minds of those who occupied Tahrir Square inspired countless millions from Madison, Wisconsin, to Barcelona, Spain, and struck terror in the rulers.

Slightly over two years since the beginning of Egypt's revolution, those heady days can seem distant. The current government of Mohamed Morsi, of the Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party, was able to push through a reactionary Constitution following a 32% turnout of voters. It includes anti-working class Articles allowing for child labor and forced labor, in certain circumstances; limits the right to form unions; and ties wages to production. It describes women's role as one of "caregiver" and includes no guarantees of women's equality—a lived reality during the occupation of Tahrir Square.

#### CONSTITUTION = COUNTER-REVOLUTION

The Constitution's vague reliance on Sharia law opens many other areas for reaction to colonize everyday life in Egypt. Indeed, there are very real echoes of Khomeini's Iranian counter-revolution in today's Egypt.

tian developments. Since December, protesters camped out around the Presidential palace have been attacked by Morsi-supporting thugs, with some being killed. The government has attempted to prosecute those like TV commentator Bassem Youssef, who satirizes Islamists, saying, "Don't be surprised if you see the people who are supposed to be the religious ones cursing and bullying people. They look at us not as Muslims and Christians, no. As infidels, hypocrites, enemies of religion, enemies of the lord. So, we deserve to be cursed and humiliated, even if it goes as far as beating and torture and maybe after that, God forbid, killing."

Youssef's popularity shows that Morsi's supporters have nothing positive to say to the Egyptian masses, especially to workers, women, youth and others who made the revolution. Morsi's gutter anti-Semitism is the measure of him. Such a narrow-minded spirit would be laughable if it didn't wield state power.

As the Arab Spring unfolded, the world's state-capitalist rulers placed a priority on limiting the revolution. The strategy they hit upon—improvised as it was—involved narrowing the revolution into electoral channels. The model that presented itself was Turkey's ruling Justice and Development Party, with its commitment to "free market" principles coupled with religious ideology.

#### CAPITALISM'S PERVERSE 'DEMOCRACY'

"Religion" was a necessary cover to roll back the new human relations, such as those between men and women as equals, that existed in Tahrir Square. By no accident whatsoever, the counter-revolution from within the revolution first expressed itself through assaults on women, including on International Women's Day demonstrators in March 2011.

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Protesters marching into Korba, Heliopolis, Egypt, besieging the presidential palace, Dec. 4, 2012, in opposition to the Constitutional referendum.

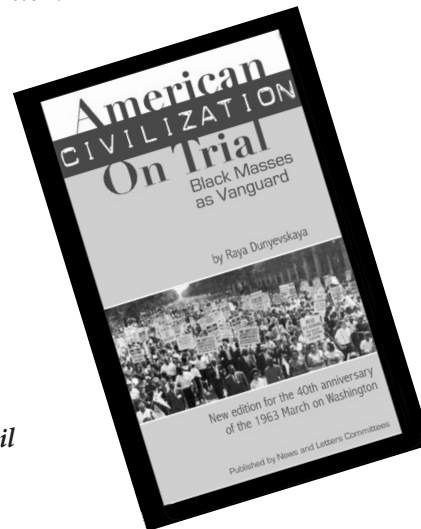
### On the 150th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation:

## American Civilization on Trial: Black Masses as Vanguard

by Raya Dunayevskaya

On the 50th Anniversary of its publication, *American Civilization on Trial: Black Masses as Vanguard* remains as relevant today as when it was written.

- *Discover a different view of Lincoln than presented in the movie Lincoln.*
- *Learn about Karl Marx's American roots and the great importance he put on the Civil War in the U.S.*
- *Trace the Black struggle for freedom from the first enslavement of Africans in North America, through slave revolts and Civil War, to the great Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s and 1970s, to the challenges faced by the movement today.*



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See page 4 for Dunayevskaya's 1963 view of the publication of *American Civilization on Trial*.



## WOMAN AS REASON Rape protests in India

by Terry Moon

The recent rape of a 23-year-old medical student in India was brutal: a metal rod was jammed with such force into her vagina that it reached into her diaphragm, destroying her intestines and ultimately killing her. It happened in Delhi, and demonstrations—first against the rape and then against a government that proved itself incapable of comprehending the tragedy or what to do about it—have been ceaseless.

It does not take away from the inhuman nature of this rape to point out that similar rapes have been happening on a massive scale in Congo for over five years, rapes every bit as brutal and deadly to *thousands* of women. (See *N&L* Nov.-Dec. 2010 "Congo, capitalism and rape," and Feb.- March 2008 "Congo: women's obliteration.")

**What is new, then, is the outcry.**

Some speculate this is because this young Indian woman was the "perfect victim." She was doing something completely normal—coming home from a movie, accompanied by a man; she was a medical student. Her rape showed it could happen to anyone.

### THE INHUMANNESS OF RAPE IS WORLDWIDE

But that alone doesn't explain the sustained, angry and militant outcry, one that is supported by women worldwide and recently spread to nearby Nepal. Rather, at least three developments are also involved in what appears to be a deep, militant, spontaneous response.

First is the initial reaction of the Indian state, which acted as if the demonstrations that sprang up in support of the rape victim—and in condemnation of her attackers and the lack of political will to end widespread rape and street harassment—were a direct attack on the state. Rather than meet with demonstrators, listen to demands, show sympathy—any kind of decent human response—the state attacked them.

Police beat demonstrators viciously, battered them with water cannons, arrested them, and cut off access to demonstration sites. So fearful were they of the demonstrations that they sent the victim to a hospital in Singapore so that when she died—which doctors knew was inevitable—she would die outside the country. Even now, after weeks of protests, they refuse to actually listen to what women are saying needs to be done.

Second is the international nature of the struggle against what is now widely being called "rape culture." That is what the Slutwalks are all about that started in Canada and spread across the globe. Worldwide, wom-

## Jayne Cortez, poet

The late Jayne Cortez was a major figure of the Black Arts Movement. She was a poet, musician and creative force unto herself. Born in Arizona, she was raised in Los Angeles' Watts district. She married the great saxophonist Ornette Coleman in 1954.

Her work held "Free" at its center, its heart, as the great generation of artists and musicians she was a part of—Coleman, Charles Mingus, John Coltrane, Eric Dolphy and the rest. Contemporaries of Fanon and Malcolm X, they developed Free as new forms of perception and expression. Her art related equally to Langston Hughes and Captain Beefheart, Chano Pozo and Audre Lorde. Where the demotic becomes the truly democratic.

Jayne Cortez' vision was revolutionary in the best sense, all about self-determination; her words delivered with a fire that seldom lost contact with humor and compassion. Her work stayed rooted in the common life of her people, as it asserted the absolute right of everyone to self-determination as plain common sense. She said, "Being unemployed and without food can make you very sad. But you weren't the problem. The problem existed before you knew there was a problem. The problem is the system, and you can organize, unify, and do something about the system."

As she wrote in her poem, "I'm a Worker":

*I got the landlord gas lights  
the union telephone department store  
subways buses & 4 human beings  
to feed  
so tell me tell me tell me  
do you think a revolution is what I need*

Cortez published many books, recorded some great music with her group The Firespitters, which included son Denardo Coleman, and won numerous literary awards. With Ghanaian writer Ama Ata Aidoo she founded the Organization of Women Writers of Africa. She is survived by her son and her husband, artist Melvin Edwards.

—Tim Finnigan

en are making it clear that when a woman is raped, the rapist is at fault, period. No longer is it acceptable—it never should have been—to say that it was because of her clothes, or she was drunk, or she shouldn't have been alone, or out at night, etc., etc., *ad nauseam*. Women rightly see these as excuses for the rapist, as a dehumanization of women and an attack on our freedom.

### ARAB SPRING REVEALS THE POSSIBLE

Third, and most importantly, is that the Arab Spring happened and showed what is possible and worth fighting for. Egypt is known for its harassment of women and yet what happened in the struggle to bring down Mubarak was more than the creation of a

real democracy in Tahrir Square. In the Square, for the first time in their lives, women could participate openly and together with men in the transformation of their country and their lives. For the first time women were not dehumanized, but seen as comrades in the struggle. Salma El Tarzi, a 33-year-old filmmaker, put it this way:

*"I was one of many women, young and old, there.... Something changed in the dynamic between men and women*

*in Tahrir. When the men saw that women were fighting in the front line, that changed their perception of us and we were all united. We were all Egyptians now. The general view of women changed for many. Not a single case of sexual harassment happened during the protests up until the last day when Mubarak stepped down. That is a big change for Egypt."*

### THE WHOLE SOCIETY MUST CHANGE

There is no doubt that the demonstrations in India are for justice for the woman who was so horribly raped, maimed and murdered. Furthermore, feminist organizations and many demonstrators include a condemnation of the Indian army's use of rape as a weapon of war in Kashmir and other places. They are demanding that their government listen to what women are saying is necessary: a total transformation of relations between men and women.

What Arab Spring has made clear is how that demand is a demand for revolution—one so deep and total that all human relationships are transformed. What Arab Spring has also made clear, once again, is how fleeting victories won by women in the heat of battle can be. That is why we have to work out how the revolution can become permanent. At this moment, our solidarity is with the demonstrators in India as the struggle there—and worldwide—continues.

## WOMENWORLDWIDE

by Artemis

On Jan. 2, Gerda Lerner, a founding member of the National Organization for Women and history professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, died at the age of 92. She founded the first national graduate program in women's history and a women's studies program at Sarah Lawrence College in Bronxville, N.Y. She wrote *The Creation of Patriarchy* in 1986 and *The Creation of Feminist Consciousness* in 1996. She edited *Black Women in White America*, one of the first books to document the struggles and contributions of Black women in U.S. history. She said imprisonment by the Nazis at age 18 taught her how society can manipulate people and allowed her to resist the notion that women had no significant history.

\* \* \*

Fifty U.S. LGBT, Queer, Two Spirited, and allied organizations observed Dec. 17, the International Day to End Violence Against Sex Workers, signing a statement of support of worldwide efforts to defend the lives and rights of all people involved in the sex trade. Even for *perceived* involvement in the sex trades, many are targeted for violence. The groups, including the ACLU, Lambda Legal, the Audre Lorde Project, FIERCE, the National Center for Lesbian Rights, and the National Black Justice Coalition, recognized that sex workers have been at the forefront of movements for LGBTQ freedom worldwide and must play a leadership role in informing our response to violence against sex workers.

\* \* \*

Amnesty International has demanded the release of 11 women detained in the town of Buraida by Saudi Arabian authorities unless they are charged with an internationally recognizable crime. They were arrested on Jan. 5 for "infringing the system" when 18 women and 10 children gathered outside Buraida's Board of Grievances to protest the continued detention of relatives in connection with Saudi anti-terrorism efforts.

## Nursing home greed kills children

For 14 years, Doris Freyre cared for her profoundly disabled daughter in their Tampa, Fla., home. Marie was fed through a feeding tube, and Doris pureed fresh fruits and vegetables for her and made sure her other needs were met. She surrounded Marie with family photos and pictures of angels.

Despite this excellent and loving care, Marie Freyre died at a \$506-per-day nursing home—sobbing, shaking and screaming for her real home.

Marie was born with cerebral palsy, hydrocephalus (fluid on the brain) and a seizure disorder. She had many of the same difficulties as my own daughter. Setbacks in her health brought her to Tampa General Hospital, where a Hillsborough County judge was asked by social workers to determine custody of Marie. He ordered her returned to her mother.

### HOSPITAL EVICTS CHILD TO SAVE MONEY

A month later, in violation of the judge's order and against her mother's wishes, the hospital put Marie in an ambulance for the five-hour trip to the Miami Gardens nursing home. Social workers insisted that the Miami Gardens home was the safest place for Marie. Family members pleaded with the hospital staff not to take her. "When they took Marie out of my arms, it destroyed everyone in the family," said Ms. Freyre.

At 5:30 PM Marie arrived at Florida Club Care Center on a stretcher, screaming. Two hours later she was still screaming. At 5:40 AM notations say Marie's breathing was labored and she was "warm to the touch." Nobody bothered to contact a doctor. A short time later, Marie was "unresponsive." She was transported to the hospital and died of a heart attack there at 6:54 AM.

Marie's condition was not assessed by nurses until three hours after she arrived, and the nursing home never told a doctor that she was struggling to breathe. She did not receive all her life-saving anti-seizure drugs the day before she died.

When questioned, the home's administrator took no responsibility for Marie's death. "She did not expire in the facility," he said. "She expired in the hospital."

When questioned, the home's administrator took no responsibility for Marie's death. "She did not expire in the facility," he said. "She expired in the hospital."

### CHILDREN MORE PROFITABLE THAN ELDERLY

Federal civil rights lawyers have accused the State of Florida of warehousing sick and disabled children as virtual potted plants. The real reason why this warehousing occurs has nothing to do with the well-being of children. Florida healthcare administrators pay nursing homes about \$213 per day to care for a frail elder; but the state will reimburse homes more than \$506 per day to care for a "sick" or disabled child! State policies and practices favor institutional care at the expense of community-based services and the health and well-being of the "patient."

**Both nursing home industry groups and the Agency for Health Care Administration, which regulates the industry, defended the practice, saying that some children are too frail or too disabled to live at home. Who are they to make those kinds of decisions about the lives of these children? Or anyone else?**

One Orlando nursing home's failure to protect a severely disabled child led to life-threatening respiratory distress. The child was blind, intellectually disabled, couldn't speak or eat and breathed with the aid of a tube. Diagnosed with double pneumonia, that child had foreign objects lodged in his or her lungs and a temperature of 103 degrees. At a nearby hospital, the child had to be resuscitated more than once, and doctors found parts of a diaper in her or his throat, as well as a Christmas tree light in the child's lungs. What happened to the nursing home that nearly killed this child and violated his or her rights? They had to pay a \$3,750 fine in a settlement with the state.

Nursing homes and institutions, as they stand in our current society, are not places that anyone should live, especially children. Sometimes there is no other choice, **but Marie had a choice.** Her tragic death highlights the dangers and inhumanity of what will only get worse unless we keep moving forward with the fight for a new society, that ceaseless movement of the dialectic that compels me to look past Marie's death: to look at the pictures of this young girl on her tribute page, and promise never to forget her and never to stop fighting.

—Suzanne Rose



One of the many thousands protesting the brutal rape in India. This demonstration was Jan. 3 at Jantar Mantar, New Delhi.

Famlesh Lalwani





**From South Africa****Hunger games real for unemployed**

**Capetown, South Africa**—During the Christmas break we received the most shocking news from Kwa-Zulu-Natal. The provincial traffic department advertised 90 positions for trainee traffic officers. More than 150,000 people applied, most of them between the ages of 18 and 20.

On Christmas Day 34,000 people received text messages saying that they had been shortlisted for these jobs. They were divided into two groups and asked to report to the Harry Gwala Stadium on Dec. 27 and 28. They were not told what to expect.

When the thousands of hopeful and excited young people arrived at the stadium, they were told that they had to perform a fitness test—running four kilometers. The weather was very hot and no water or medical care was provided. Many of these young people had already traveled long distances to reach the stadium. Many of them were not properly dressed for a four kilometer run in the heat.

On the first day hundreds of people collapsed and six died. A seventh person committed suicide. On the second day the so-called fitness test was repeated. By Sunday 230 people were in hospital.

This is not an isolated case. There have been many times where thousands of young people have turned up for a handful of jobs.

The politicians call the loss of seven young people in

Pietermaritzburg a tragedy. They also called the massacre at Marikana a tragedy and the murder of Andries Tatane a tragedy. (See Sept.-Oct. 2012 *N&L*.) This is not only a tragedy. It is a disgrace. It is an outrage.

It is a disgrace that so many young people have no jobs or income or access to education. It is an outrage that people who are desperate for jobs are treated in such an inhuman manner. If the apartheid government had done this, it would have been an international scandal. There would have been protests around the world.

It is very clear to us that we are held in contempt by the politicians who say that they are representing us and carrying out the second transition in the national democratic revolution on our behalf. We are not human beings to them. We are just ladders to them. They are predators becoming rich and powerful in the name of our suffering and struggle. They are the real counter-revolutionaries.

The lives of people who are poor and Black count for nothing in this country. They count for nothing to the capitalists, to the politicians and even to some of the media. It is our duty to insist that the lives of all people count.

People must be held accountable for the outrage in Pietermaritzburg. We fully support the call for the resignation of the Member of the Executive Council for Transport in the province, Willie Mchunu. He was discredited in 2009 for his role in supporting the armed attack on Abahlali baseMjondolo by African National Congress supporters.

We reject the statement by the South African Communist Party (SACP) in support of Mchunu with all the contempt that it deserves. The SACP are nothing but apologists for oppression.

Frantz Fanon wrote that: "A society that drives its members to desperate solutions is a non-viable society, a society to be replaced." Our society is not viable. It must be replaced.

—Ayanda Kota, Unemployed Peoples Movement

**Forced labor in China**

In January, as Xi Jinping's term as head of the Communist Party of China was beginning, the head of the Political and Legal Committee kinda sorta promised the end of "re-education through labor." Local police have been able to send at their discretion those "disrupting public order" to labor camps since the 1957 crackdown on the freer expression of the 100 Flowers period. Even now the camps hold over 150,000 for as long as four years.

The labor camps, alongside the full criminalization of labor protests and other challenges to the regime, have underpinned China's state-capitalist labor system. Like the workhouses of Ebenezer Scrooge-era England, and post-Civil War sheriffs emptying their jailhouses onto Southern plantations, forced labor is intended as a threat to all the workers not yet incarcerated.

Popular outrage, not a reform-minded regime, is the impetus behind any move to soften the labor camp system. Last August Tang Hui was given a year and a half in a labor camp in retaliation for daily petitioning that a harsher sentence be given to the seven men who had raped her then-eleven-year-old daughter and dragged her into prostitution. Public outrage forced Tang Hui's release after eight days.

But this January, when Tang Hui demanded an apology and compensation for the actions taken against her, the authorities denied her an apology and actually affirmed her sentence. Likewise, the promise to end labor camps, leaked as a trial balloon, was almost immediately twisted into proposals to "reform" the re-education-through-labor system of unfreedom.

—Bob McGuire

**Wilderness of violence**

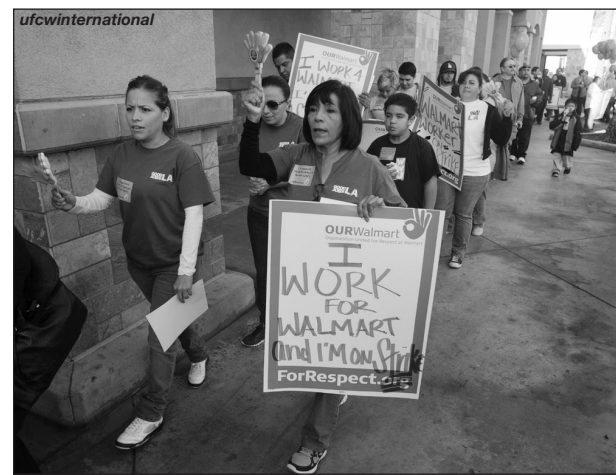
**Battle Creek, Mich.**—In Michigan, a governor attacks organized labor, signing so-called "right-to-work" legislation.

In Connecticut, a gunman takes aim at schoolchildren and their teachers and pulls the trigger.

We are lost in a wilderness of criminality and violence, and there is no way out under capitalism. I remember talking to a Battle Creek police officer years ago, complaining about the increased crime in my neighborhood. Her response? Two words—"job security." There is no solution to the problems of crime and violence under capitalism because they are not problems to the police, courts and prisons.

In the Paris Commune of 1871 it was noted that crime and violence nearly disappeared after the revolutionary workers expelled the capitalists. In order to survive today, we need a new compass, guided by the principles of Marxist-Humanism, to set a new bearing out of the wilderness.

—Ex-postal worker

**Walmart workers strike**

Workers struck at Walmart in Pico Rivera, Calif., on Nov. 20, demanding an end to retaliation against workers who speak out. On Nov. 23, the day after Thanksgiving, demonstrations and some strikes occurred at about 1,000 Walmart stores in 100 cities for better wages and working conditions. On Dec. 14 workers in the U.S. and nine other countries rallied at Walmart stores and subsidiaries, denouncing retaliation against workers trying to organize. This followed a one-day strike at a Walmart supply warehouse in Mira Loma, Calif., over unsafe and unsanitary conditions, and a three-week strike at a Walmart supply warehouse in Elwood, Ill., over sexual harassment, dangerous working conditions, unpaid wages and retaliation against organizers. The Elwood workers won full back pay and a promise to end workplace retaliation.

**Teachers and allies fight restructuring**

**Lake County, Ill.**—Recently, teachers in my district received a warning that the district would be undergoing "restructuring" for the 2013-14 school year. When the superintendent visited our school after the winter break, she informed us that scores were still not reaching our goal and that sweeping changes would be necessary.

She needed to submit a "bold and innovative plan" to the state superintendent by Jan. 18 or we could be taken over by the state (i.e., all staff would be fired). We had approximately nine days to pull a plan together, with no information or ability to collaborate with other teachers.

**The superintendent herself proposed changing the organization of our schools into "grade level centers." This would remove children from the schools and teachers they know, and might mean that children from the same family would attend different schools—a parent's transportation nightmare for drop-off/pick-up.**

Then in advance of the Jan. 14 Board of Education meeting, for the first time the union exploded into action. In three days there were four meetings—two in secret. We received buttons, "An injury to one is an injury to all," which we were instructed to wear for the rest of the year. A special "emergency communications committee" was assembled for a mass action with teachers, assistants, secretaries, custodians, bus drivers, and building grounds crews.

At the Board meeting, after three hours they were still on the first point: Open Comment from the community. The most vocal and passionate group were the parents who came to support their children and the teachers. Teachers, kindergarten and elementary, middle school, and high school, got up. The current and former union presidents spoke.

A high school junior talked passionately about the need for healthy school lunches, and presented photos of moldy bread served to students. She had surveyed over 100 students, and quantitative data supported her argument on how to make lunches healthy. After her three minutes were up, the Board President attempted to stop her. The parent in line to speak after her said, "She can have my time," and the one after that and the one after that said the same.

**One parent after another delivered scathing attacks on the superintendent and her upper-level administration. The superintendent said that of five options given to the district by the state, only one was viable. The parents said it seemed like the only option she saw as "viable" was the one that insured she remained as superintendent. One parent asked, "Can you go to the state superintendent and present another possible option to consider: your resignation?" This was met with thunderous applause.**

Parents were livid that data on the supposed dire state of district scores had been collected for four years, but had never been shared with them. One parent said, "I love my teachers and how they do their jobs. They care and they work so hard under unbelievable conditions. I don't agree with how YOU are doing YOUR jobs."

As I left the Board meeting, I felt the most gratified in my six years as a teacher. The satisfaction of having the truth finally be told touched me to my foundation.

The following morning we heard the news that the adjoining school district had just gone out on strike.

—Teacher

**WORKSHOPTALKS**

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are about to enroll millions of new paying members expecting real healthcare, frontline care-staff face layoffs. Yet more supervisors to monitor costs and revenue are being hired.

**MARKETING OVER HEALING**

With 4 million additional Californians about to get health insurance, there is expected to be an immense doctor shortage. What doctors actually do has already been transformed by new marketing directives. TV commercials brag that the HMO offers "easy access to your doctor" at the click of a mouse. Doctors where I work now complain that they have been forced to do their own clerical work, answering several hundred e-mails from patients a day.

Little time is left to actually see patients in person because, like the rest of us, doctors have become tethered to the computer all day. As one worker expressed it, the problem is not only that HMOs want to replace healthcare workers with robots, but "they actually treat us as if we were robots."

A Dec. 16, 2012 *New York Times* editorial, "When the Doctor is Not Needed," touted the healthcare offered by retail clinics in drugstore chains like CVS and Walgreens. The new trend uses less expensive workers "to consult with patients over the phone by asking questions devised by experts."

The editorial pointed out the immense cost-saving potential of "self-care," where for many ailments "the patient could consult by phone or e-mail with a nurse..." and even be "allowed to teach other patients" procedures like hemo-dialysis. The *Times* concluded, "the Affordable Care Act contains many provisions that should help relieve the shortage of primary care providers, both doctors and other healthcare professionals."

The only department growing at our HMO is the Call Center because of the tremendous savings afforded by preventing patients from seeing a skilled healthcare provider. Aides and clericals, untrained in nursing or medicine, are left on the floor to give medication advice to patients, because pharmacists and nurses are unavailable, as reductions in staffing levels have made them scarce also. This is the real cost of the HMO's financial bottom line.

**PLANNED SCARCITY**

But we rank-and-file workers know it's a manufactured scarcity, designed by cost-cutting through deskilling and hi-tech, where mechanization is taking the human beings out of providing healthcare. Our HMO recently announced their intention to lay off approximately 400 registered nurses even as patients continue to be warehoused for hours in the ER due to staffing shortages.

At one of our recent staff meetings, the union rep lectured us workers to "appreciate the job you still have" and not complain about ever growing speedup and staff reductions, "because it's a tough competitive market out there." The union rep forgot that her paycheck comes from our union dues.

She was also tacitly saying that the financial health of corporations trumps the health of patients. That is what drives this brave new world of healthcare "reform." Patients will ultimately have to rely on themselves to deliver their own healthcare. Healthcare cannot compete against the bottom line until we restructure the whole society around human needs.



## FROM THE WRITINGS OF RAYA DUNAYEVSKAYA

*Editor's note: This year marks the 50th anniversary of the publication of the Marxist-Humanist classic American Civilization on Trial, originally with the overline "100 Years after the Emancipation Proclamation," whose 150th anniversary was January 1, 2013. The original subtitle, "The Negro as Touchstone of History," was changed in later editions to "Black Masses as Vanguard." Written by Raya Dunayevskaya, the pamphlet was issued as a statement by the National Editorial Board of News and Letters Committees. To mark this double anniversary, we present the Political Letter Dunayevskaya wrote on April 15, 1963, titled, "American Civilization on Trial, as Statement of Our Views and as Basis for Follow-Up Studies and Articles." It can be found in the Raya Dunayevskaya Collection, #3082-87. Between the writing of this letter and the pamphlet's publication in May 1963, minor changes were made to the table of contents and to the passage quoted below. Except as noted, those changes have been incorporated here. All footnotes were added by the editors.*

Dear Friends:

It is seldom that any of our Political Letters deal with internal rather than external events. This one will do so for two basic reasons, which are of the utmost importance for our organizational growth: (1) it is imperative that each and every one of us internalize *American Civilization on Trial* so that we can, at a moment's notice, make a comprehensive presentation of these views to outside groups and individuals; (2) it is equally important that we do not consider this pamphlet as a "finished work," but that we constantly expand it, reinterpret it, and bring it up to date.

For example, on the day—Friday, April 12—when I was to make a presentation of it to the Detroit local, news dispatches announced that Switzerland had expelled one Erich Rajakovic, Adolf Eichmann's right-hand man, who had been responsible for the murder of 110,000 Dutch Jews, including Anne Frank. Despite all the tears that had been shed over the *Diary of Anne Frank*, as a book, as a play, as a movie, which may have equalled the tears shed over Eliza trying to escape over the ice as she was pursued by the hound dogs,<sup>1</sup> the Storm Trooper Rajakovic easily melted into the crowd at Munich, Germany, and made good his escape; while, at the same time, in our South, the savage use of savage dogs against the Freedom Fighters of today made it impossible for any of them to escape that dragnet. **In a word, not only does the todayness of history make possible the presentation of *American Civilization on Trial* as a living document, but the one-worldedness of today allows for its application on an international scale.**

Toward both these ends, I wish, first, to present the title and contents page of the pamphlet in its final form as it is now going to press:

### 100 Years after the Emancipation Proclamation *American Civilization on Trial* Negro as Touchstone of History

#### Introduction

1. Of Patriots, Scoundrels and Slave Masters
2. Compelling Issues at Stake

#### Part I. From the First through the Second American Revolution

1. Abolitionism, First Phase: From "Moral Suasion" to Harpers Ferry
2. Abolitionism, Second Phase: The Unfinished Revolution

#### Part II. The Still Unfinished Revolution

1. Northern Labor Struggles to Break Capital's Stranglehold, 1877-97
2. 1 1/4 Million Forgotten Negro Populists
3. Populism and Intellectual Ferment<sup>2</sup>

#### Part III. Imperialism and Racism

1. Rise of Monopoly Capital
2. Plunge into Imperialism
3. Racism
4. New Awakening of Labor: The IWW

#### Part IV. Nationalism and Internationalism

1. The Negro Moves North

1. In Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Eliza crosses the icy Ohio River to escape slavery.
2. As published, this section was incorporated into the previous section.

## 150 years after the Emancipation Proclamation

# American Civilization on Trial: Black masses as vanguard and the dialectic of history

2. Garveyism vs. Talented Tenth
3. Marxism

#### Part V. From Depression through World War II

1. The CIO Changes the Face of the Nation and Makes a Break in Negro "Nationalism"
2. March on Washington Movement
3. The Communists Oppose the Independent Negro Movement

#### Part VI. The Negro as the Touchstone of History

1. Urbanization of Negroes
2. The Two-Way Road to African Revolutions

#### Part VII. Facing the Challenge, 1943-1963

1. The Self-Determination of People and Ideas
2. The New Voices We Heard
3. What We Stand For—and Who We Are

Please note Part VI. Instead of being a sub-section under "What Now?" "The Negro as Touchstone" has not only become a full part, but it is no longer restricted to the American scene. That is to say, by including the section on the African Revolutions here, we are able to present the international role of the Negro. I hope many friends will wish to expand this section by various articles in *News & Letters*. The main points of expansion, however, will come on the American scene. In this respect, I would like to single out one of the additions I made in order to encourage others to take advantage of the condensed form of the pamphlet to elaborate on other phases of American development that we couldn't possibly go into, in tracing the dialectic of history that has never before been traced from a Marxist-Humanist viewpoint. I am referring to Part II—"The Still Unfinished Revolution"—where it was necessary to take note both of the economic determinist view of the Civil War as an "economic revolution," and to argue against the attitude that the Jefferson-Jackson-Lincoln tradition is fundamentally different from the "other" tradition:<sup>3</sup>

The new phase of Northern capitalist development had, of course, been a motivating force for the Civil War. But, the economic determinist view notwithstanding, it **was not** the propellant. The Second American Revolution was more than an "economic revolution." Much as the industrialists wished to break the monopoly of commercial over industrial capital, of American slavishness to British textile manufacturing, "cash and compromise" was too ingrained an element of American capitalism for the industrialists to venture forth into civil war. **Only the most prodigious revolutionary exertions by slaves, Abolitionists and, in many of its stages, labor, could tear apart the power link of cash and compromise that bound together cotton and textiles; cotton growers, cotton shippers and financiers.**

"If Lincoln has grown," wrote Wendell Phillips after the issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation, "it is quite natural. We watered him." At the same time, however, it was no accident that Lincoln chose Andrew Johnson as his running mate for the second term, in place of the Vice-President of the first term, Hannibal Hamlin, who was a friend of the Abolitionists. The objective compulsion of capitalist industrialization won over the freedom forces.<sup>4</sup> The Civil War brought to a climax and summed up the paradox of the Jefferson-Jackson-Lincoln liberal presidential tradition.

**In office**, Jefferson and the Jeffersonians were fulfilled Hamiltonians. **In office**, Jacksonian democracy turned out to be something very different from the rule of farmer and mechanic against Eastern finance capital....

In the same manner, Lincoln, **in office**, developed the "American System" more in line with the concept of the "Great Compromiser," Henry Clay, than in the spirit of a "Great Emancipator" heading the Second American Revolution....

3. This passage appears on p. 40 of the 2003 edition of *American Civilization on Trial*.
4. This sentence did not appear in the published version.

It would be excellent if someone could develop the differences between the Abolitionists—wholly devoted to an idea, the idea of freedom, without wanting anything for themselves—and the Populists who fought for limited rights and could produce so contradictory a character as Tom Watson.<sup>5</sup> But, above all, where expansion is needed is in Part VII: *Facing the Challenge, 1943-1963*, especially the final section on "What We Stand For—and Who We Are."

In this way, *American Civilization on Trial* will bring to organizational consciousness the underlying philosophy of both the movement of history and its todayness.

Raya

5. The section on Populism in *American Civilization on Trial* (pp. 46-48) describes how Tom Watson, later to become "the typical white supremacist," advocated and acted for white and Black solidarity at the height of the Populist movement.

## EDITORIAL

continued from p. 1

who campaigned as a moderate, said right-to-work was not on his agenda, he did an about-face and signed the right-to-work bill the day it passed the legislature. The law goes into effect on April 1 and will cover all public and private employees except police and firefighters.

Labor leaders got a constitutional proposition on the November ballot that would have effectively stopped any right-to-work legislation. The anger and disappointment with union leaders was apparent when that proposition failed. What passed by 52% with the backing of labor activists, concerned parents and regular citizens was a proposal to remove the emergency manager law. Under the rejected law, the emergency manager, appointed by the governor, took dictatorial power over a city in financial distress, including the right to void union contracts and override elected school boards.

### WILL OF THE VOTERS DISREGARDED

Snyder's new emergency manager law is similar to the one rejected by the voters, allowing an unelected manager to void contracts, sell municipal property, take control of school districts and consolidate or dissolve municipal governments. A new "Educational Achievement Authority" will cancel contracts for employees of schools transferred into the system, requiring them to negotiate with the anti-labor appointed Emergency Manager. The new law is so similar to the one that was voted down that it faces legal challenges.

Snyder brays, "This legislation demonstrates that we clearly heard and respected the will of the voters," but he made sure to include a mechanism in the revised law sheltering it from any future voter referendum.

Detroit activist and school board member Elena Herrada expressed the widespread outrage over Snyder's underhanded practice: "We won repeal of Public Act 4. They stay in place without leaving for one day, until a new law that cannot be repealed is written. I never dreamed of the day when Mexican politics looked better than U.S. politics. For all those millions of Mexicans who can't vote in the U.S.: Don't feel like you're missing anything!"

### ATTACKS ON WOMEN AS WELL

The other major legislation rammed through shows again the contempt Snyder and the Republican-controlled legislature have for those they pretend to represent. Despite huge demonstrations in June against similar legislation—including a bill forcing a woman to carry a dead fetus to term—the lame ducks pushed through a bill that classifies fetal remains at 10 weeks, when it weighs a half ounce, as a dead body. Women who experience spontaneous abortion as well as ones by choice have to request the remains be "cremated, buried or interred." In an attempt to force clinics to close, they mandated absurd standards for the size of exam rooms, hallways, number of parking spaces, etc. It would restrict telemedical abortions, which provide essential health services to women in rural areas; prevent private insurance companies from covering abortion services; and, ominously, allow medical personnel to refuse needed health services—not only abortion—if it is against their "moral belief" or a "matter of conscience." This opens the door for doctors to refuse to write birth control prescriptions or treat many ailments.

That this could happen in the birthplace of the UAW was a huge victory for Snyder and his reactionary Republican cronies. Like Arizona's 2010 anti-immigrant law, they hope that this new legislation will be a model for right-wing blitzkriegs across the land. Snyder was helped by a huge infusion of money from the 1% across the U.S. This must be opposed by the rest of us if we are to keep the poison from spreading.



# Now off the press: *The Crossroads of History: Marxist-Humanist Writings on the Middle East* by Raya Dunayevskaya

## Excerpts from the Foreword:

Nobody, least of all Marxists, foresaw the great historic divide which would be opened by the Arab Spring beginning in 2010. When Mohammed Bouazizi and Hussein Nagi Felhi killed themselves to protest the miserable conditions of life for Tunisian youth, they set off a year of revolutionary struggle that has shaken the world to its foundations. The region, where politics and everyday life had been delimited by the Cold War and the politics of oil, has been redefined by an uncompromising demand for human dignity.

This demand was key to lifting the incubus of contempt for the masses that allowed state-capitalist regimes like that of the Baathists to represent themselves as "Arab socialism." In truth they were bizarre mixtures of Stalinism, fascism, and hereditary monarchism, imposing the "stability" of unfreedom to keep themselves in power, and to keep capitalism's lifeblood commodity, oil, flowing to America, Europe and China.

The recognition of this profound change was expressed by one Lebanese student this way: "We are not used to seeing something like this in this part of the world. It is bigger than a dream in a region where people keep saying, 'What can we do?' Young people across the Arab world should go to the streets and do the same. It is time that we claim our rights." This is exactly what has happened in country after country. The movement has created consternation among the world's rulers. It has inspired worldwide freedom movements.

In response, powerful forces of counter-revolution have been arrayed against this new movement, both from without and, at times, from within. There has been a tremendous effort to limit the revolution in Egypt, for example, within the bounds of neoliberalism and bourgeois democracy. The U.S.-funded military remains a pillar of reaction. At the same time, reactionary religious elements have attacked women physically and denied their revolutionary role.

Within the Western Left, the crisis is manifested as ideological pollution when so many insist that enemy number one is U.S. imperialism and therefore Syrian President Assad must not be opposed. This lays bare the fixation on first negotiation, what one is against—and that opposition is not even directed at the capitalist system, but rather at one of its manifestations. Where is Karl Marx's vantage point, the freedom of the masses? In fact, Syria today has become the test of one's attitude to revolution itself, as were Spain in the 1930s and Bosnia in the 1990s.

These obstacles spell out the need for a revolutionary philosophy—specifically, Marx's philosophy of revolution in permanence as it has been recreated in Marxist-Humanism. This publication is a contribution to this new moment when Marxism needs to be recreated, not applied mechanically in any reductionist manner, but realized in its fullness as a philosophy of history.

This is for no abstract or academic reason, but because without such a vision even the most unavoidable compromises can open the doors to a return of the old, oppressive forms of life that bide their time within the mysteries of the commodity form.

*What must tower above all struggles against exploitation, nationally and internationally, is the perspective of a totally classless society; the vision of its ground would be "from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs."*

—Raya Dunayevskaya

Raya Dunayevskaya spelled out Marx's Marxism as the "philosophy of revolution in permanence" in her 1982 book, *Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution*. It is that book's central philosophic category. As she was writing it, she was also involved in working out and projecting that concept in support of the 1979 Iranian Revolution. It was a joining together of philosophy and organization that allowed her to develop a new view of Marx's Marxism in its entirety, including his late work on women and revolution in non-industrial societies.

It was through Dunayevskaya's participation in the discussions among Iranian revolutionaries that Marxist-Humanism became indigenous to the region. She insisted on the leading role of the working class, which, by placing the human being over the commodity, oil, raised a profound challenge to the entire state-capitalist world. She also pointed to the movement of Iranian women for their own liberation as essential to the dialectics of the revolution. Women's freedom was not a nice, "democratic" extra, but was both the Iranian women's own demand and the exact measure of how

deep the uprooting of the old, oppressive social order needed to be to avoid the backward pull of reactionary religion embodied by Khomeini.

The essays and letters on Iran included here represent Marxist-Humanism's fundamental contributions to an ongoing struggle that sprang to life again after Iran's stolen election of 2009. The roots of revolution remain alive in Iran in the struggles of women, workers, youth, and national minorities, among others. Iranian revolutionaries are watching the Arab Spring with the greatest interest and in the sure knowledge that their day will come again.

These collected writings on the Middle East also provide an extensive analysis of Palestinian/Israeli relations. The Arab Spring has created an opening for the creation of new human relations between Palestinians and Israelis. Part of this would require a new comprehension of history that can be released through a philosophic confrontation with Marx's philosophy. As Dunayevskaya pointed out, it was in Marx's essay "On the Jewish Question" that he first formulated his concept of "revolution in permanence." It is where his philosophic critique of bourgeois society came together with his recognition of the unfinished character of the bourgeois revolution, thus determining his attitude toward revolution itself:

*At times of special self-confidence, political life seeks to suppress its prerequisite, civil society and the elements composing this society, and to constitute itself as the real species-life of man devoid of contradictions. But it can achieve this only by coming into violent contradiction with its own conditions of life, only by declaring the revolution to be permanent, and therefore the political drama necessarily ends with the re-establishment of religion, private property, and all the elements of civil society, just as war ends with peace.*



Oil workers on strike in Iran, October 1978.

Today, in the context of recognizing Palestinian self-determination, nothing could release greater practical energies than the concretizing of this philosophy.

The Arab Spring can become a real turning point in human history. Against the backdrop of a state-capitalist world in a deep and intractable crisis,

the vision of self-determination, courage, dignity and creativity can raise itself into an absolute opposition to the degraded reality of endless cutbacks, austerity, and accompanying bigotry that is all capitalism is offering humanity.

It is nothing less than phenomenal that this most concrete of historical movements demands, of its essence, a confrontation with Marx's philosophy in its entirety. It is not enough to state his or our own conclusions.

Rather, it is necessary to recreate what Marx began as an investigation of the "riddle of history" in the 1840s and developed as the vision of *revolution in permanence* that was spelled out as a classless society in his 1875 *Critique of the Gotha Program*. This was Raya Dunayevskaya's political and organizational project from her philosophic breakthrough on Hegel's Absolutes in 1953 through to her work on organization and philosophy of the 1980s that was informed so concretely by the Iranian Revolution.

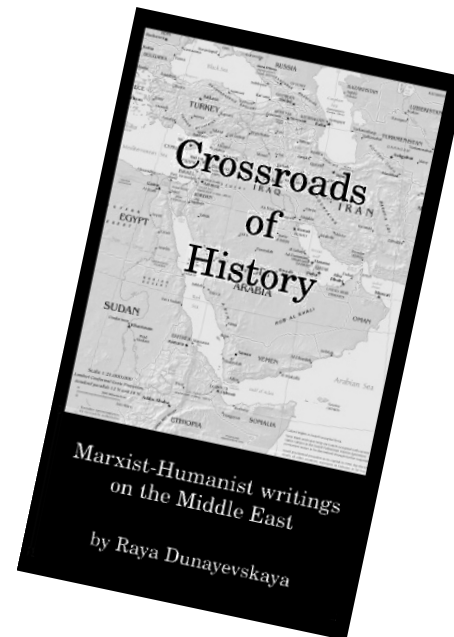
It is the masses making history that clarifies the role of revolutionary organization. That role is the comprehension of history as the human struggle for self-determination and freedom, in order to project in the course of struggle the necessary conditions for a truly free human society—the many paths to reach that needed new society will not be easy to work out.

From the revolutions in the Middle East to Occupy Wall Street that they inspired, masses of people are searching for those paths to a new society, in reality as in thought. At such moments second negativity, far from a "mere abstraction," becomes the most concrete, pressing need of humanity—that revolution in permanence that carries humanity toward greater freedom.

In publishing this collection of Raya Dunayevskaya's writings on the Middle East and revolution in permanence, we hope to be part of the worldwide dialogue that will move the revolution, and humanity, beyond the inhuman system of capitalism with its eternal threats of war and deprivation, its racism, sexism and heterosexism. In no respect are we willing to be passive spectators at yet another wrong turning of history.

—Gerry Emmett, for the Resident Editorial Board of News and Letters Committees, September 2012

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**RAVAGES OF CAPITALISM SHOW NEED FOR NEW WORLD**

The article on "Climate chaos and capitalism" (Sept.-Oct. 2012 *N&L*) is very relevant, especially the conclusion about how capitalism's contradiction is that the growth of the economy, of capitalist production, means more global warming and climate change worldwide.

**Activist for humans and environment  
Los Angeles**

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The technologies we have created for capital are objects of enslavement. The difference between technology as it is and when it will be a tool, is where we want to go. Substance is experienced by Subject. What we see is determined historically. We don't understand all of nature. We only understand what we can. It is our experience of the world, not what it actually is. It is not whether things are predetermined, it's that we choose what we feel is freedom, we choose what is human.



**D. Chêneville  
Oakland, Calif.**

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African Americans lived through what happened in the U.S., but I don't think it should only be "American Civilization on Trial." The whole world should be on trial. The whole world is suffering under capitalism.

**Iranian American  
Los Angeles**

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I'm now beginning to grasp that all the conditions for the death of capitalism can be in place but, like an animated corpse, it will go on and on until it gets a hefty, revolutionary push from a massive, subjective force of its own creation: the laboring class. I thought the falling rate of profit meant no one needs to do anything, that capitalism would do itself in. Knowing that the masses of workers need to shove capitalism over the cliff doesn't mean it will ever happen. For one thing, it isn't just workers who have to rise up. The perversions of capitalism are so deep that all of humanity must take part in delivering the final blow.

**David  
Bay Area**

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A Jan. 8 *New York Times* article exposes the dangerous, ineffective, slow, self-serving, brainless and heartless way the Japanese Government is handling cleanup nearly two years after so many citizens of Fukushima lost their families and homes. It also failed to protect citizens in the rest of Japan (and the world) from harmful radiation. Lessons from Chernobyl and Three Mile Island are barely, haphazardly applied.

From Syria to Haiti to the U.S., the dynamic is similar. We need a new way of looking at the world, an evolution of humankind into a new creature for whom human development is the most important value. That's why I stay with News and Letters Committees. Besides working on the surface—putting out a newspaper with real news, speaking at rallies and marches, being in international solidarity with those who seek freedom—News and Letters goes below the surface to where people think. We never stop trying to describe the present situation because that's the very first step in changing it.

**January  
Chicago**

**OCCUPY AND REVOLUTION**

It should be no surprise that the first major act of Mayor Bloomberg in response to Hurricane Sandy was to reopen the New York Stock Exchange, that bastion of capitalist greed. Bloomberg did not evacuate the City hospitals until after the storm had hit, endangering thousands of patients. Public housing, located in regions close to the water, did not have power for over a week after the rest of the city. Seniors and disabled were hit especially hard. The most effective force in helping people was "Occupy Sandy," not the nonexistent bureaucratic social welfare agencies. Bloomberg did not cancel the New York City Marathon until mass outrage made him.

We need a revolution to reverse the course of calamity before we go past the point of no return. We need a revolution that will create new forms of human and social relations, under the banner of a New Humanism, that of Karl Marx.

**A Sandy survivor  
Queens, New York**

**NEW PUBLICATIONS OF MARXIST CLASSICS**

A new South Asian edition of *Marxism and Freedom, from 1776 until Today* by Raya Dunayevskaya has been published in India.

South Asian readers can order it from Aakar Books, <http://aakarbooks.com/>, 28-E, Pocket-IV, Mayur Vihar Phase-I, Delhi-110 091, India. Phone: 91-11-2279-5505. Telefax: 91-11-2279-5641. Email: aakarbooks@gmail.com.

**Franklin Dmitryev  
Chicago**

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In Mexico, there has come to light a trove of notebooks of Victor Serge, the Franco-Russian novelist and revolutionary (1890-1947). They have been published in France, beautifully edited, by Agone in Marseille. In the U.S., the first complete English translation of Serge's *Memoirs of a Revolutionary: 1905-1941* was published last year by NY Review of Books Classics. In addition to Peter Sedgwick's Introduction and a Foreword by Adam Hochschild, this edition includes a Glossary, which I prepared to help readers cope with all those Russian names. Unfortunately, my Postface, "Victor Serge's Political Testament" was omitted by mistake. Finally, for those who live in the New York area, I will be hosting a class on Serge at the Brecht Forum this Spring and Fall, starting with public lectures on Feb. 2 and 9 co-sponsored by NYRB Classics and Haymarket Books.

**Richard Greeman  
New York**

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The new book, *Crossroads of History: Marxist-Humanist Writings on*

*the Middle East*, is very welcome news, especially since the situation there becomes more confusing and ominous daily.

The recent developments in Mali, with the hostage-taking in particular, indicate both the volatility in the region and the growing strength of the Islamic fundamentalists. The writings by Raya Dunayevskaya will provide a valuable background for the understanding of what is happening and disclose the importance of dialectics in making analyses.

**Steady Reader  
Detroit**

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Publishing *Crossroads of History*, a collection of Raya Dunayevskaya's political essays, comes at an important moment. The Arab Spring is at a crossroads. These new beginnings are under severe threat. It is not alone a question of arms and power. A clarification of ideas, indeed a battle of ideas, is needed, if revolutionaries are to find a way forward.

Dunayevskaya's vast Middle East writings over several decades can make an important contribution. She doesn't provide an answer for today, but the Marxist-Humanist methodology and vision she forged in her writings on the Iranian Revolution, on Syria, Lebanon, the Palestinian Question, Israel's occupation, anti-Semitism—the entire Middle East cauldron—can be of crucial assistance if revolutionaries are to find a way forward.

**Correspondent  
Mexico**

**READERS' VIEWS**

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This year is the 50th anniversary of the publication of *American Civilization on Trial*. It's not just a number that compels us to look at it today. The outpouring of response to Trayvon Martin's murder last February forced "mainstream" America to confront that his experience was the reality for masses of Black and Latino Americans, especially young men. When Occupy Wall Street burst forth last fall, attracting hundreds of thousands of young people, idealistic and enthusiastic about developing new human relations, it wasn't long before people of color and women felt the need to form caucuses, some of them separate from the larger General Assemblies.

**Occupy supporter  
Detroit**

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We have had feminist General Assemblies because we need more dialogue. We need a space to uncover relations, such as how capitalism dominates us. A horizontal structure can still be exclusive. Feminist initiatives are not just about how many women are speaking but whether the ideas are taken seriously.

**Woman occupier  
New York**

**WOMEN'S LIBERATION**

What set the rape in India apart from others was both the horrible brutality of it and then the government's completely wrong response to the demonstrations. But if anyone thinks it's so much better in the good old USA, think again. Here one in six women have been raped or suffered an attempted rape while for women in the U.S. military it is one out of three women who reports sexual assault—not from the enemy, but from her male comrades-in-arms. Here we have politicians pontificating about "legitimate rape" and quoting phony or non-existent science to insist that a raped woman can't get pregnant. Date rape is rife on U.S. campuses and often the poorest women, those who live in public housing, are raped repeatedly. I'm so glad to see the massive demonstrations in India. They are not only against individual rapists but "rape culture"—their whole society's attitude and actions towards women. We need the same thing here.



**Women's Liberationist  
Chicago**

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Wherever we look, women are subjected to political and cultural oppression. I recognize that many men, brought up believing that women have a social position beneath them, will find it difficult to accept a totally different way to relate to women. My own continuing transformation began in earnest when *N&L* sent me an article on women's liberation that enabled me to move from an abstract idea of equality to a more concrete interpretation of what women's liberation looks like in the context of Marx's concept of the man/woman relation.

**Faruq  
Crescent City, Calif.**

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Something that often amazes us in Europe is the weird rules that we hear from the U.S., absurd and sometimes inhuman ones. You see that in the article on "Rape and people with Disabilities" in the Nov.-Dec. *N&L*. This poor child and her family. I can't believe it. The U.S. advertises itself as the "most developed country." It should only be called "the most economically developed."

**Young feminist  
Spain**

**MALI CRISIS**

It's horrible that Islamic fanatics have hijacked a genuine freedom movement, the one you wrote of in the July-Aug. 2012 article, "Mali's contradiction." The article takes up how the Tuareg people have been fighting for self-determination for years in a national movement for liberation. While the French, with help from the U.S., are now fighting the "reign of terror" that fundamentalist groups have inflicted on the people, I doubt they are the least bit interested in helping the Tuareg in their struggle for freedom and a land they can call their own and feel safe in.

**A reader  
Los Angeles**

**HEGEL'S ABSOLUTE METHOD**

Some turn away from philosophy, blaming it as inadequate because ideas remain "lofty," and are not realized. In contrast, Marx said the world needs to be made philosophical. The Paris Commune made it clear to Marx that the way the world presents itself to us is a function of human relations. The power of abstraction is what sets humans apart. We encounter each other and nature through abstractions, through the meaning we give the other and the world.

**Old-time Marxist-Humanist  
California**

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Workers' self-activity is very close to Hegel. It's unfair to workers that their movements are called "spontaneous," as though revolutions are "sparked" and people are just "tired." There is a lot of thought that goes into the spontaneity.

**Worker  
Bay Area**

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Marx held that thought reflects the world. That means theory is not something smart guys give others to carry out, but the other way around. It's the masses in motion that give the intellectuals something to think about. Hegel is tracing the thought of philosophers, but they got their ideas from people engaged in creating the worlds out there.

**David M'Otto  
Oakland, Calif.**

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There's no other news organ in circulation today that gives its readers the algebra of revolution. Raya Dunayevskaya's 1953 letters detailing her amazing breakthrough on the Hegelian dialectic has given humanity the philosophical foundation necessary to not only transcend oppressive capital relations but also build a new society on new human foundations.

**Prisoner  
Pelican Bay, Calif.**

**WORK AND ALIENATION**

*News & Letters* reported mass protests against the opening of a \$1.6 billion copper processing plant in Shifang, China (Sept.-Oct. 2012 *N&L*). There are hundreds of mass protests daily in China. Timothy Tang, who is protesting the opening of a chemical plant in Ningbo, said: "A lot of us don't need high growth rate, we don't need more high rises. We want blue skies and clean air to make our lives better. If high growth rates bring these kinds of negative impact, we'd rather the economy not grow at all." In other words: quality of life instead of capitalism's production for production's sake which results in labor doing work, work, work, in order to survive. Quality of life means labor becomes a space for human development and not just for survival. It means there is no unemployment.

**Japanese American  
California**



**ARCHIVES AS LIVING**

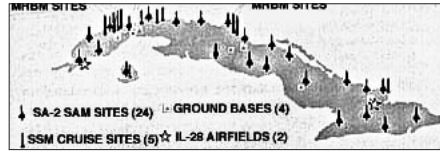
I have been following the readings for the 2012-2013 Marxist-Humanist discussions with great enthusiasm. I was especially energized by the "Women as force and reason of revolution" selections. Raya Dunayevskaya's 1970 piece "The Women's Liberation Movement as Reason and as Revolutionary Force" was fresh and relevant to today. This is no surprise since, to paraphrase Dunayevskaya herself, a freedom song is both universal and individual.

How refreshing and encouraging it was that such a great thinker admitted to not having always seen in *Oresteia* the awful indictment and wholly predictable misogyny of Athena's speech excusing Orestes for murdering his mother since his mother murdered his father. Dunayevskaya reminds us that art is in the service of vision, which, more often than not, and "even at its greatest," invigorates myths that conserve repressive orders, simply "updating characters." I cannot help but take Dunayevskaya's writing as a call to seriously engage pop culture. I feel that discussion within your pages of movies, such as *Lincoln* and *Django Unchained*, whose releases correspond with the second term of America's first African American president, would be fitting. I would expect a lively and thought-provoking exchange.

**D. Perkins**  
Phoenix, Ariz.

\*\*\*

It was stunning how Dunayevskaya's critique of the Left of 1962—over 50 years ago—spoke as if it was written about the Left today. (See "The Cuban Missile Crisis and Its Test of Movements' Negative Character," Nov.-Dec. 2012.) It's where she counsels us to *never* get into the position where we "sound so much against" one world power or country or group, "that we appear to be for the other. Above all," she warns, "we oppose war not only as 'againters' but primarily because we are for a totally new society, on new, on human beginnings...." How many times in our day has the Left come out and supported a monster like Qaddafi or Assad, simply because they were "against" the U.S.? She makes it clear



that it is completely insufficient, indeed just plain wrong, to base yourself only on what you oppose. If one as well works out what they are fighting for, one would never end up supporting some dictator only because of what the dictator opposes.

**Always learning**  
Chicago

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The Archives article by Dunayevskaya dealing with the Cuban missile crisis is a timely reminder of the dangers of authoritarian tendencies that exist in the U.S. today. Although it deals with the objective situation at the time of the crisis, the article also takes up the problems and threats to News and Letters then, and the principles that have to be maintained in order to continue and grow. Those same principles are more important today and require diligent observance.

**Member**  
Detroit

\*\*\*

Lucky for us, in the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, Khrushchev withdrew his nuclear-armed missiles, but that threat lingers as today's world economic crisis is bringing capitalist countries with nuclear weapons into fierce competition for world resources that can turn into another global war.

She also mentioned that Cuba is "an outpost of single-party state-capitalism." Today, 50 years later, so many on the Left as well as Cuban rulers think of state-capitalist Cuba as a socialist or Communist country because they have eliminated private property or private corporations. Marx's analysis of capitalism goes much deeper than that.

**Basho**  
Los Angeles

**RACISM**

During the conclusion of the Presidential campaign, Obama made an inspirational, emotional speech. The fact

that he has been harangued with charges of not being fully American demonstrates the long road that lies ahead in this country for racial progress. That road has been traveled by millions of Americans who are unfairly denied a job, incarcerated, monitored, detained, harassed and assaulted simply for their ethnicity. This is a struggle shared by millions around the globe, from Burma to Bosnia, from Syria and Israel to Darfur and Nigeria, and from Tulsa to Tinnamen.

**Exile from Southeast Asia**  
Northern California

**THE LEFT**

I went to a rally in Chicago commemorating and protesting 11 years of Guantanamo's vile existence. That is good, but this one was dominated by World Can't Wait, a Revolutionary Communist Party front organization. It is mainly interested in promoting itself and raising money! Unfortunately, I believe the rally mainly helped the RCP, not the cause.

**Mark**  
Chicago

\*\*\*

Why isn't the Left supporting the Syrian rebels? We support the people of Gaza and others. Over 60,000 Syrians have lost their lives, most at the hands of the butcher al-Assad, the Syrian dictator of the mild demeanor. Do my fellow leftists have a conscience or a sense of humanity? Don't let narrow ideology prevent you from being on the side of life and justice. We must help stop the slaughter! Assad is not our friend or ally. He is a bloodthirsty dictator!

**Long-time revolutionary**  
Midwest

**THE RIGHT**

Dunayevskaya's column, "Historic roots of far Right threat to U.S." (Sept.-Oct. 2012 *N&L*) explained neo-conservatism well. John Birchers today are against Medicare, as are the Koch brothers. Once, a teacher called me a "communist." J. Edgar Hoover accused

many of the same, whether they were or not. He survived because he had dirt on many presidents.

**Iranian activist**  
Los Angeles

**FROM BEHIND THE BARS**



I like reading and getting a better view of the world. I get that from this paper. I also like Voices from the Inside. It lets me see that

some prison systems are worse than the one in Illinois. Thank you for sending it to me all these years. My current outdate is in mid-2017—approximately 4½ years. Been in now 25½ years. Thanks again.

**Male prisoner**  
Pinckneyville, Ill.

\*\*\*

Our prison, V.S.P.W. (Valley State Prison for Women), has now changed to V.S.P. for Men. Men now have 31 of 33 prisons in California. So all of us women have now been stuffed into two prisons instead of three. Our medical and living conditions get worse but it seems Sacramento doesn't care.

**Woman prisoner**  
Chowchilla, Calif.

\*\*\*

I'm writing you because I'm an indigent inmate confined to the Behavioural Health Unit (BHU) and would like to receive your newspaper. I'm a homosexual. I've been down ever since 2009 on this case, but I served a year before that. I have never read a newspaper like yours. When I read Queer Notes, I feel good because I get to see what's going on in the world besides what's behind these walls. I'm so glad to read your newspaper and I thank my sister who let me read *N&L*. I look forward to reading more. Thank you for your time. Happy 2013, 'cause that's my year to shine. I max out.

**Prisoner**  
Huntingdon, Penn.

\*\*\*

*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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## 'Idle No More'

Winter is often seen as a quiet time in Canada. In one area, however, there is a major event right now: the emergence of a new and powerful movement of Indigenous people across Canada: "Idle No More." It grew out of resistance to the environmental destruction caused by the extraction of natural resources and the abrogation of Indigenous rights and environmental laws by the Stephen Harper administration, especially through Bill C-45.

After a long series of protests, rallies, letters, flash mobs, and highway and railway blockages—with no response from the government—a hunger strike by At-tawapiskit Chief Theresa Spence forced Harper's hand. He agreed to a meeting with numerous Indigenous groups. That Jan. 11 meeting decided little except to have more talks. Nonetheless, it was open, unlike the previous closed-door negotiations. Many are skeptical in that everyone knows that Harper does not negotiate in good faith, but a resulting larger movement may lead to change.

The actions of the Canadian federal government are part of a plan to transform Canada into a world economic power in energy production and mineral extraction. To do so, Harper will have to steamroll over the Canadian people, which he will, eventually, be unable to do. The Idle No More movement has spread to Alaska and may spread elsewhere in the U. S., including to those fighting the Keystone XL pipeline through the Dakotas, Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma, and Texas. We can expect the movement to grow, not just in size, but in ideas.

—D. Chêneville

## Oscar Grant remembered



On New Year's Day 2013 Oscar Grant's mother, Wanda Johnson, spoke to about eighty people gathered for a vigil at Fruitvale BART station in Oakland, Calif., site of his murder by a BART cop on the same day in 2009. While disappointed by the low turnout, Johnson told us that the race does not go to the strong or the swift but to those who endure to the end.

—David M'oto

## Close Guantanamo

**Los Angeles**—On Jan. 10, 150 activists gathered outside the downtown Federal Building to protest the ongoing torture and indefinite detentions of Muslim prisoners for a decade, without charges. The press conference was sponsored by Amnesty International, Interfaith Communities United for Justice and Peace, and Immigrant Communities for Justice and Peace. Pacifica Radio KPFK, Global TV and other independent media along with Channel 7 were there.

Some of the many signs read "Extraordinary Rendition," "Close Guantanamo," "Abu Ghraib," "Bagram," "Torture = War Crime," "Drones, torture, indefinite detention," and "Stop the crimes of your government."

There was street theater. Sixteen people dressed in orange jump suits and black hoods over their heads were handcuffed behind their backs and knelt down during the speeches.

National radio DJ Casey Kasem was the first speaker. Another speaker said President Obama is the commander-in-chief of the biggest surveillance state ever. Others declared: **No torture in our name. Shut down Guantanamo.**

Names were read of those "cleared for transfer out of Guantanamo" yet still imprisoned there. An attorney who visited his client, Mohammed, three times in Guantanamo said torture has nothing to do with terrorist activity. Over 150 prisoners with no criminal, let alone terrorist, charges are still detained. Other speakers said the U.S. has trained other countries in interrogation and torture techniques and that torture is used, not to get information, but to create terror and fear in the community. There was a critique of the Academy-Award-nominated film *Zero Dark Thirty* because it calls torture "enhanced interrogation techniques."

The press conference ended imploring people to call Congress and President Obama.

—Basho

## Pelican Bay families support prisoners

*Editor's note: California Families Against Solitary Confinement (CFASC) came together during the prisoners' 2011 hunger strike initiated by prisoners in Security Housing Unit (SHU). To support the prisoners' ongoing movement, specifically the Agreement to Cease Hostilities (see Nov.-Dec. 2012 N&L), CFASC organized a bus for various families from Southern California to meet with their loved ones at Pelican Bay. Here are a few statements from participants.*

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**Dolores Canales:** Talking with all the families as we gathered to get on the bus, especially those who had never been to Pelican Bay, or for whom it's been many years, is overwhelming. It encourages me to get more people up there, to get families united. Some people can afford to come only once a year, if that often, so they are very thankful for this.

We have on this bus people who will be visiting folks on the yard as well as in the SHU. There is every race here. We're bringing the families together in a way that the prisoners got together inside, issuing an Agreement to End Hostilities. There will be disagreements. The difference is in how you work through them. Since the Agreement has been put out, we said, let's start working through our differences.

We wanted to include families of people on the yard, to build hope and reunification. CDC promotes itself as California Department of Correction and **Rehabilitation**. Family reunion is the biggest part of rehabilitation, giving you something to hope for, something to strive for, to build back family bonds. That is very hard to do when the prison is so far. The distance is overwhelming. One woman on the bus is from San Diego. She has been writing her husband about their two kids, but the distance makes it impossible for them to come. It is almost 1,000 miles one way. Another family told me that to come up to Pelican Bay costs them \$500-\$600. Because of the distance and the expense, one person on the bus has not seen her loved one for 18 years! It's a real hardship. They want to visit, they want to be with

## March against violence

**Chicago**—Dozens of people marched on Chicago's South Side to take a stand against violence on Jan. 15, followed by a speakout and vigil. Occupy the Southside organized this "King on King march" down Martin Luther King Jr. Drive from 63rd to Emmett Till Road.

"We're here," explained a Black woman activist with Occupy the Southside, "because we want peace in the neighborhood. In every city I've been to, King Drive is a volatile, dangerous, very violent area. **We want to show the contradiction between what happens on King Drive and King the man.** Also, not just pray for peace but act for peace. We're asking folks to sign a peace pledge to live non-violent lives. If we could get people to agree that living non-violently is the way to go, then we can make some real changes. That's what we're hoping to begin today. I'm heartened when I look around and see all the people here, Black, Brown, white, coming together, in a way that Dr. King would have wanted."

A Latino member of Southside Together Organizing for Power told N&L:

"On this day we are commemorating the 506 people who got killed this past year through violence in the city of Chicago. We should not have any murders in Chicago. If nothing is done, violence is going to get worse. We want to show the city that we're not putting up with the violence anymore. Enough is enough."

Over the past decade, Chicago murders have outnumbered U.S. troop deaths in the war in Afghanistan. It's as if we had a Newtown school shooting every three weeks, and yet the deaths—mainly on the South and West Sides—are deemed much less newsworthy. Maybe it's because 75% of the victims are African-American and 20% are Latino. They're mostly young people, counted among the 25% of students that Mayor Rahm Emanuel says will never amount to anything. The police see the youth in these neighborhoods as suspects first and foremost, huge numbers of them get pushed into the criminal justice system. To many residents of majority-white neighborhoods of the North and Northwest Sides, **these neighborhoods are so remote that the murders may as well be taking place on another planet.**

People at the rally did not claim to have answers to this situation, but it was one more expression of the deep discontent simmering in much of Chicago. We reject the authorities' pretense of doing something about the shocking violence while in reality they are unwilling to contemplate any change deep enough to uproot it.

—King on King marchers

them, but they can't. It's very sad. The last photograph she has of him is from 1995.



San Francisco members of the Pelican Bay Hunger Strike Support Coalition welcome family members on their way to Pelican Bay on Dec. 7, 2012

There are 55 people on the bus, including many children, the youngest is 11 months old. We have several teens, who have not seen their dads in years. They are not resentful, just hopeful, glad to see their dads. The kids are being so incredibly good. It's humbling how grateful they are.

**Isaac** (nine years old): I am very excited about

seeing my dad. I am happy about it. We have not seen him for seven years, ever since he's been sent up there. My father sent me a drawing. It's of the father from *Finding Nemo* and a big shark.

**Another family member:** I'm loving the trip. I've never been to San Francisco. It's a long ride from Glendale. My five-year-old son has never been on a bus ride this long.

**A family member:** My son does not know I am coming. It will be a surprise. He's been there for 17 years. He's already served his sentence, he was supposed to be out, but they are keeping him. They did not want to let him out of the SHU. It's good to organize these trips. I have another son in Tehachapi whom I'd like to see.

\*\*\*

CFASC is planning fundraisers to organize more trips like this one, as well as actions in support of a renewed hunger strike, which may come about on July 8, 2013, since CDC has not lived up to the agreements they made during the last strike. You can send a contribution to CFASC c/o PBHS, 1904 Franklin St. #507, Oakland, CA 94612.

—Urszula Wislanka

"We want to be validated as human"

News & Letters reports from the Pelican Bay State Prison hunger strike, 2011

### From the belly of the beast: Pelican Bay prisoners speak

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## QUEERNOTES

by Elise

The newly signed law that would have protected all California Queer youth from "ex-gay" therapies and therapies to change gender expression has been suspended. Federal Appeals Court judges ruled that there must be a full review of the legality of the Bill (SB 1172). The therapists who administer "ex-gay" therapies claim the law violates their freedom of religion.

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**Kolkata, India**—Intersex woman Pinki Pramanik, the former Asian Games gold medalist in women's track and field, was arrested for rape, accused by her former lover, and imprisoned in a male ward because of test results showing that she has both X and Y chromosomes. Medical personnel on the investigating panel said Pramanik's gender is not necessarily male based solely on those tests. The panel diagnosed Pramanik with disorders of sex development (DSD). The soon-to-be-published fifth edition of the Diagnostic Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) defines DSD as the set of traits where chromosomes, gonads, and/or genitals are both female and male or atypical for either. This is highly controversial, in part because DSD is listed as a disorder. The Intersex community demands full human rights, normalization, that DSD be eliminated from the DSM, and control over their own bodies from birth.

\*\*\*

**Kiev, Ukraine**—On Human Rights Day, Dec. 10, GLBT rights supporters protested Ukraine's Draft Law 8711, which bans any television or radio programs, movies, writings, and any other media that "promotes" homosexuality. Anyone violating that law could face fines or imprisonment of up to five years. Members of the homophobic Svoboda Party tried to stop the protest, physically assaulting some of the protesters. Nevertheless, the protest went on.



# Why 'green on blue' attacks?

**London, England**—Richard Walker was described by family as a "proud, patriotic man." No doubt believing Britain's role in Afghanistan as vital to the curtailment of terrorism, Walker deployed to the war-torn country as part of the 28 Engineer Regiment. His death on Jan. 7 in the latest shootout between Coalition forces and a rogue Afghan Army soldier points, however, to increasing resistance to NATO's ongoing presence.

**So-called "green on blue" attacks involving Afghan state forces turning on their NATO allies accounted for a full 25% of British casualties in 2012 alone. Whilst the Taliban claim responsibility for the majority, this latest assault was carried out by a soldier with no apparent ties to the insurgent fighting force.**

Some analysts have pointed to cultural and religious differences between Afghan soldiers and their Coalition counterparts as fueling the phenomena of Afghan soldiers, with no ties to the Taliban, firing on Western troops. According to NATO officers, around 90% of insider attacks are directly due to cultural friction, which is partly behind the decision of the Afghan National Army to supply a brochure to its troops on how to deal with their NATO counterparts. This brochure, whilst seemingly aimed at stimulating tolerance in the ranks, borders on the surreal, for example, warning recruits that Western soldiers have a habit of blowing their noses as a matter of routine and that such a habit should not be considered "an offence or insult."

Considering that such attacks have increased the longer NATO troops remain in Afghanistan, it's been suggested that many Afghans are simply reacting violently to continued foreign interference, as opposed to any onset of cultural intolerance or desire to see the Taliban return to power.

According to sources inside Afghanistan, the brutality of Western troops in their dealings with the native population is itself a cause for violence. The continuation of night raids aimed at uncovering Taliban sympathizers and members, has led to a great many civilians being accosted, abused and sometimes killed in their own homes. According to one source, over 15,000 Afghans were killed during such raids in a ten month period between 2010-2011.

Human rights organizations have also pointed to NATO's inability to curtail civilian casualties. According to Human Rights Watch (HRW) in 2010, Coalition authorities have refused to publicly acknowledge a rising number of non-combatant deaths. In one incident involving an air strike in Herat province, U.S. commanders persistently ignored third party investigations, including one by the Afghan government, pointing to a drastically greater number of civilian deaths than originally admitted. An initial U.S. estimate claimed that five to seven civilian fatalities had been caused; the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission claimed the figure was more likely 70 to 90.

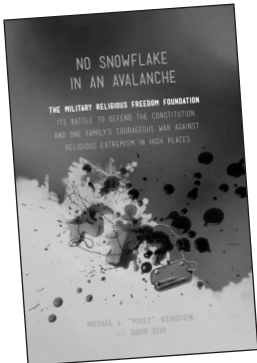
In a similar incident in Farah province in 2009 the U.S. military dismissed UN claims that an air and ground attack had killed roughly 80 civilians, downplaying the number of casualties. It was only weeks later, under mounting pressure from civilian institutions, that the military admitted that around 26 civilians had in fact been killed.

**Changes in the operational guidelines of NATO forces, initially welcomed by HRW, failed to halt the toll on civilian life. Over 1,500 Afghans, many of them non-combatants, were killed in 2010 and 2011 in night raids. There was a corresponding rise in green on blue assaults: 16 for 2011 and 44 for 2012. In 2009-2010 five similar attacks took place, up from just two in 2008, which suggests a definite link between civilian casualties and attacks on NATO troops.**

Whilst elements of the bourgeois media have a tendency to present the conflict as a clash of good against evil, with brave western soldiers facing off against a terrorist enemy, the truth appears more complex. Continuing civilian casualties, coupled with outrages such as the notorious "kill team" case of 2011—where a squad of U.S. soldiers was found to have habitually murdered native Afghans and taken body parts of the deceased as "trophies"—can only inflame further resentment. The death of Richard Walker, which has so shocked the British military establishment, is symptomatic of the continuing outrage felt by a population that has long been denied any opportunity to decide its own destiny.

—Dan Read

## Review of *No Snowflake in an Avalanche*



*No Snowflake in an Avalanche*, by Michael L. "Mikey" Weinstein and Davin Seay (Vireo, 2012).

An extraordinary organization arose to combat an extraordinary threat. Lawyer Mikey Weinstein was a graduate of the Air Force Academy, located in the religious Right territory of Colorado Springs, Colo. In 2004, his son Casey, a freshman at the Academy, told him

he was receiving constant anti-Semitic threats from other cadets and that this behavior was encouraged by the fundamentalist Christian proselytizing as well as programs, films and lectures promoted by the officers. The religious Right had taken control of the Academy to mold future military and political leaders.

When Weinstein presented a thick file of evidence of this hostile religious climate to the officers in charge, to his surprise, it was ignored. A 19-page paper he wrote broke the scandalous story in the media. The Academy responded as it always would in the future, investigating itself, then issuing a bland statement that the events had been blown out of proportion. Nothing came of a Congressional hearing and a lawsuit.

In December 2005, Weinstein launched the **Military Religious Freedom Foundation (MRFF)**, a civil rights organization "dedicated to ensuring that all members of the United States Armed Forces fully receive the Constitutional guarantees of religious freedom to which they and all Americans are entitled by virtue of the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment."

The MRFF receives about a hundred requests for legal representation per week and has about six cases running simultaneously. In spite of religious Right propaganda that the MRFF is "anti-Christian," 96% of their clients are Christians, although not deemed devout enough by fundamentalists. The organization also fights for atheists and members of minority religions. They promise their clients "Anonymity, Action, Results, and Protection" because, even for military people, it takes enormous courage to brave the threats to their lives and careers.

Weinstein also lectures extensively where he places each individual case in its larger context. MRFF maintains a website with news items and a research database.

MRFF has prevented religious Right speakers, who depict all forms of Islam as an evil force engaged in a cosmic battle with "good" fundamentalist Christianity, from lecturing to military audiences. The religious Right's promotion of the war in the Middle East as a crusade against Islam is a serious national security risk which has only served as propaganda for fundamentalist Muslim terrorists. MRFF has exposed the military's use of rifle scopes engraved with Bible verses. It has also exposed Bible references and the citation of a Nazi war criminal as a moral authority in the training material for nuclear launch officers at Vandenberg Air Force Base.

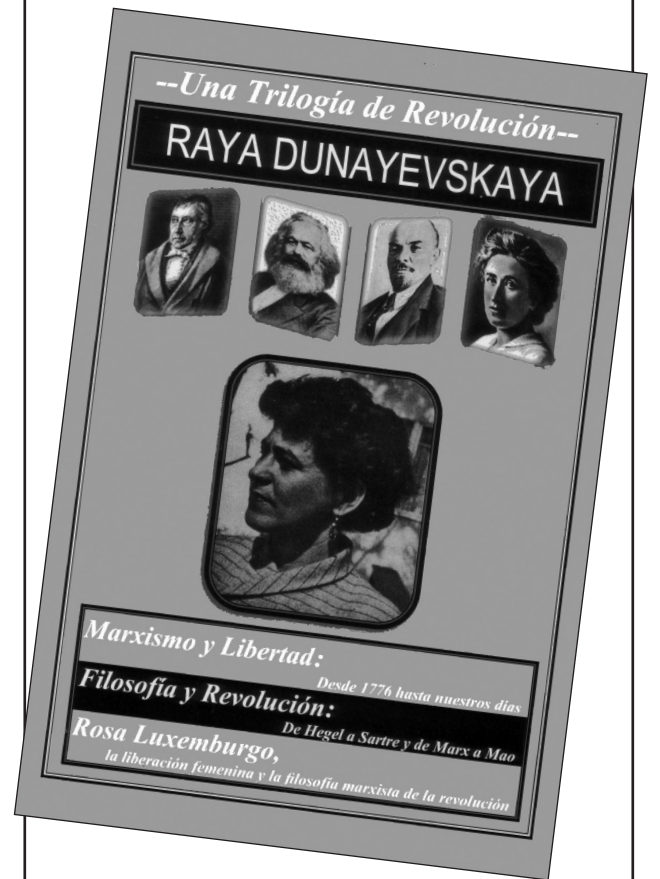
The guiding philosophy of the religious Right is Dominionism, the plan to put fundamentalist Christians in control of the seven "mountains" of culture: business, government, media, arts and entertainment, education, family, and religion (including mainstream Christian churches). Leah Burton, an expert on Dominionism and a member of MRFF's Board of Directors, says the military could be considered an eighth "mountain." What Weinstein and his multi-talented allies have done to protect the rank-and-file military, needs to be done to protect other aspects of society.

MRFF is a model of how to do this. The immense stress of death threats and financial hardship faced by Weinstein's family and clients may be lessened when more people from all walks of life and with diverse talents organize using his strategies and develop his persistence and determination.

—Adele

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by Suzanne Rose

**England**—Church of England leaders want doctors to have the right to withhold treatment from disabled newborn babies in "exceptional circumstances," even though it will "certainly result in death." The church states that the principle of "justice" inevitably means that the potential cost of long term healthcare and education in the saving of other lives has to be considered. This proposal has angered many who are against the Church's position on abortion. As one woman stated, "So I shouldn't have an abortion if tests show my fetus has a disabling condition, but it's OK to let it die once it is born?"

\* \* \*

**Dublin, Ireland**—Nearly 2,000 protesters marched to the gates of the Dáil protesting cuts to services for those with disabilities. Members of the Disability Rights Coalition are demanding their rights, not charity. They are asking for a new law to replace the 1871 Lunacy Act, a collection of laws governing people with intellectual and other disabilities. "It's past time for the word 'lunacy' to be dropped from the books," stated one activist. People with disabilities have suffered budget cuts of 13.7% since 2008.

\* \* \*

**Guatemala City, Guatemala**—Disability Rights International (DRI) has documented life-threatening abuses against children and adults at Federico Mora Hospital, a psychiatric facility. The incidents of trafficking of women for sex and other incidents of physical and sexual abuse are so high that newly admitted minors are kept in isolation cells and adult women are locked in wards. Deaths in isolation rooms are common. People die from treatable infections because they are denied medical care. The armed guards are known to be the worst perpetrators of the abuse and violence.

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# Counter-revolution and Arab Spring

continued from p. 1

The Muslim Brotherhood, with its decades of organization, presented itself as the logical candidate for the job. They had a history of opposition to Mubarak's regime, but at the same time were a million miles from the life experience of the new generation of revolutionaries. They were latecomers to the streets and Square. When they did appear, it was under pressure of events, and from the youth in their own ranks. It was inevitable that they would continue Mubarak's anti-worker policies.

The lived experience of the women workers at Muhallah al-Kubra, or the youth who were inspired by their example, is not only beyond the Muslim Brotherhood's understanding, but represents its opposite—a struggle against the dictates of capital itself. This is the red thread that runs from Muhallah in 2008, through Tahrir Square's assertion of new human relations, to the anti-austerity Occupations in Europe. A movement so deep and international represents humanity's effort to grasp its own essence, the drive to freedom and self-determination, in concrete historic terms.

This is the truth of the Arab Spring: It was the universalizing of the struggle against capitalism that expressed itself as the blazing, limitless humanism of Tahrir Square and beyond. This is why every effort to reduce such a world-historic event to mere political terms ends up like trying to catch mercury in one's fingers.

Unfortunately, too often would-be revolutionaries have mistaken reactionary forces like the Muslim Brotherhood for allies against U.S. imperialism, as in the 2002-2008 international Cairo Anti-war Conferences. These rightly called for opposition to the U.S. war in Iraq, but said nothing about the oppressive nature of Iraq's Baathist state or the need for a revolution there.

## SELF-DETERMINATION VS. GENOCIDE

The Syrian Revolution has actually faced the same obstacles as in Egypt, but in more extreme form. There capital has asserted its rule through genocide, with over 60,000 dead and millions more forced to flee. As this is being written, word comes of the bombing of Aleppo University, in which over 80 students have been killed and hundreds more wounded. Students have protested there, despite being under the control of the regime. This massacre is Assad's ongoing message to the peaceful revolutionaries.

Assad's Baathist dictatorship has long served the interests of Saudi Arabia's theocracy, Iran's counter-revolutionary regime, and Israel's occupation of Palestinian land, whatever its rhetorical relations with those states. It has served Russian imperialism, in both its Communist and post-Communist forms. And it has well served U.S. imperialism as a partner in war and torture. The peaceful Syrian uprising faced, from the start, the fully armed might of a vicious and unprincipled fascist state. There, as Marx once put it, "no kind of bondage could be shattered without every kind of bondage being shattered."

In the face of the world's (at best) indifference, Syrian revolutionaries have practically accomplished miracles. They have defended themselves. They have driven Assad to the wall and managed to free much of Syria from his rule. In response, today, not only have the few weapons supplied to the Syrian people's struggle begun to dry up, but the litany in almost every article the bourgeois press publishes would have al-Qaeda as a leading force in the anti-Assad struggle. This despite the fact that most of the Syrian rebel fighters are working-class people defending their neighborhoods and families.

Al-Qaeda in fact opposed the Arab Spring from the start, and it has no affinity for the values of dignity, equal rights, and democratic practice the millions of protesters shared. Far from turning over their revolution to al-Qaeda, the Syrian people, especially in the areas liberated from Assad's forces, continue to debate and organize their own lives and futures. This attitude also disregards the contributions of revolutionary women like Rania Kisar, who describes Syrian women thus: "They're spreading the ideology. They're helping the wounded. They're teaching children. They are leading the relief aid. We do it for freedom and equality."

## 'HELL OR A POLITICAL PROCESS'

The only future envisaged by the world powers is a future in the image of their own desires, not the people's—either a compromise with Assad, or a division of the country along sectarian lines. These projections, on the part of the world's most powerful states, amount to open counter-revolutionary threats. UN-Arab League envoy Lakhdar Brahimi poses the alternatives as "hell or a political process." Clearly the powers he represents have disallowed a revolutionary victory.

Turkey has cut back its support for the revolution as it considers the possible effects of a free Kurdish territory in Syria. Israel threatens simply to build another border wall. Egypt uses the crisis to bargain with Iran.

In Syria, the counter-revolution from without and from within have joined hands, in even more insidious and violent ways than in Egypt. The same state powers that use religious ideology to impose capital's rule in Egypt, turn right around and use the threat of religious ideology to pretend that they are powerless to aid the Syrian people. The bourgeois press bears witness. All the laws of men and gods tie their hands. These are the intellectual virtuosos of unfreedom!

Here are the limits of life under capitalism. As Marx pointed out in *Capital*, this ultimate violence in its own defense is something inherent in the commodity form itself. The genocide and slavery with which capitalist society was built don't

disappear into thin air, but can reappear at the terminal points of capital's existence, when crisis and human struggle—revolution—pose a fundamental challenge to capital's rule.

## THE ROLE OF REVOLUTIONARIES

*"We have been living this lie altogether too long. State-capitalism has reincarnated both Religion and Science as moves away from real human needs and new human relations. The turning of the clock backward must be stopped and will be stopped when we stop separating the philosophy of revolution from social revolution."*

—Raya Dunayevskaya  
*Crossroads of History*

In both Egypt and Syria the role of revolutionary ideas is now vital. Morsi represents the face of world capitalism to the Egyptian workers, but his coming to power was also aided by the blind spots and misconceptions among revolutionaries. Too many Leftists failed to develop a critique of the Muslim Brotherhood, presuming that "the enemy of my enemy is my friend." That attitude not only has caused confusion among Egyptian revolutionaries, but left many of them ill-prepared to see their own revolution as a world phenomenon.

It would be equally an illusion to imagine a fundamental conflict of interest between the Egyptian military, still a pillar of reaction, and the Muslim Brotherhood. They have known each other, intimately, for decades and wouldn't be together if they had fundamental conflicts.

In Syria it is literally a life-and-death matter to clarify the revolution's aims. The profound internationalism of Arab Spring can still be a powerful revolutionary force, both in breaking down the barriers of sectarianism (which have been deliberately exacerbated by Assad) and in finding allies among the oppressed masses in Iran, the Assad regime's most active supporter. The goal of human self-determination can't be subjected to state power rivalries. That goal applies equally to Kurds, Bahrainis, Palestinians, Yezidis, Israelis and Iranians. Women and men.

People in the liberated areas of Syria are, even now, struggling over the shape of the future—asking the question, what kind of society should we create from this revolution? They are under attack by all the world's oppressive powers. At such a moment, silence from "revolutionaries" would be disgraceful—far more so than the expected hypocrisies of the rulers.

The Arab Spring shows that world-historic freedom struggles have a necessary philosophic content. As Raya Dunayevskaya wrote of the 1979 Iranian revolution, "What is needed is the working out of a theory that would never again separate itself from the actuality, any more than the actuality can be separated from theory." From the moment the Arab Spring began in 2010, these revolutions have necessitated a recreation of Marx's philosophy of revolution in permanence for our time. If not now—when?



Dar Al-Shifa hospital, Syria, (at the right of the frame) has been bombed and shelled more than 20 times. It is now a symbol of resistance.

## Hot and homeless

**Chicago**—Anyone who has lived through a homeless winter on the streets of a Midwestern city knows the value of a warm night. It means you die a little less. Maybe get to stay out of a shelter, or avoid the humiliation of the Mission. Maybe talk with a friend in peace.

We've had a lot more of those warm nights lately—with global warming. Sixty degrees in January? That's crazy. It can almost feel like what they call charity.

But there's one thing a lot of us know. Things can begin to fall apart on you slowly. Without you noticing. But then it all goes to hell real fast. That happens with homes. It's how you lose them. It's happening now to the whole society, to the world we live in. These warm nights are nice, but they're going to become more Katinas and Sandys and things that are even worse.

And you know what? From what I've seen, I expect this society to do just about as much to save itself as it does for the "bums," for the homeless kids in Boystown, for the old woman on the train hiding her face.

You see, they talk about charity. That's supposed to mean love for your fellow human beings. But it doesn't amount to much down at the bottom. I'd like to see that change so that there can be a future past a few warm nights—but the view from here doesn't look good.

Anyway, it's a warm night. Thanks for chatting.

—A watcher

## Monsters of the Market

*Monsters of the Market: Zombies, Vampires, and Global Capitalism* by David McNally (Haymarket Books, Chicago, July 2012).

"The wealth of those societies in which the capitalist mode of production prevails, presents itself as 'a monstrous accumulation of commodities...'" Thus Marx states the theme of his magnum opus in the very first sentence: that capitalism is a real horror show.

Of course, the German word *ungeheure* is usually translated as "immense," which, as David McNally points out, fails to capture the full import of Marx's formulation.

*Das Kapital* as a gothic novel? In Chapter two of *Monsters of the Market*, titled "Marx's Monsters: Vampire-Capital and the Nightmare-World of Late Capitalism," McNally makes the case for *Capital* as a work of imaginative literature.

He shows that an Indigenous writer of the Americas, Leslie Marmon Silko, author of *Almanac of the Dead*, reads Marx as a great storyteller.

## THE HORRIFYING LOSS OF SUBJECTIVITY

Mary Godwin Shelley's *Frankenstein* is a monster created by man, which turns to destroy man. It is a critique of science which arose with capitalism. William Blake, too, writes about grave robbers, those who provided bodies for surgeons to study. Many a horror movie plot is based on wanton killings of people to provide bodies for anatomy class. McNally stops just short of naming modern science itself as a monster, the Siamese twin of capitalism.

The use of horrifying words to describe capitalism's devastation was widespread during the Great Depression, when "zombie banks," for instance, was a popular term. The word "zombie" comes from Haiti, where zombies were the living dead working the sugar cane fields. What they knew they lacked, and wanted to get from the living, were brains. The Haitian Revolution challenged the entirely passive perception of the laborer, it became the mob intending to eat the rich.

Horror movies frequently show people losing their will, being turned into objects manipulated by others. It is an expression of a loss of subjectivity, not just a loss of control of your body or even mind.

## THE MONSTER IS CAPITALISM

McNally compares Marx to a modern Van Helsing, the mighty vampire slayer. Marx tracks the monsters of capitalism, for example factories, in which torture in real life surpasses Dante's imagination of the inferno. He recites the crimes of capitalists and colonialists against children, against Indigenous people from all over the world. McNally quotes Silko noting that Marx was the only white man to call those of his own race "vampires."

McNally recounts the story of Europeans in Africa, who could not understand why the Africans would not sell a statue significant to them. The Europeans called this a fetish. What they can't understand, they call "primitive." Marx shows that commodities are much more of a fetish, more profoundly rooted in human relations as they exist under capitalism masquerading as "natural," "unchanging" and "objective."

In *Capital*, Marx is inventing a new language to illustrate his conceptual scheme. It is a literary masterpiece, weaving in horrors to shake up the reader into rejecting what they grew up knowing as normal: the selling of your own ability to labor, your own life-producing substance, as an article of commerce.

—Lew Finzel

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# Teachers and parents talk education

*Editor's note: Below we print excerpts from the News and Letters Committees panel discussion of teachers and education activists on the September strike by members of the Chicago Teachers Union. Daily mass demonstrations and solidarity from teachers and city residents extracted some concessions from the previously intransigent Chicago Public Schools and Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel.*

**Chicago**—While there are many similarities from one district to another on education issues such as salary, medical benefits, or class size, there are also many differences: poverty levels, linguistic differences which might necessitate bilingual classes, violence in the area, the tax base and so on. There is no one-size-fits-all analysis of the crisis in education today.



Terry Moon / News & Letters

Over 70% of the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) ratified the current contract, which according to many experts isn't that great. They mainly got an increase in salary. What was their other great success, according to CTU President Karen Lewis? That they actually had textbooks available the first day of school. How insane is that?

Schools have become, more and more, the only home many children know. What were Chicago teachers saying leading up to the strike? That they were concerned children weren't going to be receiving breakfast and lunch in the schools. Those are, in many instances, the only regular meals some children have.

The local school is probably the safest thing around in many neighborhoods, despite many problems. There is a structure, and children need structure. There is a routine that can be counted on. Children need that, too. So many families are in a constant state of chaos and dysfunction because of the poverty, homelessness and violence caused by the economic chaos we live under.

Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel is proud of saying that students now have a longer school day. But one teacher put it very succinctly: "What difference does it make to keep them in school longer if you've got a building that's falling apart, no air conditioning, no heat in winter, no working computers, no library books, class sizes over 45 students?"

—Erica Rae, K-12 teacher

The unfolding crisis in education has its roots in the 1970s, in the economic, social and political crisis. The ruling class was determined to solve that crisis at the expense of the working class and what many would consider the middle class, as well as the poor.

I would encourage everyone to read a very thoughtful memorandum written for the U.S. Chamber of Commerce by Lewis Powell before he was on the Supreme Court. He was very clear, very strategic and well organized—a model of class consciousness. He argued that the institutions of capitalism were under attack by the women's movement, which was challenging male domination; the civil rights movement; the anti-war movement which had evolved into an anti-imperialist movement; the radicalization of sections of the working class, including wildcat strikes.

His argument was that the ruling class needed to change the discourse. That's the birth of the modern think tanks. They had their think tanks write the laws to re-establish ruling class domination. From the economic crisis and mass layoffs evolved open unionbusting under President Ronald Reagan—but the plans were drawn up under President Jimmy Carter. This was a bi-partisan effort.

For example, former Vice-President Al Gore was head of a committee that specialized in privatizing the federal government. My union, AFSCME, bragged in its literature about participating in this. They had privatized over 350,000 full-time federal jobs. We are seeing this now in education with a national movement basically to destroy the teachers' unions. After having gutted most of the private sector unions, with the collaboration of most of the top union leadership, they are moving on to the public sector unions—of which teachers are the largest.

They are turning everything that's possible into a commodity. Charter schools can be run at a profit. They began as vehicles of teachers' unions, to have experimentation in different teaching methods. They were taken over by investment bankers and others who saw money-making opportunities.

—Earl S., retired teacher

The content of this attack on public education is not simply a question of wages. It's about shrinking the

size of public schools in this society. It is about writing off a huge section of the working class.

I spent my last two years as a teacher in a closing, failing high school. We watched them take the computers out of our rooms and move them to the charter school in the same building.

If we are ever going to organize a strike over the conditions that would make teaching possible, we should demand massive public housing programs, social workers in schools, and social services for all the things students need; a shorter work week so parents can be home and support kids; decent healthcare; all the other conditions that make it possible for children to learn.

There are lab schools with five or seven full-time art teachers. These are the schools that Mayor Emanuel's kids go to. They have a library, they have physical education. Do you have those in the public schools?

Then there are the bells and whistles: cultural opportunities, zoos, summer camps, trips, overseas vacations. Home libraries for every kid. You want to help my kids perform? Give me the control over all the things that affect their ability to learn.

And then when you tell me the teachers are asking for too much, be really glad that the teachers are so patient!

—Tina B., retired teacher

I'm not a union member. I'm not in the Chicago Teachers Union, although I'm a facilitator of education in my children's lives. I have four kids who have been part of the Chicago public school system.

Everyone took notice of the teachers' strike, and was happy to see the little guys standing up against the giant, saying, "I'm not going to take this anymore." It was very exciting to have my kids out there seeing thousands and thousands of red shirts, the solidarity and spirit of the workers. My kids got a lot of education out there on the picket line with me doing the commentary.

There needs to be more communication between the teachers and the parents. I knew there was a strike coming, but that's from working in the Occupy movement and with the solidarity campaign. For the parents of the average kid, this came as a surprise.

Parents count on schools to feed children, educate them, shelter them. For that to be removed for a week and a half got a lot of parents' attention. A lot of them said, dang, we didn't know it was so bad for teachers.

Teachers are unique. They aren't plumbers or carpenters, because the products are our children. You have to take special consideration when striking. Children and parents should be at the negotiating table. There should be an intentional commitment of the teachers' union to work with the parents. It would be great to have teachers support a student-led action.

I haven't seen thousands of teachers protest the violence in the streets, but it would be very good to see that.

—Marissa B., Black mother, Occupy the Southside activist

## Chalking charges dismissed!



Franklin Dmitryev / News & Letters

**Chicago**—At an Oct. 9 protest at the Federal Building, a Homeland Security officer had Occupy activist Marissa Brown charged with property destruction for writing political messages on the premises with chalk. (See "Chalking a felony?" in Nov.-Dec. 2012 *N&L*.) At her trial on Dec. 17, about 40 supporters in the courtroom rose to their feet in solidarity. Judge Calabrese dismissed the charges, denying the prosecution's motion to continue the trial. Brown told *N&L*:

"I did chalk on the Federal Plaza, and I'm proud of it! When the complaining witness is the Department of Homeland Security, you get scared. The judge questioned how hurtful chalking could be. The judge realized that it's ludicrous to waste the taxpayer's money to prosecute a mother of four on a felony charge of chalking. I'm really looking forward to doing more chalking and more actions. It was amazing when everyone stood up in the courtroom. News and Letters Committees was there, Occupy Chicago, Occupy El Barrio, Occupy the Southside, the LGBT Network, First Unitarian Church, and more."

—Courtroom supporter

## Fake Burmese reforms

When highly lauded Burmese human rights activist Aung San Suu Kyi doubted whether the Rohingya Muslims really belong in Burma, the incipient racism and ethnic chauvinism echoed personally. I consider myself, my family and many other ethnic minorities to be exiles, having fled persecution in Burma during the post-colonial era of national independence movements. In Burma, we were declared a marginal Other, who did not belong, "foreigners" in our own birthplace.

In Burma, General Ne Win had declared his junta in 1962 to be a "caretaker" government. But they never left. The generals are still in charge.

### PRETENDERS OF DEMOCRATIC REFORM

It is these pretenders who are now supposedly spearheading "democratic reforms," sadly with validations from pro-democracy activists and incipient narrow nationalists like San Suu Kyi, as well as the U.S. administration. They give the junta legitimacy.

Burmese junta butchers changed their policies in the face of ongoing revolts from their own masses. Dictators don't embrace "reform" and "democracy" because they love those ideas. They are attempting to appropriate political trends, and preserve themselves.

On Nov. 19 President Obama spent about 24 hours in Burma. It was the first time a U.S. President has visited Burma. He did so in the throes of racial apartheid and political persecutions. It is significant that the first U.S. president to visit Burma is Black. Millions of Burmese came out to greet Obama. That would not have happened if, say, the British Prime Minister paid a visit. We have too many bad memories of the Brits.

I think Obama himself recognized the simultaneously historic and contradictory nature of his trip. He took pains to almost apologize, saying it wasn't to validate the regime but to help move forward the beginnings of reforms.

As soon as he left Suu Kyi's side, the junta resumed their repression of Burmese villagers. At the Letpadaung copper mine in central Burma, 70 Buddhist monks and five lay persons were arrested and injured at a peaceful protest. The mine is a joint venture between China's Wanbao Copper Mining Ltd. and the military-owned Union of Myanmar Economic Holdings, Ltd.

### VILLAGERS FIGHT CONTAMINATION

For years villagers have had health problems from air, soil and water contamination they believe are the results of mining. Many at the old mine sites allege their land was confiscated without compensation.

More than 7,800 acres of land have been seized from 26 villages under the shadow of the Letpadaung mountain range since last year to make way for the Chinese-backed project. Villagers demand its closure, citing environmental destruction and illegal land confiscation. A pre-dawn raid left dozens of unarmed demonstrators seriously injured. Security forces used water cannons, tear gas and smoke bombs to clear protesters from another copper mine in northwestern Burma.

The crackdown showed that the government, which claims to have turned over a new leaf, is only protecting its own interests and those of foreign investors. In Kachin State in northern Burma, an estimated 75,000 people have been displaced by the Taping River dam projects. A minister attached to the Burmese President's Office publicly admitted, "We're afraid of China....If China asks for compensation, the Myitsonne Dam shutdown would cost us \$3 billion dollars."

In the 1970s, fear of China, the Communist imperialist behemoth in the north, triggered irrational fear of the ethnic Chinese within Burma and a rampage of ethnic cleansing. Fear-mongering and ethnic chauvinism are being stoked again, now against the Rohingya Muslim minorities along the southern coast in an effort to displace them.

Since Obama's visit, the military has intensified its war against the oppressed Kachin minority and their demand for autonomy. There is heavy fighting, with reports of grave human rights abuses. Though activists in Rangoon have urged the government to stop its war on the Kachins, Aung Sung Suu Kyi has been silent.

National movements for democracy cannot stop at any halfway houses if the aspirations of the masses are to be achieved.

—Htun Lin

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## WORLD IN VIEW

by Gerry Emmett

In the remarkable documentary film, *La Toma* (2012), Afro-Colombian woman activist Francia Marquez Mina is threatened by government forces and forced to spend each night sleeping in a different place for her safety. (See "Afro-Colombians Throw Off Shackles," Nov.-Dec. 2012 *N&L*.) She has described the experience of people in her community this way: "We've been able to take measures for self-protection. Information isn't shared with strangers when they come asking."

Silence may be the oldest recourse of oppressed communities. A new study of Afro-Colombian women called "Defeating Invisibility" represents a bridge out of silence.

It is compiled as part of the Afro-Colombian Women Human Rights Defenders Project being developed by the Black Communities' Process. Described as an "exercise in hope," the study was based upon "women's testimonies collected in workshops and activities intended to reconstruct memory and stimulate thinking" in order to "shed light on the structural violations of human rights faced by Afro-descendant women."

### AFRO-COLOMBIANS MARGINALIZED

The reality of racism, and the rhetoric that covers it, have contributed to the invisibility of Afro-Colombians. Politicians have held that the lands where Black people lived could produce nothing of value. This

## France in Mali

The long-simmering situation has exploded. French troops have begun attacking fundamentalist militias in northern Mali. It remains to be seen how effective French and African forces will be against the militias. Certainly many people want to be rid of the al-Qaeda-linked groups that have attacked women, destroyed historic Sufi Muslim shrines in Timbuktu, outlawed music, and inflicted cruel punishment on petty thieves. The Tuareg independence movement has been pushed aside by these larger military forces.

The inhumanity embodied by the fundamentalist "religious" ideology is expressed in their attacks on Mali's beautiful, profound and Islamic cultural heritage. This is why there are Malians celebrating the French troops, even as many Afghan civilians celebrated the fall of the Taliban in 2002.

The seizure of neighboring Algeria's Ain Anemas natural gas field, with many hostages taken, indicates the seriousness of the crisis. Dozens of hostages have been killed as Algerian troops stand off with fundamentalists. The seizure was allegedly in retaliation for Algeria granting France the right to use its airspace for attacks in Mali, but also points to the roots of Mali's crisis in the Algerian civil war of the 1990s.

Between the probably temporary relief at French intervention and the anti-human threat of fundamentalism, Malian society remains unstable.

## Defeating invisibility

has continued right through to discussions of the Free Trade Agreement with the U.S. To the contrary, for Afro-Colombians the land has been where they escaped enslavement, mined gold from the streams, and grew crops—the means to freedom and self-determination.

In the racist context of capitalist development, Black women have been hard hit. In the context of ongoing civil war, they have been attacked by both sides.

As the study reports, "Women have been squashed and assaulted in our own territory, and everywhere, by different armed groups legal and illegal, who kidnap us, kill us, rape us and humiliate us." When women make efforts to hold their communities together, they become targets for attack as human rights defenders. "The precarious-

ness of Afro-descendant women is reflected in their life expectancy, which is 11 years less than that of the mestizo or white woman and 2.1 years less compared to men of African descent. Mortality rates of Afro-descendant children are another tragedy....

"In the public sphere, the manifestations of violence against women are expressed through oppressive forms such as poverty, lack of access to education, health and sexual safety...internal displacement, and sexual violence perpetrated by armed actors to exert control and political persecution. The violence in the private sphere manifests mostly through physical and sexual violence perpetrated by emotional partners, members of the family or those close to it, or by armed actors. Sexual violence as an instrument of war has created patterns of 'naturalization' of violence against Afro-descendant women...."

### A VOICE AT THE TABLE?

In articulating the problem, the women of the Black Communities' Process are also critiquing the dehumanization now common to both the multinational corporations and the lost revolution of the FARC guerrilleros. Colombia's capitalist exploitation and distorted development can't be separated from the racist prison-industrial complex in the U.S.

One might speculate that Colombia's recent history could have been very different if would-be revolutionaries had started from the consciousness of the most oppressed, the Afro-Colombians and Indigenous peoples—not only because they would have learned the jungles and mountains are more than the terrain of guerrilla war, but because the narrative of these communities' histories is the story of resistance to the growth of capitalism in the Western hemisphere, and in the world. The current struggle against international mining companies, agribusiness, and other exploiters is the latest chapter of this history.

As peace talks proceed between the FARC and Colombian government, it is important to make sure that—this time—the voices of the most oppressed people are heard.

Contact charominarojas@gmail.com for a digital copy of "Defeating Invisibility."



Afro-Colombian women make their voices heard.

## Massacre in Quetta

Over 100 people were killed and 150 injured in Quetta, Pakistan, in bombings on Jan. 12. The targets were Shi'a Muslims, mainly from the Hazara minority. The terrorist group Lashkar-e-Jhangvi claimed credit. This group, allied with the Afghan Taliban, has a long history of attacks on Shi'a.

**The latest bombing sparked protests by the Shi'a community. Hundreds occupied the streets of Quetta, refusing to bury the victims' bodies for days, demanding more protection from the police and military—although those agencies often have ties to such terror groups.**

Quetta is in Balochistan province, which has been the scene of a dirty war in which independence activists have been targeted for assassination, with bodies being found dumped in rural areas on a regular basis.

## Zapatistas' new era

Dec. 21, 2012, was a special date in the Mayan calendar—the end of an era and the beginning of a new historic cycle. For the Zapatistas of Chiapas in southern Mexico, it signaled a new moment of the movement. Some 40,000 Zapatistas from the autonomous Indigenous communities in resistance marched through the five cities where the rebellion began Jan. 1, 1994.

They came without arms, without talking, wearing their masks. Their silence was deafening. To the Mexican government—federal, state, local—their presence in the tens of thousands revealed the lie of the whispers, rumors and hopes of the officials and their corrupt parties, that the Zapatistas had "disappeared." Their lie lacked any real effect on the Indigenous peoples in Chiapas. To the Mexican news media—who had ignored them, lied about them, and failed to print the news of what has actually happened in Chiapas—the Zapatistas demonstrated their powerful presence.

Perhaps most importantly, it was a signal to the social movements in Mexico and in Latin America—movements that had grown out of the Zapatista rebellion or been inspired by it—that the struggle was not over, but just beginning. Here is how the Zapatistas expressed it in an excerpt from a communiqué signed by *Sub-comandante Marcos* several days after the march:

*We, who never went away, despite what media across the spectrum have been determined to make you believe, resurge as the Indigenous Zapatistas that we are and will be. In these years, we have significantly strengthened and improved our living conditions. Our standard of living is higher than those of the Indigenous communities that support the governments in office, who receive handouts that are squandered on alcohol and useless items.*

*Our homes have improved without damaging nature by imposing on it roads alien to it. In our communities, the earth that was used to fatten the cattle of ranchers and landlords is now used to produce the maize, beans, and vegetables that brighten our tables. Our work has the double satisfaction of providing us with what we need to live honorably and contributing to the collective growth of our communities.*

*Our sons and daughters go to a school that teaches them their own history, that of their country and that of the world, as well as the sciences and techniques necessary for them to grow without ceasing to be Indigenous. Indigenous Zapatista women are not sold as commodities....*

The communiqué further stated that new initiatives will be undertaken in the coming period.

—Eugene Walker

## 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.