

# NEWS & LETTERS

Theory/Practice

'Human Power is its own end'—Marx

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## WORKSHOP TALKS

### Truth of John Q.

by Htun Lin

A CEO of a major HMO said in 1996, "If the airline industry were run like the healthcare industry, you wouldn't want to fly." Although Hollywood may have made the Denzel Washington film John Q. into an exaggerated melodrama, the situation is based in reality.

The hero, John Q., is an African-American factory worker on the outskirts of Chicago whose job has been downsized as production moved to a Third World country. After his son collapses at a Little League baseball game, John Q. discovers to his surprise that his son has an enlarged heart and needs a transplant.

When he asks how in the world so many doctors could have failed to diagnose his son's problem, one nurse in the ER blurts out that doctors are told to keep costs down, and to postpone procedures for conditions that are not immediately life-threatening, and they get a fat bonus check at the end of the year. It is true that our nation's doctors have been reduced to the same status as the rest of us workers—namely ever decreasing control over the quality of one's work, made hostage to the demands of capital to cut costs.

Unbeknownst to John Q., the company which downsized his job had automatically downsized his health insurance, which no longer covered transplants. He goes ballistic after the hospital administrator advises him to make his son comfortable and prepare him for

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## BLACK/RED VIEW

### Marx and Black freedom

by John Alan

Martin Luther King Jr. closed his famous 1963 "I have a dream" speech by saying: "Free at last! Thank God Almighty, we are free at last." It seemed that African Americans had won a victory over racism and a new period in American history had begun. But the struggle against racism, poverty and police brutality goes on. Thus, many African Americans are ambivalent about President Bush's "war on terrorism."

The NAACP's board of directors has expressed this ambivalence in a statement published in the November/December 2001 issue of *The Crisis*. They say that while they fully support their country against the attack of an enemy, "the struggle to eradicate racial injustice from our society [and]...the goal of a truly just country is still so painfully far out of reach that literally millions of Black lives are disintegrating this very minute under the weight of discrimination, cruel and incompetent institutions and greedy racist indifference to suffering."

The "greedy racist" and "cruel and incompetent institutions" that the NAACP board so passionately condemn comprises nothing less than American civil society where racism, individual egoism and the exploitation of labor reign. The NAACP and other African-American organizations have, for eons, gone to the courts and pressured Congress to legally purge racism from this society. They have won cases, but essentially racism has only been modified and remains intact.

African Americans have always been moved by the idea of freedom. During slavery they destroyed the objects of their labor, killed their masters and built an underground railroad to escape. This opposition to slavery was the foundation upon which the white abolitionists built their movement. Marx played a role in the abolitionist movement as part of the labor movement in England. He fought against the British gov-

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## Women fight terror and war in South Asia and the Middle East

by Maya Jhansi

A global women's movement has made itself heard over the din and violence of Bush's so-called "war on terrorism" following the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center in New York. The fall of the Taliban brought women from around the world to Brussels to take part in a parallel conference to the official Summit on Afghan Women. Women from Belgium, Croatia, France, India, Italy, Jordan, Morocco, Netherlands, Pakistan, Palestine, Somalia, Tajikistan, Tunisia, Turkey, United Kingdom and the United States expressed their support for Afghan women by declaring that "Afghanistan is everywhere."

Yet no sooner had the interim government been installed in Afghanistan under the dubious leadership of Hamid Karzai, than Bush and his allies dropped women from the international agenda as they searched new areas of the world to bomb. Despite condemnations of the treatment of women by the Taliban, the issue of women's rights was not on the agenda of Secretary of State Colin Powell's foreign visits.

### BUSH ABANDONS AFGHAN WOMEN

Likewise, Bush, who signed the Afghan Women and Children Relief Act of 2001, decided to withhold the \$45 million that Congress had approved for the United Nations Population Fund, which distributes much needed birth control and birthing kits to war-torn Afghanistan. Afghan women have an average of seven children. According to the *Toronto Star*, contraception is not available, and 17 pregnancies per woman are common, beginning at age 15. Of the 1.5 million refugees who fled Afghanistan when Bush's bombing campaign began, 375,000 were women of reproductive age, and 56,000 of them were pregnant.

As the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan (RAWA) has pointed out, the future of



Women protest repression in Bangladesh last year.

women in Afghanistan remains uncertain. Factional fighting in several areas of the country, instability in Kandahar and Kabul, as well as widespread looting and banditry are beginning to wear away the confidence of Afghans in the ability of the interim government, installed on Dec. 22, to move the country toward democracy.

Reports of rapes and abuse continue. The International Federation of the Red Cross reported that girls in the western part of the country, some as young as 10, were being sold as "brides" for as little as 100 kilograms of flour. While the Taliban's involvement in the trafficking of Afghan women was long reported by Afghan refugees fleeing Afghanistan, more details are emerging following the regime's collapse.

Government officials and witnesses report that the Taliban routinely kidnapped women from Tajik, Uzbek, Hazara and other ethnic minorities to be sold to brothels or used as sex slaves and "wives" for Al Qaeda soldiers. As many as 600 women have been

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## World economic cabal protested

New York—Thousands of activists protested Feb. 2 against the World Economic Forum (WEF) then taking place in this city. Organizers of the protest estimated that 25,000 people attended the demonstration; the police estimate was 7,000. Numerous other protests, forums, and vigils about and against the WEF took place before and after the Feb. 2 demonstration.

A sizable percentage of the demonstrators had traveled from outside New York to attend it.

The simple fact that these protests took place is a most significant one. In the aftermath of the September 11 terrorist attacks and the plunge of the U.S. into war, an important anti-globalization demonstration that was to have taken place in Washington, D.C., was abruptly cancelled.

Thousands of activists turned their attention to opposing the war; but then the antiwar movement all but collapsed. It was unclear whether the anti-globalization movement had a future. The New York protests have answered that question, even though the turnout was much smaller than pre-September 11 protests in Quebec City and Genoa.

Protesters did not succeed in shutting down the WEF; the police presence was too massive and threatening for that. Yet they were indeed able to turn the area around the Waldorf-Astoria hotel, where the economic forum took place, into a "frozen zone." Miles of

steel barricades and thousands of riot police, standing shoulder-to-shoulder, surrounded the hotel.

That the City of New York was able to prevent a shutdown of the WEF only by resorting to an overwhelming show of force and extraordinary measures is itself a victory for the anti-globalization movement. It testifies to the movement's growing militancy and determination. At the Feb. 2 demonstration, several people were arrested, and some maced, for seemingly no reason other than that the police were trying to display their might. The next day, 87 demonstrators were arrested when they attempted to march through the East Village without a permit.

The Feb. 2 demonstration had a festive, even pageant-like, atmosphere. Many participants wore masks or costumes, or carried papier-mâché figures, or held up colorful signs. Political and theoretical analysis and discussion were de-emphasized.

The dominant political line was conveyed through signs and banners: greed is responsible for most of the world's ills; the global economic institutions are undemocratic and unrepresentative; they exist in order to make the rich richer by making the poor poorer.

However, the anti-globalization movement is by no means homogeneous. One young woman demonstrator with whom we spoke critiqued the movement's dominant ideology by likening it to the ideology propagated by Pierre Proudhon a century and a half ago—namely that the evils of capitalism can be abolished simply by changing its financial institutions and property forms. She recommended that people read the critique of these notions contained in Raya Dunayevskaya's *Marxism and Freedom*.

Some signs at the Feb. 2 demonstration protested war, calling for love and peace. One young activist complained that the concept of peace being advocated was totally abstract. It did not refer, he said, to the current U.S. war, terrorism, or national liberation struggles

—New York Marxist-Humanists  
See report on World Social Forum, page 12.



News & Letters

## What's feminist about 'Turbo Chicks'?

By Jen Aimbinder

*Turbo Chicks: Talking Young Feminisms* is a well-intentioned, bloodless book that sets out to be "fantastic in its diversity, fair in its process, and that would embody what we feel about young women, not-so-young women, young feminism and the need for sharing across women's movements."

The editors, Allyson Mitchell, Lisa Bryn Rundle, and Lora Karanian, all hailing from York University's graduate program in Women's Studies, have gathered together a diverse collection of essays from a diverse group of Canadian girls and women. While giving a forum to those who are often not provided with one, and embodying a democratic process in writing and editing are both admirable goals, these goals do not make this a feminist book.

The editors and many, but not all, of the writers seem to feel that if one is a strong young woman with a strong personality and a strong sense of self, then one is automatically a feminist. Each writer gives her own definition of feminism, and while some of the writers believe that feminism or women's liberation is a political movement, too many of the writers treat feminism (never mind liberation) as a question of identity alone.

For every Julie Devaney who states that "women's liberation has to be an active theory, a theory that is based on women's struggle at the same time as it inspires women to fight for change," and who goes on to advocate for solidarity among those who challenge systems of oppression, there are five like Angie Gallop who believes that feminism "is about balancing honesty with compassion in your daily interactions with the people and ideas that surround you, and it is about listening and stretching your mind to honor the realities of the new people you encounter."

Too much of *Turbo Chicks* is this cloying blend of decontextualized postmodernist subjectivity and new age spiritual self-revelation.

*Turbo Chicks* becomes a theorized book-length version of *Bust* magazine, touching on all of the big issues (race, class, porn) but coming to all the conclusions that we expect—racism and classism are bad, and porn is bad when exploitive, but it sure is interesting and fun sometimes! The questions of what is specific to Canadian feminism, and of how Canadian feminism has challenged the unilateralist views of U.S. middle-class feminism get lost in the effort to be fair to every person and every viewpoint.

If you are planning to write a treatise on the failures of contemporary "feminism," than *Turbo Chicks* is a valuable resource. Otherwise, leave the book on the shelf. There are better books to read.

The reason that I've been so harshly critical of *Turbo Chicks* is not because I believe that we need a monolithic movement that tolerates no dissent and welcomes no new voices and ideas. What we need, desperately, is a vision of freedom for all women. We need to understand that INDIVIDUAL freedom is nothing without a common freedom for all of us. I am alter-

### Woman as Reason

nately distressed and enraged when women, young and old, equate freedom with the right to wear a baby-doll dress or spike heels—that our choice of apparel should be confused with our basic needs of food, safety, shelter, power over our bodies, and the right to do the work we choose! That the power to be who we are, to own our lives is subverted into the power to look good! Some feminists even refuse to lay out a political and philosophical vision for fear of being hegemonic. I invite all who read this to write to me, care of *News and Letters*, with your vision of freedom. Our movement is disoriented, but it does not have to stay that way.

### 'The Circle': a review

A woman born in Iran is born as a second-class citizen. The humiliation and deprivation of that status are shown in the appropriately titled film, *The Circle*, by Jafar Panahi, banned in Iran. It is based on episodes from the lives of several women. It starts with the alarm of a woman who has to face the unexpected birth of the wrong gendered grandchild. She says, "We were told it was to be a boy. My daughter's in-laws will ask for a divorce." The very first scene in the film succeeds in showing the absolute burden of womanhood in Iranian society, which also rings true to the condition of women living in other regions where patriarchy has an excessive stronghold.

Every single day of their lives, women in Iran are insulted verbally, physically and emotionally. They are threatened by the Islamic government and their guards and security forces, which promote and protect a gender-biased society. In this society, women have to take a great risk in order to gain a limited freedom. Women are not seen as human unless they have the appropriate and sanctioned relations with men.

The movie follows the dreams for freedom of a young woman who has just been released from prison. She tries to go back to her home, which she thinks of as a paradise where she will find freedom. She represents young women with all their dreams and hopes to be free. But all they see is injustice in a police society with brutal reactionary rules and regulations against Iranian people, especially women. Jafar Panahi tells the story of a woman's sacrifice and loss, depicting the innocence and rebellion that are embodied in her spirit. He shows several other women caught in the repetitive cycle of abuse which pulls their dignity to shreds.

Their own families, and not just the nameless, faceless society at large, victimize and abuse these women. They are prisoners of society—at home, at work, and in jail. The utter loneliness of being a woman is well-depicted by Jafar Panahi.

The strongest woman shown in *The Circle* was a prostitute. Confronted by the righteous police officer who apprehended her, she replies, "Will you feed my children?" Without begging, crying, or protesting, she is taken to the police station, where we encounter other women Panahi has introduced us to. Ironically, they are crouched on the floor in a circular room. Thus, Panahi shows us a few rotations of the inescapable circle of imprisonment for a woman in Iranian society.

—Ali Reza and Hawa Bibi

## Letter from woman in California prison

*Chowchilla, Cal.*—When you invited me to write to you, you said "thoughts develop by sharing them with others." I find it hard to share my thoughts and feelings about being here with others—even with those I am close to—because unless you have personally experienced this, it's hard to relate or understand. For me and other women, I know the most predominant feeling is the one of powerlessness or helplessness.

When you first get locked up, you are in a sense cutting your close ties with those on the outside, whether it be spouses, parents, children or friends. Once in here, you find out who does and who does not have your best interests in mind. (I'm speaking of the people with ties to our heart on the outside.) A lot of women lose their children to the system or to their relatives. Some even lose their emotional ties. You may once have had material possessions, a house, furniture, animals, keepsakes, but now you are powerless. And what of the closeness you once shared with spouses, siblings, parents, friends when their whole attitude to you changes. You are powerless insofar as the outside world is concerned.

In here, you have to learn to live with and get along with many women who come from many different backgrounds and cultures. You must learn to work out your differences, verbally or physically. You must learn to live for yourself and for leaving here.

And then we have the system, the correctional officers, the lieutenants, the captains and others. We live in rooms with eight women to a room. D-yard is mainly for drug offenders. There is no privacy here, your room is subject to search and seizure at any time. That means if you have an extra coat or any extra state clothes, they will be taken. If you happened to borrow a curling iron or hair dryer from someone, and it doesn't have your name on it, they take it.

We have one lieutenant here who tries to make everyone's life miserable on our yard. Surprise inspections, no smoking coming back from chow, no makeup allowed going to the yard. If any of the correctional officers have allowed the unit to become lax, he will make sure the strictest of rules are applied so everyone feels uncomfortable. You know that he is such a miserable person himself that his goal in life must be to make the women on D-yard miserable, too.

The most important and vital problem here is the medical help we receive. A doctor at Chowchilla women's prison was charged with sexually molesting two inmates during medical exams. He is, of course, denying the charges and has been put on paid administrative leave. But it's not only a case like this. It's the lack of an adequate medical staff and the ignorance they reveal.

Or maybe it's that they just don't care that women are not being cared for properly. It's not just little things. There are women in here with cancer, hepatitis, grand mal seizures, and other serious conditions who are simply not being given the proper medical attention. Their conditions are just left to drag on and on.

I'm going to try to get other women in here to write to you with their thoughts, too. Sharing them with others is difficult, but it is important to us to know that someone is listening.

### Women Worldwide

by Mary Jo Grey

After two years of hard work and fundraising, the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan and the Afghan Women's Mission have succeeded in reopening Malalai Hospital for Women and Children in Islamabad, Pakistan, an area with a large Afghan refugee population. The hospital had closed after ten years of operation. The facility will give women and children much needed access to quality health care in a part of the world where one of 12 women dies in childbirth. They are working to expand the hospital to again serve up to 400 patients a day.

—Information from Afghan Women's Mission newsletter

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama finally decided at the end of 2001 to cover prescription contraceptives and other forms of birth control for all 2.5 million members in its 28,000 employer-sponsored health care plans. Lawsuits have already forced Blue Cross in other states to begin such coverage. In the quote of the day from company spokesman Jim Brown, "Perhaps it should have been done sooner."

Unfortunately, the Utah Senate Health and Environment Committee has not even progressed that far. In February, they rejected bills that would have required employers to provide coverage for prescription contraceptives. Supporters of the legislation blame the rejection of the bills (for the sixth time!) on the low number of women in that state's legislature.

Lithuania's "gender ombudswoman" decided in January that a national law requiring women (but not men) to undergo gynecological exams before they could obtain a driver's license is discriminatory. For those who question why this should be required of anyone, some Lithuanian medical officials argued that the law is necessary because some gynecological diseases can cause "sudden pain and even temporary loss of consciousness."

## International Women's Day, 2002

### A Revolutionary Legacy: Past, Present and Future

#### From Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution, by Raya Dunayevskaya

"When [Clara] Zetkin proposed to the 1910 Second International Women's Conference that an International Women's Day be adopted, it was an act of solidarity with the organizing struggles of the American garment workers who had erupted in the 'Uprising of the 20,000' the year before."

#### From Women's Liberation and the Dialectics of Revolution: Reaching for the Future, by Raya Dunayevskaya

"There came, with the celebration of International Women's Day [1979], a mass outpouring of women bearing the banner, 'We made the revolution for freedom, and got unfreedom, which may very well have opened Chapter 2 of the Iranian Revolution.'"

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## Argentina's unemployed rise up

The spontaneous revolt of late December that brought down the president in the increasingly impoverished middle class played a role in it, but deeper roots lay among the unemployed.

The movement of unemployed workers in Argentina known as *los piqueteros* (picketers) has been ongoing for a decade. Unemployed Argentinians (who in some areas make up 60% of the population) have been forging new forms of struggle and raising questions that deserve to be listened to.

### 'PIQUETEROS' A NEW FORCE

Hundreds (or thousands) of *piquetes* have taken place just in the past few years; they've been continuous, massive, and widespread. These are highway closures, and the tactic is simple enough: the unemployed march in front of vehicles, burning tires and furniture, and bring everything to a screeching halt. The police are sent out to clear it, but the picketers stand up to the assault until the government is forced to discuss their demands.

Most Argentine media accounts trace the *piquetes*

or *cortes de ruta* (highway closures) back to 1996 or 1997. But the unemployment that drives them stems from 1991-1993, when the state-run oil company YPF went from 50,000 workers to 7,000 after it was sold to Spaniards. In 1992 the Aceros Zapla steel plant was sold to Americans (including Citicorp) and the workforce was cut from 5,000 to 700. In the small northern town of General Mosconi, where 90% of its 15,000 people worked for YPF, there was 60% unemployment by 1993. They've been in permanent rebellion there ever since.

In places where unemployment is highest, nearly the entire population participates. They define themselves by their lack of hierarchy. All decisions are made in daily assemblies, and everything is run communally. When the government is forced to negotiate, it's done right at the picket, for all to see and hear.

When jobs are won through these negotiations, they're distributed according to the needs of the poorest in the community and their involvement in the picket. Joint actions are carried out with the militant CTA (Central de Trabajadores Argentinos) and others, but all of the *piquetero* groups insist on maintaining autonomy from the unions and "revolutionary" parties.

Last June, at a national conference of the unemployed, the mention of Carlos Giuliani brought an immediate standing ovation; they consider Giuliani, killed by police while marching against the G8 meeting in Genoa, to be as one with their own martyrs who have died defending the pickets. A clear identification with the politics of the anti-globalization movement has been developing.

In an interview in February, Pepino Fernandez, a *piquetero* leader from February, spoke about the need to "return to the way it was before," i.e., to nationalize the industries that were privatized in the early 1990s under Menem. This is of course something everyone in Argentina talks about now.

### GLOBAL VIEW

But later Pepino went into a list of demands the General Mosconi picket is putting to the government, some that clearly mirror the issues brought out by the anti-globalization movement. For example: "For agriculture and ranching, reforestation has to be taken seriously." He put special emphasis on the pickets set up by indigenous peoples. And speaking about the work the pickets usually win from the government, which are essentially subsidized, low-paid public works jobs, he said: "We're not fighting for subsidies anymore, we want genuine work."

The thinking of the *piqueteros* has thus developed through these years of struggle. But while this militantly autonomous movement has taken root throughout the country, there is little recognition that a common idea drives them. In Pepino's words: "Everything is still divided, the movement hasn't united yet, we still go out only for our own individual battles." This is the contradiction the movement as a whole seems to be struggling with now.

—Mitch Werth

## Historic Oregon farm worker win



PCUN supporters at Norpac plant in Salem, Oregon press the boycott which ended in victory.

Farm workers in Oregon have reached an agreement that ends a ten-year dispute with a cooperative of growers. The Campaign for Labor Rights, a coordinating organization for solidarity with grassroots workers' struggles, has announced that Pineros y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste (PCUN) and NORPAC Foods, Inc. reached an agreement on Feb. 15 as a result of mediation. The agreement provides for a set of guidelines for relations between farm workers and growers in the state of Oregon.

PCUN publicized its dispute with NORPAC through a boycott of the company's products, many of which are supplied to university cafeterias. Student activists nationwide took up the boycott, and pressured their institutions to drop deals with NORPAC. The level of student activity was so intense that Sodexo, North America's largest provider of institutional food services, intervened with NORPAC to recommend that the company recognize the union.

In the statement released by the growers and the union, Ramon Ramirez, PCUN's president, said, "This is an historic accomplishment for our farm workers, who will now have clear and enforceable guidelines that provide them with an opportunity to elect PCUN to represent them."

—Kevin Michaels

## Work in chains

Oakland, Cal.—We hear from many prisoners how much they appreciate the opportunity to be productive, to make something, to be useful. We've heard stories from prisoners about going out on road clean-up crews while in jail and choosing to stay in 100-degree heat even without water, just to be out of the cells and doing something. We heard from a couple of women prisoners that their gardening jobs were the one thing that made their time a little more bearable. Making things grow let them see their activity become objective, in a real sense changing their world.

On the other hand, work in prison is an especially alienating activity. The actual work conditions are so punitive and vengeful that many jobs seem more like torture. For example, one woman prisoner was assigned kitchen duties. She had to carry big, heavy, hot pans of grits from the oven to the serving area. When she asked for potholders, she was given one.

When she pointed out that the pans were too big to carry in one hand, that she needed another one that would cover her forearms, she was written up for disobeying orders. She suffered burns on both arms.

The joy of work is that you feel useful helping somebody. Prisoners justifiably feel proud of working making eyeglasses or dentures. The glasses and dentures help other women prisoners see and eat. But even this, which should be experienced as a benefit from prisoners' own activity, gets spoiled by the prison authorities who put themselves in the middle.

Medical neglect is a part of women prisoners' lives. It also relates to the question of work in prison. One woman was told that the prison would not fill a cavity in her tooth. Instead, they would wait until her tooth rotted out and remove it. Once she had no more than seven teeth left, they would prescribe dentures. Thus even work to help other women prisoners becomes abuse because the women themselves don't determine when to provide this help.

As with every other wrong in society, prison magnifies the contradiction experienced in work. Work, especially in cooperation with others, is what most people want to contribute. Lack of control over what you actually do transforms work into a tool of oppression instead.

—Urszula Wislanka

## Modern workhouses

London—From history we know that the workhouse was an administrative means of killing off the poor and elderly. Are we any better with the warehousing of the elderly through the residential and nursing home care services?

This is an area that is little discussed, and the marginalization of ethnic minorities is ignored. One of the issues that is covered up is the 30,000 people sent to nursing homes, even though they warranted free health care under the National Health Service. This is both unfair and unlawful.

Add to this injustice the removal of psychiatric, social and rehabilitative services. Then they merely provide warehousing spaces for the young who have become physically disabled by car and work accidents. The same is true for head injury victims, stroke victims, the learning disabled, and among the fragile or demented elderly. What is going to happen?

—Patrick Cooper-Duffy

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## Workshop Talks

(Continued from page 1)

his inevitable "last days." He resorts to desperate measures by taking the responsibility for a cardiac surge, to get his son a new heart.

Organ donor groups expressed frustration that the film focuses on lack of insurance rather than organ availability. Yet a spokesman for one organ transplant center could not unequivocally deny that people ever fail to get on organ recipient lists because of lack of funds. What is conveyed accurately is the commodity nature of every aspect of our health care system.

### LIVES DEVALUED

John Q.'s co-worker complained, "I think the whole thing just sucks. What we have in this country is not family values but value, because they put a value on everything." It is that value which the hospital administrator had in mind when she reminded John Q., "There are 40 million Americans without health insurance, you're not the only one."

Later she added, "We can't concede to the demands of one hostage taker. That would set a bad example to the other 40 million." The majority of that 40 million are the working poor, too poor to afford insurance, yet not poor enough to qualify for governmental programs like Medicaid. Another worker in the movie pointed out, "This is a two-tier system. They have modern surgery for the wealthy. And they have sucker surgery for us."

Health care workers increasingly feel the pressure of being between the HMO patient with legitimate anger and the dictates of the HMO money managers. The HMOs know that the employers' money managers are their real customers. HMOs made record profits, while tens of thousands of patients and health care workers have been permanently injured by cost-cutting measures. HMOs must abide by the dictate of capital, if they are to remain players in the market. They do this by holding hospitals as well as patients and workers hostage to this despotism on a daily basis.

So to the story of John Q. represents a very real hostage situation which workers in the middle feel everyday, and as a harbinger of more desperate crisis situations to come. In the hospital where I work, as with many hospitals across the country, the ER (open 24 hours a day) is a place of last resort for many desperate people without means.

### LASHING OUT IN DESPERATION

As with John Q., consumed by their own personal desperation and misery, they may be prone to lashing out. According to the International Association for Health Care Security and Safety, 285 hospitals surveyed in 1999 reported 213 assaults involving some type of weapon, and 1,595 other assaults.

In my own hospital, many nurses over the years have reported assaults by their patients, some angered by real or perceived neglect, some by old patients suffering from dementia. Many nurses and aides have gone on disability from these attacks. We have had fist fights, knifings as well as gun incidents in our ER.

Management recently decided to install a metal detector at the ER front entrance. And an HMO spokesman complained that Hollywood's exaggerated portrayal of John Q. may put us in a bad light and discourage copycat violence. The callousness in those statements are glaring when you consider that from our own concrete experiences, it is not John Q.'s violence that we should worry about, but the real and immediate threats we are already facing daily in the workplace.

One spokesman even said there were no 100% guarantees for safety anywhere, so the best you could do was minimize your risks. When capitalists talk about minimizing their risks, they mean financial risks. Many have pointed out the inhuman and immoral nature of runaway greed of the HMO money managers. But even without greed, it is the very commodity nature of all aspects of our society that makes us all hostages.

From the Writings of Raya Dunayevskaya  
MARXIST-HUMANIST ARCHIVES

### Editor's Note

The anti-colonial revolutions in Africa, during the decades following World War II, inspired a return to the humanism of Marx inside revolutionary movements. Among the leaders of nascent independence movements who were discussing Marxist humanism was Leopold Sedar Senghor of Senegal. The recent death of Senghor is the occasion for *News & Letters* reprinting two critical writings by Raya Dunayevskaya. One is an Appendix to the 1961 edition of her *Nationalism, Communism, Marxist-Humanism and the Afro-Asian Revolutions*. In it she critically discusses Senghor's 1959 book *African Socialism*. The other is her 1960 letter to Senghor, which discusses other themes.

## 'The New Humanism: African Socialism'

[1961]

At a time when the weary American intellectual has been so brain-washed both by the Cold War and the threat of nuclear war between America and Russia, that he declaims, "The End of Ideology," (1) the world that is fighting for its freedom at the cost of its very life—Africa—is charged with the dynamism of ideas. As Leopold Sedar Senghor put it in his June 1959 report for the Constitutive Congress of his Party of African Federation:

A nation that refuses to keep its rendezvous with history, that does not believe itself to be the bearer of a unique message—that nation is finished, ready to be placed in a museum. The Negro African is not finished even before he gets started. Let him speak; above all, let him act. Let him bring like a leaven, his message to the world in order to help build a universal civilization. (2)

At a time when the African revolutions are redrawing the map of the world, the arrogance of white civilization shows itself not only in the ruling class but amongst many Western socialists. Thus Sidney Lens writes as if the Africans' theoretical contributions are comprised of Tom Mboya's "one man, one vote." (3) Leaving aside for the moment that "one man, one vote" discloses nothing short of a revolution against white domination that parades as "democratic civilization," these intellectuals have a long way to go before they equal the African's intellectual grasp, not to mention his courage, daring, and totality of devotion to the struggle for freedom.

In his speech Senghor said: "Let us recapitulate Marx's positive contributions. They are: the philosophy of humanism, economic theory, dialectical method." Senghor spoke with the simplicity that comes from a profound understanding both that socialism is humanist and that socialism is a method. The fact that he aims to combine Marxism with utopian socialism as well as with religion in order to create what he calls an "open socialism" or an "African type of socialism" is not without subjective motivations. But this does not obscure the fact that he wishes the humanism of Marx to be the theoretical foundation for a triple synthesis of: 1) traditional African civilization, 2) the results of the encounter of this civilization with colonialism and French civilization, and 3) the economic resources and potentialities of Africa and their necessarily interdependent relationship with the economies of the industrially advanced countries.

So powerful and polarizing a force is the Marxist theory of liberation that throughout the Middle East, the Orient and Africa, that there are attempts by various religions, Buddhism, Christianity and Mohammedanism, to find a bridge to it, even as there is a similar attempt on the part of Communist China and Russia. It is not here maintained that opportunism like that also characterizes the African intellectual, rather it seems to me that part of their critique of Marxism is due to the realities of present-day Africa which did not form (and could not have formed) part of Marx's thought. Other parts of Senghor's critique of Marxism, especially on present-day economics are, however, either wrong or, as in the case of religion, overly subtle. "The atheism of Marx," writes Senghor "can be considered a reaction of Christian origin against the historical deviation of Christianity."

Oppression in Africa has always worn a white face. This weighs so heavily on Africans that they are liable to react against any white faces, even that of the worker. Thus Senghor claims that the standard of living of the European masses rose "only at the expense of the standard of living of the masses in Asia and Africa," and that, therefore, the European proletariat "has never really—I mean effectively opposed it" (my emphasis—R.D.). The very fact that Senghor must himself interpret "really" as "effectively" shows an awareness of proletarian struggles and revolutions. It is certainly too easy today to use that as an excuse to appeal, not to the proletariat of advanced countries, but to the authorities. It is certainly too high a price to pay when it entails an apology for De Gaulle who is

exploiting not only the white proletariat but the North African (Algerian) revolutionaries. The very fact that on all the concrete questions relating to Africa's relationship to De Gaulle's France, Senghor has had to appear as an apologist for De Gaulle, discloses the tragedy of the underdeveloped countries fighting for freedom in an automated nuclear age.

On the other hand, Sekou Touré of Guinea, where the people had dared to say "No" to remaining part of the French Community, is much bolder in his concepts:

In the realm of thought, man can claim to be the brain of the world, but on the con-

crete level of real life, where any occurrence will affect both the physical and spiritual being, the world is always the brain of man. Because it is in the world that all the thinking forces can be found, the dynamic forces of development and perfection, it is there too that the fusion of energy takes place and where the true quantity of the intellectual capacity of man can be found. So who could claim to exclude any one school of thought, any one kind of thought, or any one human family without by so doing excluding himself to some extent from the total society of man?...

"The science resulting from all human knowledge has no nationality. The ridiculous disputes about the origin of such and such a discovery do not interest us since they add nothing to the value of the discovery. It can therefore be said that African unity offers the world a new humanism essentially founded on the universal solidarity and co-operation between people without any racial and cultural antagonism and without narrow egoism and privilege. This is above and beyond the problem of West Africa and as far removed from the quarrels which divide the highly developed countries as are the conditions and aspirations of the African people." (4)

We cannot know in which direction these African leaders will turn in the critical 1960s. We do know that their serious concern with the theoretical foundations for the building of a new society has no parallel in the intellectual leaders of "the West." Our epoch is a "birth-time of history" (5) and the contribution of the Africans to thought as well as to revolutions is an integral part of the reconstruction of society on new beginnings.

— R. D.

## Letter of May 15, 1960

Dear Leopold Sedar Senghor: Your June 1959 Report to the Constitutive Congress of the Party of African Federation, published in America as *African Socialism*, has just been made available to me. Because I was interested in giving it as wide a circulation as possible I have reviewed it for *News & Letters*, which is enclosed herewith (6). You will note that my critique centers around the positive aspects, especially on Marxism as a humanist philosophy and dialectic method, and mutes my political differences with you on De Gaulle's France or the present course of the African Revolutions.

Because the African Revolutions are the present creative force for the reconstruction of society on totally new, truly human beginnings, the destiny of the American, indeed the world's proletariat, Black and white, is indissolubly tied with the fate of the Africans. The same, it seems to me, is true in reverse. It is this which impels me to write to you.

First, if I may, I would like to call to your attention my book, *Marxism and Freedom*, which had, as its dual objective, the re-establishment of Marxism in its original form of Humanism as well as the disclosure of the American roots of Marxism. In addition to emphasizing—as you have done so brilliantly in your speech—that Marx's early philosophical works are indispensable to a comprehension of his *Capital*, I have shown that the struggle for the eight-hour day following the Civil War in the U.S. led Marx to change the entire structure of his book. At the same time I was interested in tracing through the very concept of theory for it is the warp of woof of the relationship of intellectual to worker which characterizes Marxism as the theory and practice of liberation. That this relationship of intellectual to worker also characterized the relations of white Abolitionists to the runaway Negro slaves long before the birth of Bolshevism illuminated, for me, today's need for a New Humanism and a new relationship of intellectual to worker.

Indeed, the problem of the organizational relationship of intellectual to worker (and here I include the peasantry) gains a much greater urgency in our epoch when the economically underdeveloped coun-

tries face the question, which way to industrialization, at the very moment in history when the whole capitalist world is divided into but two power blocs, nuclearly armed—American and Russia—fighting for world domination, which may very well spell destruction of civilization as we have known it. I followed up *Marxism and Freedom* with a special, brief pamphlet, *Nationalism, Communism, Marxist-Humanism and the Afro-Asian Revolutions*, enclosed herewith.

Writing from afar, however, I could not but write "coldly." I felt that a generalized statement was nevertheless needed to break theoretical ground where neither the founder of Marxism nor its extender (Lenin) could have been. Our generation must hew out its own path. Ever since 1939 when I broke with Trotsky (whose secretary I had been), I have been acutely aware of the theoretical void in Marxism since the death of Lenin. I do not agree that Mao is the one who has extended Marxism. His realism on the peasant question was to end as perversely as Stalin's on the proletariat. Nor do I agree that the complex problems of Africa in the present state of world technology compel appeals to the established authorities only rather than to the proletariat...

For your convenience I am enclosing one of my articles which was recently translated into French in *Arguments*.

— Raya Dunayevskaya



1959  
edition

### NOTES

1. Daniel Bell, *The End of Ideology*, New York, 1960.
2. Leopold Sedar Senghor, *African Socialism*, American Society of African Culture, New York, 1959.
3. Sidney Lens, "The Revolution in Africa," *Liberation*, January, February, and March 1960.
4. Sekou Toure's speeches are from those excerpted by Abdullaye Diop in his "Africa's Path In History." See *Africa South*, April-June 1960, Capetown.
5. "A birth-time and a period of transition", G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Mind* [Baillie ed., p. 75; Miller ed., p. 6].
6. *The Raya Dunayevskaya Collection*, 6660.

## Raya Dunayevskaya on the African revolutions

— Some writings —

- *Nationalism, Communism, Marxist Humanism and the Afro-Asian Revolutions* (1959, 1961, 1984)—British, Japanese, and Iranian youth have reprinted this pamphlet. The author's "New Introduction" in 1984 includes a discussion on Marx's last writings which "touch on the problematic of our day—the Third World." Available from *News & Letters*.
- Articles, correspondence, and lectures on West Africa, before and after her trip there in 1962, can be found in *The Raya Dunayevskaya Collection: Marxist-Humanism: A Half-Century of Its World Development* (including but not limited to 3184-3250 and 9573-9677).
- "The African Revolutions and the World Economy," Chapter 7 of *Philosophy and Revolution, from Hegel to Sartre and from Marx to Mao* (1973, 1982, 1989). Sections are: A. "Neocolonialism and the Totality of the World Crisis" and B. "New Human Relations of Tragedies like Biafra?"
- Extensive preparatory notes for *Philosophy and Revolution* (12939-13008) as well as correspondence are in the *The Supplement to the Raya Dunayevskaya Collection*.

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Raya Dunayevskaya

Chairwoman, National Editorial Board (1955-1987)

Charles Denby

Editor (1955-1983)

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759-C

In celebration of Women's History Month

# Marxist-Humanism: the biography of an idea

This essay is adapted from *Women Building Chicago: A Biographical Dictionary*. We publish it in celebration of Women's History Month, 2002.

by Terry Moon

**R**aya Dunayevskaya was a revolutionary thinker and activist who developed an original philosophy, Marxist-Humanism. Throughout her life she searched for paths to liberation, paths she saw in the struggles of women, African Americans, youth, and labor.

**Women Building Chicago 1790-1990: a biographical dictionary.** Rima Lunin Schultz and Adele Hast, editors. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001.

Adrienne Rich called her a "major thinker in the history of Marxism and of women's liberation—one of the longest continuously active woman revolutionaries of the twentieth century...A core theme of [Dunayevskaya's] writing... [was] the inseparability of experience and revolutionary thinking, the falseness of the opposition between 'philosophy' and 'actuality'" (Foreword to *Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution*).

Dunayevskaya proposed that the radical movement return to the works of Karl Marx and study his roots in the philosophy of G.W.F. Hegel; and she rejected the thinking, in both the U.S. and Soviet Union, that identified "Marxism, a theory of liberation, with its opposite, Communism, the theory and practice of enslavement" (*Marxism and Freedom*).

As Douglas Kellner put it in the *Encyclopedia of the American Left*, she "attempted to realize the unity of theory and practice, which she took to be the core of revolutionary Marxism."

## FROM UKRAINE TO BLACK CHICAGO

Raya Osipovna Dunayevskaya was born on May Day of 1910 in Ukraine, then part of tsarist Russia, in the town of Yariishev near the Romanian border. The experience that set her on the path of revolutionary philosophy and activism was the Russian Revolution of 1917 and the ensuing civil war, which she witnessed as a young girl.

During these years she saw the destruction of her village and the rapes and beheading of townspeople by counter-revolutionary troops retreating from the Bolsheviks. That the Bolsheviks were welcomed as liberators shaped her outlook and actions when the family settled in Chicago in 1922, after fleeing the famine in Russia the year before.

Although Dunayevskaya was too young at the time to be a Communist Party (CP) member, she soon joined the communist youth organization in Chicago. Angered by anti-Semitism, injustice, and poverty, she felt such revulsion at reciting the pledge of allegiance at school that at age 13 she contributed her own version to the CP youth journal: "One aim throughout our life/Freedom to the working class!" A year later, she led a student strike at Cregier Elementary School against anti-Semitism and corporal punishment.

Because Dunayevskaya viewed her childhood in Russia and Chicago as the crucible for a radical life, it becomes parts of the biography of the idea of freedom. As she put it in 1978, "It isn't personal whatsoever! If you live when an idea is born, it doesn't make any difference where you are: that becomes the next stage of the development of humanity."

Her activities in this period were unusual: as a teenage white woman she had determined to immerse herself in revolutionary work with African Americans. She carved out a place for herself, working with the *Negro Champion*, the newspaper of the American Negro Labor Congress, edited by Lovett Fort-Whiteman. The *Negro Champion* office was located in the heart of Chicago's Black Metropolis. She wrote book reviews that were published widely in African American newspapers and journals. When she graduated from Medill High School in 1928, her date with an African American classmate created a protest that threatened to cancel the scheduled prom.

Dunayevskaya began to question the CP's policies and actions after the expulsion of Leon Trotsky from the party in 1927. When she suggested that her local comrades hear Trotsky's response to his expulsion, she was thrown down a flight of stairs and kicked out of the Young Workers League. She then began a revolutionary sojourn that took her from New York City to Los Angeles. Moving to Boston in 1929, she met Antoinette Bucholz Konikow, a birth control advocate who spoke out for legal abortion and had formed a group of independent Trotskyists—almost all women—who had been thrown out of the CP.

Back in New York, she became secretary to James P. Cannon, who was one of the founders of the Socialist Workers Party in 1938. Dunayevskaya did not stay with Cannon very long but traveled to workers' strikes at various sites. She hitchhiked across the country in 1934, a year during which labor strikes were characterized by intense class conflict.

When she arrived in San Francisco, the general strike of July 16-19, 1934, had begun. More than 100,000 workers in San Francisco and Alameda Counties stopped work in support of longshoremen and sea-

men who had gone on strike along the entire West Coast. Dunayevskaya was shot at by police during a street battle that was part of the widespread police and vigilante violence. The next year she was in Los Angeles, where she taught Karl Marx's *Capital* and was an organizer for the Spartacus Youth League. By 1936, she moved to Washington, D.C., where she worked with Ralph Bunche on the Washington Committee to Aid Agricultural Workers.

In 1937, hearing that Leon Trotsky needed a Russian language secretary, Dunayevskaya left for Mexico without obtaining permission from the U.S. branch of the Trotskyist party. Trotsky was in exile in Mexico, trying to escape assassination by Stalin, who was methodically jailing and executing his past revolutionary comrades. Dunayevskaya worked with Trotsky in Coyoacan, Mexico, during the years when Stalin waged the infamous Moscow trials. She helped Trotsky respond to the trials' fantastic slanders against him.

In 1939 she broke with Trotsky over his insistence that Russia was still a "workers' state" even after Stalin's August 1939 pact with Hitler. The 29-year old Dunayevskaya found herself disagreeing with Trotsky, the man she considered the greatest living revolutionary. She lost her power of speech for two days.

## THE MOVEMENT FROM THEORY

Then began what she later asserted was "my real development." The realization of Trotsky's error, a mistake that limited the total revolutionary change that Dunayevskaya envisioned, forced her to immerse herself in economics, revolutionary theory, and philosophy, a development that transformed what Marxism would come to mean for her.

Driven to understand the true nature of the Soviet Union, she began a rigorous study, utilizing Russian economic statistics, Marx's *Capital*, and his then little-known *Economic-Philosophic Manuscripts* (1844). In 1941, she wrote "The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics Is a Capitalist Society."

She soon met C.L.R. James, who had also written a position paper on state-capitalism. Dunayevskaya and James formed the State-Capitalist Tendency within the Workers Party; Dunayevskaya was active in the Harlem, New York, branch of the party.

By 1944 Dunayevskaya's critique of Russian theoreticians, "A New Revision of Marxian Economics," published in the *American Economic Review*, reached beyond the publications of the Left and was reported on the front page of *The New York Times*. She criticized Russian theoreticians who had declared that the law of value, which Marx said was a defining feature of capitalism, operated under socialism. (Will Lissner discussed her article in "Soviet Economics Stirs Debate Here" in *The New York Times*, October 1, 1944).

Moving to Pittsburgh in the late 1940s, she became active in the coal miners' general strike of 1949-50 in West Virginia. At the same time she was translating Lenin's "Abstract of Hegel's *Science of Logic*" and working on a book on state-capitalism.

Her activity and studies in the Hegelian-Marxian dialectic culminated in a series of "Letters on Hegel's Absolutes," written in the spring of 1953—the period following Stalin's death. Dunayevskaya referred to these letters—in which she discerned "a dual movement in [Hegel's] Absolute Idea, from practice and from theory"—as a determinant for her subsequent development of Marxist-Humanism. From then on, Dunayevskaya never separated activism from the deepest delving into philosophy.

In the midst of cold war politics in the 1950s, C.L.R.

James was expelled from the U. S. for passport violations; he moved back to England after breaking up the State-Capitalist Tendency, whose Correspondence Committees had been listed as subversive by the U.S. Attorney General in 1954. Immediately after the dissolution, in 1955, Dunayevskaya, together with most of the worker members of the Correspondence Committees, formed News and Letters Committees as a "unique combination of workers and intellectuals."

In 1958, Dunayevskaya published her first book, *Marxism and Freedom, from 1776 until Today*, with an introduction by Marxist philosopher Herbert Marcuse. It aimed "to re-establish Marxism in its original form, which Marx called 'a thoroughgoing Naturalism, or Humanism'" and included her translations of Lenin's *Philosophic Notebooks* (1914) and two of Marx's 1844 *Economic-Philosophic Manuscripts*, the first time those essays were published in English.

Dunayevskaya worked with an array of U.S. and international movements throughout the 1960s, traveling to Europe, Africa, Hong Kong, and Japan. In 1969, she made the first donation of her writings to the Wayne State University Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, believing one could learn as much from the process of development of theory as from the result. Her manuscript collection included voluminous correspondence with such Left theoreticians as Herbert Marcuse; Erich Fromm; Iring Fetscher and Maximilien Rubel; the Scottish worker Harry McShane; the African leaders Leopold Senghor and Nnamdi Azikiwe; and a host of women writers, including Natalia Trotsky; Sheila Rowbotham; the Portuguese revolutionaries Maria Barreno and Isabel do Carmo; and Americans Meridel LeSueur and Adrienne Rich.

The crises of the 1960s revolutionary movements moved Dunayevskaya to work on a book that would clarify revolution theoretically: *Philosophy and Revolution: From Hegel to Sartre and from Marx to Mao* (1973). In her opinion, the failure to make a revolution in 1968 revealed the limitation of social movements whose practice is not grounded in philosophy. "Now the one thing we learned from the turbulent 1960s was this: without a philosophy of revolution, near revolutions abort! It is a fact that because those near-revolutions had ended so disastrously, in particular France 1968, that the New Left finally ended their delusion that 'theory can be picked up en route' and a deeper look into Marx's philosophy of revolution was begun by some."

## MARXISM AND WOMEN'S LIBERATION

The women's liberation movement was not exempt from these difficulties, but rather than castigating it as a diversion from revolution, as most of the Left initially did, Dunayevskaya sought to make explicit its revolutionary character.

She wrote in her third book, *Rosa Luxemburg, and Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution* (1982), that the uniqueness of the women's liberation movement is that "not only did it come out of the left but it was directed against it, and not from the Right, but from within the Left itself." Dunayevskaya argued that the transformation of the relationship between women and men was fundamental to a Marxist concept of a new society.

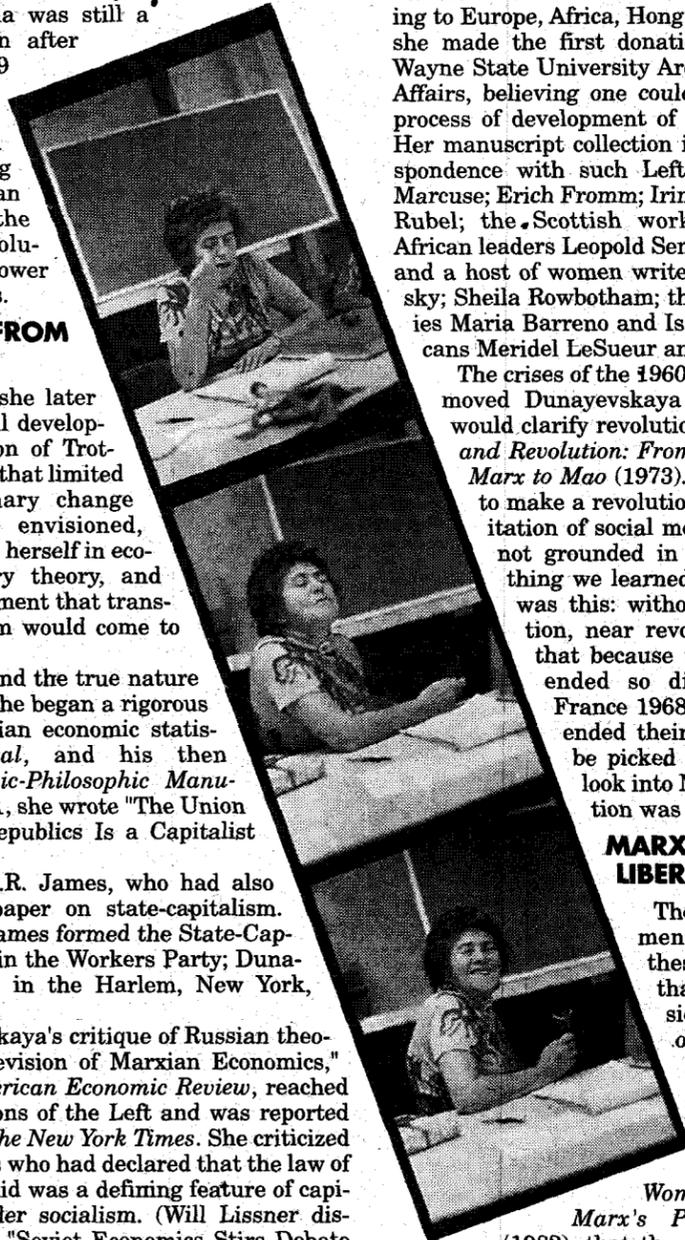
Charles Denby, the Black worker-editor of *News & Letters*, died in 1983. The next year the headquarters of News and Letters Committees moved to Chicago. Dunayevskaya there continued to write a monthly column for *News & Letters* and articles and reviews for other publications.

She published her fourth book, *Women's Liberation and the Dialectics of Revolution: Reaching for the Future* (1985), a collection of essays written over a 35-year period, which sought to articulate "Marxist-Humanist views over the entire post-World War II world in a way that will...confront unfinished revolutions."

Her last years were dominated by studies for a book with the working title, "Dialectics of Organization and Philosophy: The 'Party' and Forms of Organization Born out of Spontaneity."

Dunayevskaya died on June 9, 1987. She was buried in Forest Home Cemetery, Forest Park, Illinois, with her grave facing the monument commemorating the revolutionaries who were falsely convicted in August 1886 of throwing a bomb in Chicago's Haymarket Square on May 4, 1886.

Raya Dunayevskaya lived freely when women were not free and was fierce in her determination to transform a world she viewed as brutally inhuman into one where everyone could experience self-development and freedom. Since her death, all her books have been republished by university presses and translated in numerous countries. A collection of her philosophic writings, *The Power of Negativity*, has just been published by Lexington Books.



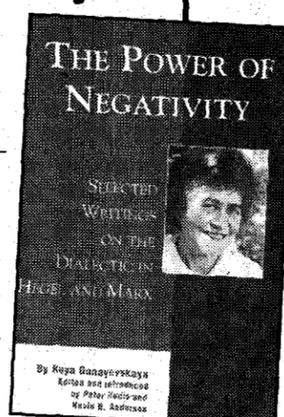
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On the Dialectic in  
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To order, see page 7



## FIGHTING U.S.'S NEW WORLD ORDER

Because Marxist-Humanism has from its beginnings been free from even a vestige of Stalinism, it was able to critique U.S. imperialism during the Cold War without any sort of rationalization for the Stalinist counter-revolution that occurred within the revolution. It was able to project an alternative vision of new forms of human social relations without tripping into the false dilemma of the bipolar world that vanished in 1991.

Yet in the decade since, the Left has continued to be hamstrung by a binary logic. Anti-imperialists and prominent voices in the anti-globalization movement somehow feel compelled to dismiss serious criticisms of a Milosevic, Hussein, or in the most bizarre example, even a Taliban militia. They seem unable to achieve a higher viewpoint of what to be for and not only against.

The editorial "After Afghanistan, What?" (January-February 2002 *N&L*) can foresee how escalating the "war" by sustaining a permanent war economy and the national security state that goes along with it, will create more terror and terrorists, the opposite of the Bush administration's supposed intentions. We don't need to apologize for the deprivations of Islamic fundamentalism any more than for Christian fundamentalism in order to criticize the new world order of U.S.-dominated global capitalism.

Teacher  
Washington

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The lead article in the January-February issue did a fine job describing the new perils facing immigrants under the oppressive measures taken by the Bush administration under the guise of "fighting terrorism." However, I think the report would have been strengthened by specific reference to the "Patriot's Bill" rammed through Congress that threw out many of the legal rights immigrants had before the September attacks against the World Trade Center and Pentagon.

Old Radical  
Detroit

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Fully 212 years of the orderly constitutional transfer of power were trashed in the "coup by gavel" that put in power the regime we now have in the White House. Its first major fascist measure was the "USA Patriot Act of 2001" which is 342 pages long and is in reality a refurbished version of the "Protective Custody Law" of Nazi Germany, the law that started the concentration camps. We already have an occupied concentration camp in Guantanamo Bay. But other unoccupied ones exist at undisclosed locations since the Reagan administration, ready to confine people in case of "massive civil unrest."

Worried  
Texas

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The large number of protesters at the World Economic Forum who turned out despite a huge police force, barricaded streets, helicopters and media attacks was encouraging. I believe opposition will continue to grow as the repression deepens. I see strikes and threats of strike already, from airline workers to teachers in Detroit. Capitalism's gravediggers are alive and kicking.

Ready to dig  
Detroit

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I usually enjoy watching the Olympics, but the jingoism this year was just too much. When commentator Bob Costas

referred to the U.S. as the "homeland," it reminded me of Hitler and I almost threw up.

No watching  
Memphis

## KING'S LEGACY

John Alan's column in the last issue raised the provocative question of who will carry on Martin Luther King's legacy. The idea of freedom doesn't belong to any specific time or place. Anyone can borrow from anyone freely. The ideas of the Civil Rights Movement were powerful beyond the U.S. At the time of the Montgomery Bus Boycott there was also the Hungarian Revolution. A continuity appeared decades later in Tiananmen Square when the Chinese students sang "We shall overcome." The universality of the idea is there. The question of the struggle for freedom in our everyday lives is what the fetish of "violence vs. non-violence" overlays.

Asian worker  
California

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John Alan's column made me think of the many liberation theologians who try to make a relation between religion and theology. Many of the most active women in prison are very religious, trying to draw strength from their beliefs, but it can't stop there. Marx said religion is the opiate of the masses, but he also called it the soul of the soulless world and distinguished between the religion of the oppressed and the oppressor. The difference between a theologian who is revolutionary and one who's not, is seen in whether you're told to wait for your reward in heaven or to try to realize it on earth.

Support activist  
Chicago



'LIFE  
AND  
DEBT':  
A  
REVIEW

"Life and Debt" is a movie about the economic conditions affecting present-day Jamaicans and how the World Trade Organization and the IMF loans drive the country deeper into debt and intensify the repression of the workers. Imported powdered milk undersells local milk producers and drives them out of business. England stops buying bananas under pressure from Western banana corporations. Local Black women lose their jobs in the sweatshop when they protest their conditions and contractors respond by importing busloads of Chinese women laborers.

The movie emphasizes the contrast between the affluence of Western white tourists and their insulation from and ignorance of the massive poverty of the Black Jamaicans. What the movie doesn't show is that, though the local Jamaican companies producing cattle, bananas, milk, coffee, etc. were profitable even after the British colonizers left in 1947, the people weren't freed from poverty. Nothing fundamental changed in the system of production. Workers were still doing the physical labor under the rules of the bosses who controlled the productive process. The movie ended with a few local women growing their own food on a small plot of land.

Basho  
Los Angeles

## ENRONIZING THE U.S.

The *San Francisco Chronicle* recently juxtaposed pictures of the Enron officials taking the fifth and the cases of hundreds of people locked up for 25 years to life for shoplifting (under the three strikes law). It showed the gulag of the justice system out to discipline labor. There is an army of people focusing on bringing labor under the heel of capital while Enron is presented as "just" a financial market scandal. The mechanism of the state as an extension

# READERS' VIEWS

of capitalism recognizes freedom only for capital.

R.B.  
California

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Sen. Trent Lott responded to questions concerning Cheney's refusal to disclose information about the Energy Taskforce meetings with Enron executives by claiming, "If we require these kinds of meetings to be open, that would put a chilling effect on input by industry." It put new meaning to what Sen. Daschle introduced into the American lexicon when he said he would "not allow the Bush administration to enronize the U.S. economy." Daschle was only referring to the tendency to make economic projections based on mirages. But increasingly to "enronize" is beginning to signify a shadow government "behind closed doors," based on deception and secrecy and flouting U.S. legal and constitutional requirements.

Observer  
California



A NEW  
SLAVE  
TRADE?

Moving prisoners around at the drop of a hat as prisons in the U.S. do is tantamount to the slave trade. That is something that began with the process of private prisons. Most disturbing of all is that there seems no rhyme or reason behind how the decisions are made of who moves and who is allowed to remain. Since 1983 I have been moved to 11 different facilities in three different states. The longest I have been in any facility has been five, four and three years. The rest of the time I have spent anywhere from a year to a month and a half somewhere before being moved again.

Prisoner on the move  
Minnesota (for now)

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I have been looking everywhere, including surfing the internet, looking for "jobs for felons" but there is nothing. Nothing, NOTHING. I know that God is supposed to be a forgiving God but where are the jobs, so you can move on with your life?

Unemployed felon  
Missouri

## THE HOMELESS

The article on the homeless youth in the last issue counters statements in a PBS series on the brain. They examined the "teenage brain" and "scientifically" concluded that young people are physically incapable of making mature judgments. But *N&L* showed these are very capable individuals who care very much about their lives.

Not homeless  
Illinois

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I happily received a copy of *N&L* that was distributed at a meeting in Berkeley and had to tell you how much appreciated reading the article by Sonia Bergonzi about the homeless youth holding a vigil in Chicago. I am a disabled 54-year-old woman living at poverty level and am a survivor of the kind of sexual exploitation Sonia wrote about. That article made me feel more sane.

New supporter  
California

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I cannot forget the article I read in the *Los Angeles Times*, reporting that the rate of homelessness had shot up 80% during the past year. What was unforgettable was the story it told of a 51-year-old woman who was single, lived alone, and for the last five years had cleaned rooms in a downtown Cleveland hotel. She had worked her way up to earning \$8 an hour plus benefits until

the hotel's business collapsed after September 11, and she was laid off. To buy groceries she had sold all the belongings she could but had not been able to pay her rent after November. When she admitted in court she could still not pay it, the magistrate gave her ten days to vacate the premises. The article described her eyes filling with tears as she left the courtroom saying, "I'm going to have to get a lot of quarters because I'll have to call a lot of shelters." What makes the story unforgettable is the "statistic" that says this kind of story has "shot up 80% during the past year."

No Statistician  
Los Angeles

## SEGREGATION IN 2002

The *Detroit News* recently ran a series on segregation and found that both Blacks and whites are "comfortable" with segregation. However, on a local TV talk show, Dr. Shirley Stancato, Director of New Detroit, a non-profit founded after the 1967 rebellion, said that wrong questions had been asked. She said people might agree with a statement such as "I am comfortable where I live, or in my house," but what if they were asked, "Are you comfortable with the choices you have about where you can live?" You have to dig below the surface to get to real answers.

S. Van Gelder  
Detroit



HEGEL  
AND THE  
DIALECTIC

The "In Memoriam to Wang Ruoshui" (*N&L*, January-February 2002) says he got excited about Raya Dunayevskaya's critique of Lenin's comment that Hegel's "Absolute Idea" equaled "Objective Truth." Wang's own critique of Lenin was that Lenin only got as far as objectivity but not the unity of subjectivity and objectivity. In other words, Lenin stopped at the identity of opposites as the dialectic principle. But the real problem today is how to transcend opposites that are identical. Dunayevskaya's view of the *Phenomenology* points to just that. Nobody else thought to say that Hegel's Preface to that work is a continuation of his chapter on Absolute Knowledge or that an actively engaged philosophy can make the difference between the long night and the breaking of the dawn, because that is what the future needs.

People are drawn to different aspects of the dialectic. Marcuse, for example, was also drawn to the identity of opposites. But the departure for our age is not that, but seeing absolute negativity as new beginning.

Marxist-Humanist  
California

## FREE SPEECH VICTORY

Readers of *N&L* should know about a victory for pluralism and free speech which was won when the Union for Radical Political Economics (URPE) retracted a false charge made against Andrew Kliman and lifted a publishing ban imposed on him. URPE had falsely charged that Kliman violated professional ethics by submitting a paper to another journal while it was still under review by them and banned all further articles authored by him.

In its retraction (see [www.urpe.org/rrpehome.html](http://www.urpe.org/rrpehome.html)) URPE accepts that the paper was no longer under review when it was submitted elsewhere. Although the fundamental issue of pluralism remains unresolved, the retraction removes a decisive obstacle to genuine scholarly debate around the substantive question of Marx's Value Theory which has been raised by Kliman.

Alan Freeman  
New York

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**FOR WOMEN'S LIBERATION, MARCH 2002**

An enthusiastic overflow crowd joined an array of talented local musicians to shout "you are not alone" to the video camera at the conclusion of an inspiring benefit concert for Revolutionary Association for the Women of Afghanistan (RAWA) organized by Detroit-area composer/musician Mark Gottlieb. The music was punctuated by short readings and commentary about the history and struggles of RAWA. In a concert with no low points, the high point was a string quartet composed by Gottlieb which was played to a reading of "I'll Never Return," a poem written by RAWA founder Meena before she was assassinated by Islamic fundamentalists at the age of 30 in 1987. Mark told the audience that he had known of RAWA and had intended to send a donation but never got around to it. After September 11 he saw a film in which fundamentalist men were beating the faces of Afghan women protesters "and smiling, they liked it." That was when he had decided to organize the benefit concert. Anyone interested in more information can visit [www.gott.musik.com](http://www.gott.musik.com).

**Women's Liberationist Detroit**

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Yael Dean, as the speaker who opened a "Women Who Shook the Jewish World" series in Northern California, had been asked to discuss the status of women in Israel. That she did, but not without spending at least half of her talk railing against the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza.

She is a Labor Knesset member whose views put her at the extreme left of her party. She insisted that you cannot believe in the concept of a "Greater Israel" and be a feminist at the same time, that you cannot have a double standard when it comes to basic human

rights. The audience was quietly receptive.

**Women's Liberationist California**

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A full week after the letter from the soldiers who refused to serve in the occupied territories was published, their act was still all over the media in Israel. An incredible one-third of Israelis expressed support and several support groups have sprung up. One is by disabled army veterans. Another is by the wives of reserve soldiers who are circulating a petition that says in part, "We are not willing to be pawns of a government of occupation and oppression, which corrupts the values of our loved ones and our nation...while our families pay the price."

At the same time, vigils of Women in Black and others are growing all over Israel. There are now 18 regular anti-occupation vigils throughout Israel, about half of them Women in Black.

**Gila Svirsky Jerusalem**

**FIGHTING AN ATTACK ON FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION**

Marxist.com was the victim of a deliberate act of politically motivated aggression when our web server was hacked into by unidentified individuals in January with the clear intention of destroying our site. As a result of the sabotage a number of web sites were deleted, including "In Defence of Marxism," "Socialist Appeal," "Socialist Labor" and "Trotsky year 2001." It was not a random act of vandalism. Other non-political sites hosted by the same server were not touched. They clearly wanted to shut us up.

Our work has obtained wide recognition, even from people who would not consider themselves Marxists, as shown by the increasing number of visits to our site and the correspondence received from all over the world.

A few dedicated collaborators have worked day and night to get the website up and running again. We have recovered practically all the lost material and will soon be running a normal service

again. We depend exclusively on the support of our readers and friends to continue our work and appeal for your help. Please pass this appeal on to all those interested in fighting against this attack on the most basic principle of free speech and democracy.

**Alan Woods Editor, Marxist.com**



**MUMIA ABU-JAMAL AND THE DEATH PENALTY**

Since the judge threw out the death penalty for Mumia his sentence has most likely been relegated to life imprisonment. Will the focus die out now that death is off the table? Or does it mean we will now start looking at the whole picture? Although the death penalty is a big issue to the community—and of course, to those sentenced to die—there are many more lifers in our prisons than those on death row. The fickleness of liberal attitudes when they have a "cause" is widely discussed among prisoners. It is great that Mumia has gained the reprieve from an early death but his case has always been simply the tip of a very large, very convoluted, very repressive iceberg.

**Political prisoner Indiana**

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When a Giant food store in Pennsylvania placed an ad in the window: "In honor of Black History Month—Fried Chicken on Sale" an African-American woman called the NAACP and now they are on the scene. My problem with this situation is that they will not go far enough for a good solution. Here is mine: since the state of Pennsylvania had been planning to "fry" Brother Mumia Abu-Jamal with a "hot needle" of chemicals you couldn't give to a chicken without being fined or arrested, I suggest that the Giant food chain be made to fund freeing all political prisoners, starting with Mumia.

Meanwhile, since the NAACP is preparing for their National Awards din-

ner with the main honoree to be Condoleezza Rice, I have these questions: Does Ms. Rice have a membership in the NAACP? What about the action she took against letting Secretary of State Colin Powell go to the World Conference Against Racism in Durban, South Africa? The NAACP should change its name to National Association for the Advancement of Certain People. "No frying of Brother Mumia Abu-Jamal" should be the chant heard inside and outside the dinner area.

**George Wilfrid Smith Jr. Chicago**

**WHO READS N&L?**

A fellow worker told me about *N&L* at the IWW convention in 1979 and I figured I couldn't go far wrong for the \$1 a sub cost then. I have been a subscriber ever since and can't imagine life without it. I appreciate the way you look for the revolutionary potential in wide-ranging acts of revolt. Your conception that the revolt of the most oppressed strata of society is the most socially advanced movement of our time has broadened and deepened my understanding of world events.

**Two Wobblies Boston**

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I consider myself a green anarchist (not of the neo-primitivist sort) but I am always open to other ideas and viewpoints. The only truly important goal is liberty and equality for all, regardless of personal labels.

**New Reader Ypsilanti**

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It meant so much to me when I started seeing articles about our Defense Depot work in *N&L*. This is an international paper and I knew my message was getting out all over the world. I travel a lot and meet people who know about our struggle because of this paper. One of my relatives found an article I wrote in *N&L* and wanted to know: "How did you manage to get into a paper in Chicago?"

**Defense Depot activist Memphis**

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# Workman, Rahman cases show death penalty's injustice

**Memphis, Tenn.**—The two people closest to execution in Tennessee are Philip Workman and Abu-Ali Abdur'Rahman. Since Philip Workman received a stay—42 minutes before his scheduled execution—the Tennessee Supreme Court granted a stay of his new execution date and ordered a full evidentiary hearing on new evidence that indicated that Philip was not the triggerman in the case.

That hearing began last summer in front of Memphis Judge Colton, who had denied Philip's appeal for a stay of execution. All the community observers at the appeal hearing were struck by the theatrics of the prosecution and by the ways in which the judge favored the prosecution. We were not surprised when the judge denied Workman relief on all points that he had raised. The state immediately moved for a new execution date to be set. The Tennessee Supreme Court, however, refused to vacate the stay of execution and also refused the state's motion to expedite the appeal. Thus, Workman will receive a full appeal before the Tennessee Supreme Court. We are hopeful that there will be a favorable outcome from that court.

## Chicago cops harass West Side family

**Chicago**—The Chicago police have made my family's life a holy hell. They haven't helped us when we needed it and they have picked on us. They picked up my baby, my grandson, for the first time on Fathers' Day, 1995. Everytime he moves, they keep trying to put something on him.

In February 2000 I had a dispute with the tenant in my building over utility bills. The tenant called the police and claimed that I was trying to steal my own stove. The police wanted to take her side, but I was in the right and they had to leave. They came back to our house in March and tried to arrest my grandson, saying he was selling drugs. He wasn't doing that, but they didn't care.

The one cop grabbed me and I tried to pull away. He threw me to the ground and put his knees in my back. I have to wear pain patches and he threw me so fast that they were ripped off.

I heard my children calling, "Don't do my mama like that! She's too sick!" They cuffed me too tightly. I had already had two spinal surgeries.

The policemen took me by the arms and dragged me out to the police car. They told me, "You Black b— —! If you don't get in there I'll slam the door on your feet!" They were laughing at me and calling me all kinds of names. Everybody on the street was watching.

They wouldn't even let me put my shoes on my feet. I kept asking them for that, at least. They handcuffed me to the wall at the station for about 40 minutes. My children were begging the police to give me my pain medication and get me away from the abusive cops. When they finally let me go my children brought my medication.

They found me guilty in court for aggravated battery and trespassing. The police didn't take pictures of my body. They lied in the trial. My doctor pleaded to keep me from serving 20 days of community service. I had to have surgery last year to remove torn ligaments from my shoulder, from when they beat me. I can't do much with my right hand and my family has to take care of me. My daughter had to take time out from her own life. I still have nightmares, seeing them coming in and beating me, and killing me and killing my children.

Philip Workman's case received much attention in the media and much community support. It is critical that the same happen for Abu-Ali Abdur'Rahman, a 48-year-old African American, whose execution date is set for April 10. Abdur'Rahman was convicted of a homicide committed in Nashville (Davidson County). Between 1913 and the most recent execution in 1957, a total of 26 people were executed for crimes committed in Davidson County. Twenty-one of them, 81%, were Black. Two-and-a-half times as many Black men were executed for rape as white men for murder.

As a child Mr. Abdur'Rahman suffered horrific physical, sexual, and emotional abuse. When he was incarcerated as an adolescent, he was repeatedly raped. Abdur'Rahman has a long history of serious mental illness, which has never been adequately treated.

Abdur'Rahman had extremely poor representation at trial. In the first place, trial counsel had a conflict of interest because he was receiving payments from someone who, potentially, was facing criminal charges in the same incident as Abdur'Rahman. The federal District Court found the trial counsel performed

absolutely no investigation into the circumstances surrounding the defense, or into the defendant's background. Even the prosecutor, John Zimmerman, admitted that guilt was not open and shut in Rahman's case.

Abdur'Rahman admits he was at the scene of the crime. Physical evidence indicates that he was not the assailant. He was convicted on the testimony of the co-defendant, who may have been the assailant, and who received lower charges for his willingness to testify. The trial counsel called no witnesses, did no investigation, and presented no evidence at all during the guilt stage of the trial. At sentencing, he presented no mitigating evidence. Eight of the 12 trial jurors have given affidavits saying that if they had known of Rahman's background of well-documented long-time mental illness and brutal abuse, they would not have voted for death.

John Zimmerman, the prosecutor in the case, has been cited for misconduct in a number of cases, including Mr. Abdur'Rahman's. The Tennessee Supreme Court held that in this case, Mr. Zimmerman's conduct "bordered on deception by which he was able to get before the jury information which was not evidence in the case they had under consideration. The action of the state was improper." The court denied Abdur'Rahman relief, however, holding that the prosecutorial misconduct had been "harmless." Given that this is a death case, such a finding seems bizarre, but it demonstrates the inadequacy of appellate review to correct errors. Abdur'Rahman's case is a classic example of the trap created for defendants by prosecutorial misconduct, defense ineffectiveness, and appellate indifference.

A positive development happened on Jan. 30, when Tennessee's Legislative Black Caucus held a press conference calling for an end to the death penalty in Tennessee and specifically mentioning Abdur'Rahman and Workman. But we're worried it won't be enough. It's extremely important that people express the desire for the governor to commute Abu-Ali Abdur'Rahman's sentence. Write to Don Sundquist, State Capital Building, Nashville, TN 37243; email: dsundquist@mail.state.tn.us; Telephone: (615)741-2001; Fax: (615)532-1353. The best hope we have for clemency in this case will come from an outpouring of public opposition to the execution.

—Professor Margaret Vandiver

I have never done anything against the police, and they are still harassing my family. My husband and I were driving home one night last week and they followed us for blocks in their car. When we got to the house they stopped us and said, "We know you. You're the woman who doesn't like the police." A few nights later they picked up my grandson after midnight—they beat him, threatened him, and left him alone in another neighborhood where anything might have happened to him. He could have been killed. He had to find a pay phone and call me at one in the morning to come and pick him up.

I have gone to the Office of Professional Standards, the Mayor's office, my alderman. Nobody wants to help us. This can't go on. It's like me and my little family don't even exist in this country. We need to find some help.

—Charlene Coleman

## Velsicol party crashed



Environmental activists in Memphis, Tenn. challenged Velsicol Chemical Co. for poisoning an all-Black neighborhood with toxic pollution since 1992. See story, page 11.

News & Letters

## Black/Red View

## Marx and Black liberation

(Continued from page 1)

ernment jumping into the U.S. Civil War on the side of the South.

From the start Marx saw the question of slavery as integral to world capitalist development as well as to the emancipation of labor. In 1847 he wrote: "Direct slavery is the pivot of our industrialism today as much as machinery, credit, etc. Without slavery, you have no cotton, without cotton you have no modern industry. It is slavery that has given value to the colonies; it was the colonies that created world trade; it is world trade that is the necessary condition for large-scale machine industry. Also, before the slave-trade in Negroes, the colonies supplied the Old World with but very few products and did not visibly change the face of the earth. Slavery is thus an economic category of the highest importance."

Ending slavery was a crucial dimension to opening a new epoch of human liberation. Marx closely followed events in America like John Brown's slave uprising in 1859. These events coincided with the anti-serfdom agitation in Russia. Marx wrote to Engels on Jan. 11, 1860 that the movement of these slaves, Black and white, in such widely separated parts of the globe marked the beginning of the emancipation of the working class and was "the biggest thing now happening in the world." In his greatest theoretical work, *Capital*, Marx brought in the struggle for the normal working day and its phenomenal spread throughout the U.S. after the Civil War as the first fruits of the victory over slavery.

Where Marx saw the crucial role of Blacks in the emancipation of labor, there has been a great deal of confusion among post-Marx Marxists on what is the meaning of the African-American movement after the

Civil War. Socialists in general put it as a side issue detracting from the emancipation of labor. A new chapter was opened with Lenin and the Russian Revolution. He saw the independent struggle of African Americans as a new manifestation of the national liberation which would not detract from, but enhance, the revolutionary struggle. The U.S. Communist Party (CP) had over 70 years of various theoretical/political positions on the African-American problem. At no time were these political positions directly answering the instinctive striving of African Americans for freedom.

The CP was to be the teacher and the Black masses were the pupils. The glaring contradiction in this is that the independent action of African Americans did not often coincide with the shifting policies of the CP and the Soviet Union. Thus, the American CP opposed the 1943 March on Washington for equality and jobs during World War II because Germany broke the Hitler/Stalin Pact and invaded Russia. Russia was now an ally of the United States.

The CP had a position at one point that there should be a separate Black nation declared out of the five Southern states, a kind of "Tajikistan for Blacks" in the U.S. What they didn't comprehend is that the self-movement of the Black masses has its own trajectory.

It was hard for post-Marx Marxists of all stripes to grasp both the independence of the Black movement as well as its vanguard nature in the struggle for liberation from American capitalism. African Americans need to play an independent role in starting the struggle. But that independent role does not separate them from the general movement to emancipate labor and all oppressed groups. It was the slave revolts that brought the Abolitionist movement into being as well as the women's movement.

## California lockdown

**Los Angeles**—The Criminal Justice Consortium of Southern California held a forum in January called "Seeking Justice for the Imprisoned '02." More than 250 people attended, including some ex-prisoners and activists representing various organizations.

California prisons today are increasingly institutions of dehumanizing, tortuous punishment rather than rehabilitation. SHUs (Security Housing Units) or "Lockdowns" is a program of inmate isolation (23 1/2 hours a day in their cells) and sensory deprivation, meant to destroy inmates' basic personality, all of which contributes to feelings of anger, rage and violence in the inmates. According to Corey Weinstein, M.D., the SHUs and prison yards are rife with fighting, gang activities, prisoner on prisoner assault, as well as assault on staff.

The continued existence of the SHUs is justified as an anti-gang measure. Many "gang members" are targeted for SHUs regardless of what crimes they were convicted of, just because they were labelled gang members. Those that don't "snitch-out" on their former "gang" associates (people they grew up with) are often put in SHUs as "serious rules violators." To be released from SHUs, they must also "snitch-out."

In July, 2001, 1,000 prisoners housed in SHUs at Pelican Bay and Corcoran state prisons, self-organized and went on a hunger strike to voice their grievances, including excessively long sentences in SHUs. The inmates stopped their hunger strike when requested to do so by a progressive California assemblyman along with non-prisoner prison reform activists. Meetings were held by officials in Sacramento after the hunger strike ceased. It is not clear what reforms have resulted from those activities.

In the workshop on women prisoners, serious illnesses like HIV/AIDS and hepatitis and lack of health care are major issues. A "suicide watch" in one prison consists of her being strapped down naked on a cold metal table with no sheets for 24-48 hours. There was testimony by a mother whose daughter (Gina Muniz) died of cancer because prison officials continually ignored her plea for medical attention.

One woman ex-prisoner stated "inmates trying to look after other inmates were threatened with lock-up." Still another said: "We are the people that pay taxes for the system to go on. This forum is a first step in a mile long struggle. We're the heart of the community, we're the mothers." Too often, prisoners, both male and female, are moved to a facility far from family members to discourage visitation.

A consensus of the forum was that prisoners need contact with and support from the outside in the form of letters and visitation (especially children of mothers) as a means to reestablish humane relationships which the prisons destroy.

—Activist

## EDITORIAL Bush's permanent war

Never was there a greater need for the anti-globalization and anti-war movements to rethink and reorganize their forces than now. George W. Bush has made it clear that he has no intention of toning down, much less withdrawing the declaration of a globalized permanent war he announced to the world in his State of the Union speech. What he had presented as merely a shift of emphasis in his "war on terrorism"—from a pursuit of the terrorists responsible for the carnage of September 11, to a war against states that hold "weapons of mass destruction"—was in actuality the announcement of an entirely new and chilling policy: his imperial right to wage a pre-emptive attack on any state he has declared an enemy, at any time and any place he chooses. It was the first time since the nuclear age began that anyone has put forth the insane proposition that reduction of chemical, biological and nuclear weapons could be achieved by a war.

### MASTER IN ALL MATTERS

While Bush supposedly addressed two major problems in that speech—the economic recession and the international situation—it was clear that he was not about to separate them, as his father did, causing him to subsequently lose the enormously high status he had supposedly won as the victor in the Gulf War.

The economic crisis now gripping the world is even greater than the one of 1991. Yet the very first sentence of George W. Bush's address in 2002: was "The state of the union is a state of war." That is the plank on which he evidently intends to stand as world master in all matters, whether at home or abroad. Indeed, the President's stop in South Korea during his recent trip to Asia seemed intent on not budging an inch from tarring North Korea with his "axis of evil" brush.

As stunned as the world had been to hear North Korea suddenly lumped together with Iran and both thrown into the same pot as the U.S.'s long-standing "archenemy" Iraq, there is little doubt that Bush knew exactly what he was doing. While the charge against North Korea managed to complicate the talks aimed at improving relations with South Korea, and while the charges against Iran succeeded only in strengthening the zealot hardliners and cutting down the reformist president, Khatami, it became clear very quickly that it was Iraq which was to become the immediate target.

Only a few days after the State of the Union address, the *London Times* carried an article about an eight-week plan presented to Bush by the Pentagon in conjunction with the CIA and the National Security Agency, outlining a bombardment of Hussein's forces and installations, followed by an attempt to turn his army against him. Although the plan acknowledged that this might well precipitate the launch of chemical and biological warheads by Hussein, the question of an attack on Iraq had moved from "whether" to "when."

There are a number of reasons he feels he needs no "allies" in this war—and that he will get them when he wins. The most important reason he feels confident that he will win is because the tremendous military power of the U.S. is without rival. Even without the \$48 billion increase in the defense budget he has demanded and is sure to get—which will bring the total defense budget to no less than \$379 billion—U.S. defense spending is the equal of the total defense budgets of the next nine powers combined. Moreover, this sum does not include the additional billions to be spent on new weaponry, "fighting terrorism abroad," "bioterrorism," "aviation security," or "border protection."

### REORGANIZE ANTI-WAR MOVEMENT

Another reason he feels so emboldened by his rapid victory in Afghanistan is that he feels he has nothing to fear from any anti-war movement today, considering that no viable one developed after September 11. The failure to hold fast to a total view of freedom, to oppose the reactionary designs of the Islamic fundamentalists who perpetrated September 11, as well as the bombs rained on the Afghan people, spelled out defeat, not for Bush but for the anti-war movement.

Despite this false start, there is a growing anti-war sentiment and discontent is sure to spread as the economic crisis deepens. The task now is the development of a deep and broad-based opposition to the permanent military future Bush is planning for us. That begins with aligning with all those forces from below who are looking for a totally different alternative to existing society in every land. That is what makes so urgent the serious reorganization of that movement we have been raising for discussion in the pages of *News & Letters*, a task in which we urge you to participate.

## Resistance leader murdered in Aceh

Aceh mourns the death of Teungku Abdullah Syafie, the military commander of the Free Aceh Movement (GAM), which has fought for Aceh's independence from Indonesia since 1976. Syafie was killed Jan. 22 by Indonesian military forces, who found his camp after the provincial governor sent him a letter about peace talks. GAM suspects the letter contained a tracking device.

Aceh Central Information Center (SIRA), a leader in the civilian movement for a referendum on Aceh's status, issued a statement calling for calm. It read, in part, "Although he was a military commander, Teungku Abdullah Syafie was known to many as an amicable personality and a humanist. SIRA is deeply saddened by the tragedy that has struck this great personality of Aceh, his wife and several personal guards."

Aceh is a province of four million people on the northern tip of Sumatra island. Last year 1,700 people—most of them civilians—were killed, largely by Indonesian security forces. In February, the government reinstated a separate military command for Aceh and renewed a presidential decree authorizing military action against the rebels, amid criticism from human rights activists who fear even wider abuse by security

forces. Ten thousand soldiers and special police were recently sent to Aceh to reinforce the regular contingent of around 30,000.

One humanitarian worker sees a pattern to the recent killings of prominent citizens and the intimidation of human rights workers. "I think it's part of the military operation in Aceh to stop the civil groups," said Juanda, 24, who runs the People's Crisis Center, which supports more than 7,000 refugees displaced by the conflict. "It is the ordinary people, not the rectors and the lawyers, who remain the most common victims in this war."

A typical example was reported by relatives of a young farmer who was recently visited by four thugs wearing plainclothes and carrying AK-47 rifles. "You are GAM," they told him. "No, sir," the farmer replied. They gave him a beating on the head with a piece of wood that left him in the hospital for two days. Before the armed men left, they spotted a pretty young woman. "Can we take her?," they asked. Then they shot some buffalo belonging to local residents. Such incidents, including the murder of civilians, occur every day.

—Anne Jaclard

## 'Axis of evil' hits Iran

Bush's State of the Union Address on Jan. 29, in which he called Iraq, Iran and North Korea members of an "axis of evil" has had important reverberations in Iran. On Feb. 11, a state-sponsored demonstration marking the anniversary of the 1979 Iranian Revolution was attended by huge crowds chanting "death to America" and was addressed by President Khatami.

While some analysts have argued that Bush's speech made a distinction between the repressive government and the Iranian people's "hope for freedom," most analysts have attacked Bush for alienating Iran's reformists. Bush's "axis of evil" designation has been a gift to the hardliners and is helping them to cover over the internal battles.

Following the September 11 terrorist attacks, many Iranians did solidarize with the people of the U.S. Many also celebrated the defeat of the Taliban in Afghanistan. Recent signs of continuing protest in Iran include the following:

- A student protest during a speech by Khatami at Tehran University in December. Students shouted: "Either strength or resignation," "Political prisoners must be released," "Do not chant slogans, take action."

- Demonstrations and strikes for better working conditions and a living wage by school teachers in Tehran, Shiraz and Isfahan. Teachers' strikes in Iran have been historically important as bellwethers of larger upheavals.

- A January walk-out by 240 of the 290 members of the Iranian parliament to protest the imprisonment of a deputy from the western city of Hamadan. He was subsequently released but the anti-reformist Iranian courts have also sentenced a woman member of parliament, Fatemeh Haqiqatju, to 17 months in prison for criticizing the government.

- The abduction, disappearance, and later arrest of an important journalist, Siamak Purzand, by the government. Purzand is married to Mehrangiz Kar, an Iranian feminist legal scholar whose critical writings have challenged clerical orthodoxy.

- A summons from the government has been sent to a number of prominent journalists and intellectuals who are to be questioned for their writings and activities.

—Sheila Fuller

## Phil Gramm blasted

Memphis, Tenn.—Students from Rhodes College and citizens from Memphis recently protested against Texas Senator Phil Gramm, allegedly one of the collaborators of the California energy crisis and the Enron scandal.

Led by Rhodes College Greens and members of other local progressive groups, the protesters sent Phil Gramm a "TELL-ON-GRAMM" as soon as he started speaking:

*TELL-ON-GRAMM for Mr. Enron from the American People:*

- Justify your sponsoring a bill that allowed Enron to control energy markets.
- Justify your taking \$101,350 from Enron and then doing their bidding.
- Justify your voting against campaign finance reform.
- Your wife was on the audit committee of Enron; justify your claiming a victim role in this bankruptcy when she had oversight of the company's finances.
- Justify your sponsoring legislation that returns banking to the 1920s in terms of consumer protection.
- Justify your sponsoring of Fast Track for the Free Trade Agreement for the Americas.
- Justify your sponsoring legislation that expands NAFTA.
- Justify the death of 4,000 Afghan civilians and your statement, "This is not about justice. This is about war."
- Justify your sponsoring of legislation that would allow oil drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.
- Justify your voting against protecting Coho salmon.
- And finally, the American people want you to justify your opposition to affirmative action.

Reactions to the interruption and his speech varied from laughter and applause to stark anger and shock and inspired vigorous questioning of his neo-liberal trade policies, his lack of concern for the economic plight of poor people, and his record of voting against the environment and social justice.

When I heard Gramm was coming to Rhodes College, I knew we had to do something. My campus has a heavy right-wing leaning. We alienated some people in the audience, but I doubt that many of the fur-coat-wearing, upper-class people in the audience would ever even think of voting for a Democrat, much less a Green or a Red.

The speech was an orchestrated event to spread Gramm's ideology. The speech was not set up so that there could be a frank and open discussion of ideas.

This Senator has significantly helped to kill and hurt thousands, if not millions. The environment is significantly degraded because of his votes. A protest was in order. Questioning would have been too easily controlled. The man could have said, "No more questions," and he would have walked away. The issue of Enron would never have come up.

We alienated people, but they will get over it. College Greens is on better footing than before.

—Student activist

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# Women fight terror, war in South Asia and Middle East

(Continued from page 1)

reported missing in one region of Afghanistan.

Women are still vulnerable to sex trafficking, and the prospect for justice for the thousands of abducted women remains dim under the new leadership. The only solution offered by Sima Samar, the deputy prime minister and minister of Women's Affairs, was her pledge to build orphanages to protect young orphan girls from abduction.

Bush's abandonment of Afghan women is hardly surprising or unexpected. But the courageous work of RAWA, their principled stand against all fundamentalists, and the support they have received from thousands of women in the U.S. and around the world signal a new awareness and new opening for women to take their lives back into their own hands.

## AFGHANISTAN IS EVERYWHERE

Women from many parts of the world find themselves in a new situation. On the one hand, the attention that feminists and activists have brought to abuses of women by fundamentalists has weakened fundamentalism, especially in places where it has a hold on state power. In Pakistan, for example, feminists are seizing this moment to push the self-declared President Musharraf to reform laws that clearly discriminate against women as part of his agenda to "democratize" Pakistan from above. In Bangladesh, the international feminist outcry has pressured the new Prime Minister, Khaleda Zia, brought to power by an alliance with fundamentalists, to propose tougher legislation against acid attacks.

On the other hand, fundamentalists have become increasingly more extremist. Nothing shows this better than the sentencing of Safiya Hussein in northern Nigeria to death by stoning for adultery. Safiya's stoning is scheduled for mid-March, delayed long enough for her to wean her baby. Although Nigeria has a long history of conflict between the Islamic north and the Christian and animist south, the imposition of sharia is a new development in state politics. As the *New York Times Magazine* put it, "Between one-third and one-half of Nigeria's [population] will find themselves living under a judicial system with which Mullah Muhammed Omar, the ousted Taliban leader, would find little to quibble" (Jan. 27, 2002).

In another less publicized case, an 18-year-old woman, Abok Alfa Alok, was recently sentenced to death by stoning for adultery by a criminal court in Sudan. Both women's cases are under appeal, but to save their lives the global women's movement needs to come to their defense more vocally.

Elsewhere, in South Asia and the Middle East, women continue to fight against female genital mutilation, domestic violence, honor killings and other forms of violence against women. The numbers are staggering. According to the newsletter of Women Living Under Muslim Law, Bangladesh tops the world's charts in violence against women. Forty-seven percent of women in Bangladesh are victimized by male partners or family members. Bangladesh is followed by

India, where 40% of women are similarly abused by men they are married or related to. An estimated 5,000 women are murdered each year in India in dowry-related incidents.

Women are also fighting against the widespread practice called "honor" killings. In these cases women are murdered by family members for transgressing social or religious codes, and murderers are rarely brought to justice by courts influenced by fundamentalist hatred of women.

- In Pakistan, three women a day become victims of honor killings, usually murdered by male members of their families, including their husbands, fathers, and brothers.

- In the Gaza strip and West Bank, two-thirds of all murders were most likely honor killings, according to UN agencies.

- In Jordan, an average of 23 women are murdered every year in the name of "honor."

- In Yemen, an Al Qaeda stronghold, 400 honor killings are believed to have taken place in 1997.

- In Bangladesh, there was a four-fold increase in reported disfiguring acid attacks between 1996-1998.

- In Turkey, an estimated 200 girls and women are murdered in the name of honor each year.

Human rights groups note that the figures are inconclusive because so few crimes are reported or convicted. According to Human Rights Watch, in 2001, judges in Turkey trying "honor" killing cases often reduced the penalties for perpetrators, holding that the victim had "provoked" the murder by transgressing codes of conduct imposed on women by society.

In Jordan, there has been a vocal grassroots public awareness and signature campaign since 1999 run by the Jordanian National Committee to Eliminate the So-called Crimes of Honor, but the government has so far failed to repeal the law that allows for a reduced sentence for the perpetrators of "honor crimes."

Women's liberationists argue that "honor" killings are not unique, but lie on a continuum of violence against women across cultures. They are calling for an international response to "honor" killings. Grassroots activists have planned over 800 actions all over the world in conjunction with V-Day, a global movement to



Feminists around the world are demanding the release of Safiya Hussein, above, sentenced to death by stoning in a Sharia court in Nigeria for adultery.

## Mass rally challenges Israeli occupation

**Jerusalem**—We knew there would be a big turnout for the peace demonstration on Feb. 9 just from the deluge of pro-peace ads in *Ha'aretz* the day before—page after page of statements and petitions, all critical of the occupation. Some excerpts:

- "There is a choice!" An expanded new list of 200 combat officers and soldiers who refuse to serve in the army of occupation.

- "There's a limit!" Support for the new soldiers, and the names of others who have consistently refused to serve, placed by Yesh Gvul.

- "Peres, you are a collaborator in war-crimes!" placed by Gush Shalom.

- "Do not say 'we did not see, we did not know'—the price of keeping the territories"—placed by the Israel Committee Against House Demolitions.

And a huge, blood-red ad, "The Occupation is Killing Us All", signed by the 28 organizations that came together to hold last night's impressive rally in Tel-Aviv.

**This was the largest pro-peace rally since this Intifada began in September 2000, with an estimated 10,000 participants—Jews and Arabs from all over Israel.**

Yehudit Harel's opening words in fluent Hebrew and Arabic set the tone for the entire evening: We Israeli Jews and Arabs together will no longer abide the crimes that the Israeli government is carrying out: "There is only one flag held aloft here today," said Yehudit, "and it is the black flag of pain, mourning, death, bereavement, and the immorality of war crimes that are being committed in our name."

At her words, hundreds of black flags were raised high by the crowd, symbolizing the statement made years ago by an Israeli court that if a military order has "a black flag of immorality" hanging over it, the order must be refused.

Young men who refused to serve in the army of occupation were the heroes of the evening, receiving ovation after ovation. "I once disagreed with refusal to serve in the army," said Uri Avnery to the crowd, "but today I salute those who will not serve. Refusal is the beginning of the end of the occupation." Some of these brave young men have been stripped of their command, demoted, and face court martial, but continue to answer to their conscience.

"How can we serve in an army that kills children?" asked Yishai Rosen-Zvi, an Orthodox tank corps sergeant in the reserves, "How can we serve an army that demolishes homes, does not allow the sick to get medical attention, seeks to humiliate an entire population, and reduces them to hunger and poverty?"

Between speakers and sometimes during them, the crowd broke into chanting of familiar slogans: "Fuad, Fuad, Minister of Defense, How many kids did you kill today?" "Occupation, No! Peace, Yes!", "Money for the poor, not for settlers!"

It was a rally in which the stage was shared by Arabs and Jews, women and men, Mizrahim and Ashkenazim, young and old, religious and secular. Distinguished elderly author Sammy Michael pointed out the futility of the ongoing occupation: "Death is not a threat to people who willingly give their lives for a cause."

And Shulamit Aloni, former government minister and perennial conscience of Israel, called out her message of hope: "All of you here today are the harbingers of a mass movement that already has begun. You will be the teachers of democracy to this government. You will set an example of morality. We shall clean out the crimes of this country and fill it with peace!"

There were many moments that brought tears to my eyes last night. I will tell you of two: Famed singer Ahinoam Niri (known as "Noa", I believe, to her American fans) took the risk of alienating her Israeli right-wing fans, and sang to the crowd a Hebrew, Arabic, and English version of "Imagine" by John Lennon: "You may say I'm a dreamer, but I'm not the only one; I hope someday you'll join us, and the world will be as one."

And the other was the transformation of a beloved Zionist song "Ein li erez aheret." Reciting this song in two languages; Hebrew and Arabic, suddenly infused it with new meaning: "I have no other country to go to. And even if the land is burning under my feet, this is my home." For the Arabs in the crowd, the song suddenly became theirs, too, and for the Jews, it meant a land we both love deeply.

I hope someday you'll join us, and the world will be as one.

—Gila Svirsky

end violence against women organized by the author of "The Vagina Monologues," Eve Ensler. Amnesty International will launch a similar campaign in 2003.

## WAR AND POLITICS

Women's efforts to combat violence unfold in the context of a war-torn world. While Bush's bloodthirsty hounds search out new lands to prolong his "war on terror," South Asia stands on the brink of possible nuclear war. The nuclear threat in that region should not be underestimated. India's rejection of General Musharraf's offer to make South Asia a nuclear free region and to sign a no-war pact exposes India's continuing efforts to build up its nuclear arsenal. A recent CIA report to Congress concludes that both Pakistan and India "continue to acquire nuclear technology."

It is against this nuclear threat that women in South Asia persist in their battles for a more humane world. Following the September 11 attacks, a coalition of South Asian feminist organizations released a statement in which they wrote:

Religious fundamentalism and military aggression are two sides of patriarchy, that aim to seek control and wield power over women and other oppressed sections. The women's movement opposes the forces of religious fundamentalism whether they are from the U.S. or Afghanistan or from India or Pakistan because fundamentalist forces in essence trample upon all democratic and women's rights and seek to reverse the gains made by women's liberation movements.

With more than a million troops amassed along the border between India and Pakistan, the tensions between Hindu and Islamic fundamentalist groups run high. Communalist sentiment is being whipped up in various regions of India between Christians and Hindus as well.

In the state of Orissa the rape of a woman and the ensuing prosecution is embroiled in the conflict between Hindus and Christians. The woman, a Hindu, was raped by two men, at least one of whom is believed to be a Christian. In that same region, an Australian missionary and his son were set on fire by Hindu fundamentalist thugs two years ago.

However, voters dealt a serious blow to the ruling right-wing Hindu fundamentalist party, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), in the recent state assembly elections, showing that many Indians oppose the government's militarism and communalism.

## LESS SANCTUARY IN SECULAR STATES

Women are becoming more vulnerable to fundamentalist policies, not alone in the Sudan or Saudi Arabia, where the state openly imposes religious laws, but also in places like India, which claim to practice democracy.

There exist in many places two types of laws—one set of laws for women and the family and another set of laws for the public sphere. Personal and family laws in places like India and Algeria have stripped women of the basic rights of inheritance and ownership as well as of divorce.

Countries like Egypt, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh have nationality laws on the books that deny women the right to transfer citizenship to their children. Despite years of protest by women's groups in Egypt, in May 2000 the government dismissed a parliamentary plea to reform the nationality law. Laws such as these deny women a national identity in the very lands that they fought to liberate from colonialism.

In the face of such reaction and violence, women continue to battle for a more human world, struggling against war, nuclear weapons, religious and ethnic hatred, and to protect the environment against the ravages of global capital. Women are raising questions about nationalism and about what it means to be human in this increasingly violent world.

Looking at women's struggles in the Middle East and South Asia shows us that we can't separate the personal from the political. Women fight for new human relations in the home, where they might face violence or even death, at the same time that they challenge warmongering and jingoism at the national and global level. Freedom and anti-war movements everywhere need to listen to these women, so we can work out a more comprehensive vision of social transformation to counter the future of permanent war being offered to us by Bush, Bin Laden and other fundamentalists around the world.

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4: Marxist-Humanism: Its Unique Contributions

For a syllabus and schedule of meetings in your area, contact us through the directory on page 3.

# At Memphis open house, Velsicol can't hide from truth

**Memphis, Tenn.**—Last month Velsicol Chemical Corporation held an open house at the Douglass Community Center here to try to convince area residents that continuing to operate their hazardous waste incinerator would not harm them. A compliant community organization was there to tout the "shelter in place" plan, that is, the next time there's an explosion at the plant, stay in your house, close the windows and ignore the toxic chemicals.

Velsicol tried to exclude Balinda Moore, a founding member of Concerned Citizens of Crump, who has been fighting toxic pollution caused by Velsicol and other chemical plants to her all-Black neighborhood since 1992. Moore, along with Rita Harris, environmental justice coordinator for the Sierra Club, and over 25 community residents and their supporters, crashed Velsicol's toxic whitewash to hold their own meeting and press conference. Parts of their statements are here:

**Balinda Moore:** On Sept. 20 Velsicol said they conducted a telephone survey to make the community aware that should there be another February 2001, when there was a huge explosion at the plant, there would be an automatic system that would phone every resident in the area to let them know what's going on.

I told them on Sept. 21 that there were at least seven people I knew that the emergency phone test didn't reach. They still claimed it was successful and didn't get back to me until January 2002.

A lot of dead people are listed on this report. Even Velsicol said only 16% were contacted. Now, should there be a disaster, and there's more than a thousand homes in this neighborhood, and you've only contacted 16%, there's a potential for a lot of deaths when the

## Taco Bell boycott grows

**Memphis, Tenn.**—Local activists in Memphis have launched a campaign to inform the public about the national boycott of Taco Bell initiated by the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW), a union representing tomato pickers in Florida. I am writing about the CIW campaign, and about our efforts to support it.

The CIW has been fighting for the rights of immigrant farm laborers for more than 15 years. The CIW workers are mostly immigrants from Mexico, Guatemala, Haiti, Nicaragua. Minimum wage laws in the U.S. don't apply to agricultural workers, and as a result, the Immokalee farm workers work for a "piece rate." Every 32-pound bucket of tomatoes is worth 40¢—the same that was paid in 1978.

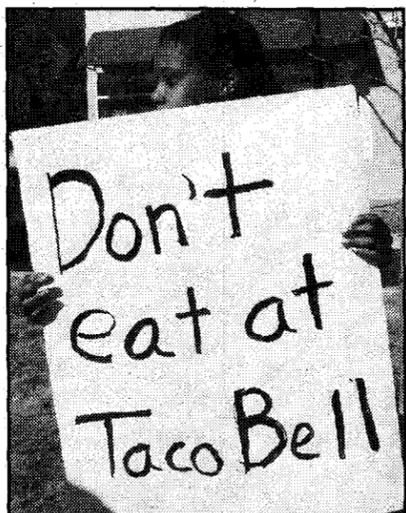
To make the minimum wage, they must pick 13 buckets per hour; to make \$50 in one day, they must pick two tons of tomatoes. When adjusted for inflation the real wages of tomato pickers has dropped 40% since 1978. Most farm workers have no right to overtime pay, sick leave, health insurance, holiday or vacation pay. The median annual income of farm workers today is \$7,500.

During the last 10 years, using tactics of nonviolent direct action, the CIW workers have engaged in strikes, walkouts, protests, sit-ins, and hunger strikes to pressure Six L's Packing Company to renegotiate wages and living conditions. All of these attempts to force Six L's to change their policies were unsuccessful. On April 1, 2000, the CIW took their campaign to the public and called for a boycott of Taco Bell, the number one buyer of tomatoes from Six L's.

The CIW wants Taco Bell to pay one cent more per pound of tomatoes. If the growers passed that penny along to the pickers, their wages would double. The cost to consumers would be less than one half-cent for each chalupa or taco. Yet, interested only in profits, the representatives of Taco Bell have refused to meet with the CIW.

Fifty CIW workers will be visiting Memphis on March 16 as a part of their "Truth Tour." We will march from the National Civil Rights Museum to a highly visible Taco Bell where we are planning to have one hell of a protest. Some are considering engaging in the great American tradition of civil disobedience, that is, locking down and getting hauled off to jail. In the meantime, we have been handing out flyers at the University of Memphis; and, for the last three weeks, we have had protests at local Taco Bells where we held up signs and handed out literature.

**More information about the CIW Taco Bell Campaign can be found at [www.ciw-online.org](http://www.ciw-online.org).**  
—Steve Tammello Univ. of Memphis Student



Farmworker supporters urge boycott of Taco Bell in Memphis, Tenn.

great explosion comes. If Dr. King was yet living, he could not help but be concerned about the safety and health conditions of the people in all neighborhoods—especially the poor African-American neighborhoods of Douglass, Bungalow, and Crump.

I also want to talk about Velsicol's refusal to allow the environmentally informed to have an exhibit at this open house. I asked directly: What about me? They said, I'll think about it and we'll get back to you.

It took a week till the safety officer called and said no, it would not be good, that would be a conflict. The information I'm willing to give out is said to be in conflict. What they're giving out is a Velsicol horse and pony show tonight.

**Retha Winfield:** There was an explosion at Velsicol last year (see March 2001 N&L). My father has since died from leukemia and multiple myeloma. I was a nurse at Baptist Hospital for 21 years, and I did a survey of people in my neighborhood who have died from catastrophic diseases. There has been crippling arthritis, cancers, lung diseases. Out of only two streets I bet

## Mumia's new defense

**Chicago**—Anti-death penalty activist Sam Jordan detailed recent developments in the case of imprisoned Black journalist Mumia Abu-Jamal at a public meeting on Chicago's south side on Feb. 17. Jordan is a spokesperson for the International Concerned Friends and Family of Mumia Abu-Jamal and a former director of Amnesty International's Death Penalty Project.

Jordan described a major shift of emphasis in the defense's case. Mumia chose a new legal team to represent him after dismissing one of his previous lawyers for surreptitiously publishing a book about the case. "Before May 2001," Jordan explained, "Mumia's defense was based on procedural issues. Now we talk about exculpatory evidence."

The new legal team has secured a videotaped admission by a man named Arnold Beverly that he was paid by elements in the Philadelphia police force to kill Daniel Faulkner, the police officer Mumia is accused of murdering. Faulkner was allegedly interfering with police corruption in his district.

Mumia's death sentence was overturned on Dec. 19 by Philadelphia Federal District Court Judge William Yohn. The state now has to hold a resentencing hearing for Mumia, or he will face mandatory life in prison.

Jordan condemned this move as an attempt to demobilize the movement to defend Mumia. "It's no great shakes to have a resentencing hearing under these conditions," he said. "Mumia has more in common with the 99 people released from death row since 1976 than he does with anyone else in the criminal justice system."  
—Kevin Michaels

## NEWS & LETTERS

### VIEW FROM THE INSIDE OUT

by Robert Taliaferro

Who are you? Do you consider yourself as Black, African American, Hispanic, Costa Rican? Have you ever received a ticket, been arrested, been in prison? Has anyone in your family been arrested? Do you have a drinking problem—or problems with drugs? Have you ever been treated for depression, or does anyone in your family have psychological or other medical problems?

Most times we are asked questions like this in an innocuous fashion on job applications, medical and insurance queries, or through the normal conduct of our lives.

After September 11, however, those questions have taken on an entirely new context in a rather old debate. In fact if the conservative Right has their way, those questions could be answered by an electronic scan of a data chip on a national identity card, thus removing the last vestige of privacy that Americans still have.

#### OLD DEBATE MADE NEW

The debate on national identity cards is not new in this country—or in others. It is a question that, for the most part, has been rejected because of the inherent abuses that it might cause regarding civil liberties.

Many supporters of a national identity card argue that we already have the basis in many of the cards and forms of identification that we currently carry.

Social Security cards, drivers licenses, Medicare and other insurance cards, even an application for a common library card disseminates information to a variety of databases in the public and private sectors. In fact, the private sector manages an alarming amount of information on practically every person in the country, something that the federal and state governments tap into in order to get around legislated privacy laws.

As a result, many supporters of the national identity card question arguments that are designed to derail the concept, relying on fueling the paranoia present in the country after September 11, by end-running the civil libertarians.

The national ID card has some powerful lobbyists. Larry Ellison, CEO of Oracle, has offered to donate the database software that would logistically support the

I can count 30 people who have died from those diseases.

**Jennifer Warren:** Since moving to this area last year I had to come under the care of an allergy and asthma specialist and have incurred numerous medical bills. In less than a year I have been diagnosed with asthma, experienced my eyes watering all through the night and then being swollen in the mornings. I suffer from recurring nosebleeds, shortness of breath and sinus infections every other month. I have been prescribed six different medications ranging from \$20-\$40 each and I have insurance. Minorities and low-income citizens have the inalienable right to breathe the same unpolluted air that the rich neighborhoods enjoy.

**Vera Corley:** Of the five of us born to my mother and father, my brother and my sister both died in this neighborhood from cancer, heart disease and tuberculosis; so did my mother, my aunt, my uncle, and several cousins. We have a family plagued by cancer that we believe is coming from these chemical companies that surround us—especially from Velsicol. Breast cancer and lung cancer run rampant here. If we do nothing else tonight we want to make that abundantly clear and bring it to everyone's attention.

## Gay marriage demo

**Chicago**—Chanting "Gay (Lesbian) marriage is our right! We have just begun to fight!" dozens of protesters organized by the Chicago Anti-Bashing Network (CABN) and other groups converged on Chicago City Hall's marriage bureau this Valentine's Day. This year's demo was a bit larger than last year's—this is becoming an annual event—although it was perhaps also a bit more subdued. The police presence was thicker and nastier.

The responses from the public were interesting. One Black woman in a wedding dress said, "I'm with you! Keep up the fight!" Her obvious generosity of spirit lit up the dark little underground hallway where the state hides the machinery of marriage. One white guy in a suit called us all "a bunch of idiots," but he looked like he says that to everyone he meets.

There were a number of moving speeches including one young man from Latinos United who talked about the double standard facing immigrants. If he were straight and got married, he would be issued a green card and be able to stay here, but a gay person who tried to do the same would be deported. Another speaker said "My partner and I have been together for 11 years now. That's 22 years in heterosexual time."

After the speeches and a skit from the CABN Players, four same-sex couples were denied marriage licenses.

—Gerard Emmett

## Bias of national I.D. cards

national ID system, and Alan Dershowitz, a law professor at Harvard, noted that national IDs would reduce the need for racial and ethnic stereotyping.

Ellison, of course, is looking towards the financial windfall that would benefit his company if it were chosen as the "donating entity" for software. Though the software would be donated, the advertising and management of such extensive software would require many years of government contracts with his company.

We live in a country where racial, ethnic, cultural, and religious stereotyping is at the very core of its existence, despite the "constitutional imperatives" that are in place. This is a simple fact of life in the U.S. and it is time that we dealt with this in the open, rather than hidden in the closet like some embarrassing family secret.

We live in a country where abuses of whole cultures is a part of the national psyche, and where paranoia often ignites the ever-present embers of ignorance that underlines American idealism, especially in light of some "national" tragedy.

#### U.S.'S HISTORY OF ABUSES

Sixty years ago that paranoia and bigotry embraced the loss of liberty and property for Japanese-Americans in World War II, setting a tone of Asia-bashing that resulted in more wars in the hemisphere.

Sixty years later the same paranoia embraces similar attacks on civil liberties with Arab-speaking-appearing-thinking-supporting peoples, using tactics that have been tried and tested on American Blacks, Indians, Asians, and Hispanics.

It is about time that we stop mixing apples with oranges and simply call certain practices what they really are. With national ID's, the argument is not merely about privacy. The argument should be about how easily such a card can further discrimination, in all its forms: age, race, culture, gender, health, religious, sexual, or a combination of all of the above.

National ID's are used by governments as a culling out process subject to historically documented abuses with ethnocentrism as the guiding doctrine. Nowhere is this more true than in the United States, especially in times of war.

Who are you? Is it anyone's business, but your own?!

## Our Life and Times

## Anti-globalization at World Social Forum

by Kevin A. Barry and Mary Holmes

Over 60,000 people attended the second World Social Forum (WSF) in Porto Alegre, Brazil. With the theme "Another World is Possible," it was convened as an anti-globalization counter-meeting to the World Economic Forum, held at the same time (Jan. 31-Feb. 5) in New York City.

The 15,000 delegates and 45,000 other participants came from 150 countries and included grassroots activists, workers, peasants, leftists, feminists, environmentalists, the landless and homeless, and many others concerned not only with discussing the ills of global capitalism, but also with how to transform this reality.

The Forum was set up to include 700 workshops, 100 seminars and 28 plenary assemblies. During the official, and unofficial sessions, participants dis-

## Milosevic on trial

The trial of Slobodan Milosevic, one of the late 20th century's most notorious war criminals, has finally begun at the International War Crimes Tribunal in The Hague. Predictably, he attempted once again to sing his old tune of Serbia as the "victim" of its own oppressed minorities, especially the Muslims of Bosnia and Kosovo.

Unfortunately for him, Milosevic no longer controls a national propaganda apparatus and will be forced to listen to witnesses recounting the mass rape, murder, and torture committed by his forces. This was all part of an effort to "ethnically cleanse" (his term) the former Yugoslavia of its religious and ethnic minorities to create a Greater Serbia.

These outrages included 1) concentration camps that tortured and starved thousands of Bosnian Muslims and Croats in 1991-93, 2) rape camps during the same period for Muslim and Croat women, 3) the expulsion of two million Muslims and Croats from their homes, 4) the massacre of 7000 Muslim men at Srebrenica in 1995, and 5) the expulsion of nearly a million Kosovar Albanians in 1998-99. Overall, the death toll stands at more than 200,000. This clearly adds up to genocide, the most serious charge facing Milosevic.

Those like ourselves who opposed his neo-fascist policies from the start are outraged that it took ten long years to bring him to trial, largely because NATO and the U.S. tolerated him, when they did not support him outright. Yet the racist mass media have concentrated on Milosevic, but not on the trials of the former Rwandan rulers who carried out an even more massive genocide in Central Africa. Nonetheless, the Milosevic trial is a necessary and important one and is undoubtedly a step forward.

## Madagascar strike

Protests over a fraudulent election in December have mushroomed into a general strike as well as demonstrations that have drawn hundreds of thousands into the streets of this East African island nation.

Protesters and strikers have been backing Marc Ravalomanana, the challenger to Didier Ratsirika, a former dictator back in power again after elections in 1996. In addition to fraud, Ratsirika has sought to manipulate ethnic antagonisms in order to stay in power. As the general strike persists week after week, however, his hold on power is weakening.

cussed debt in the developing world, the role of women in globalization, issues of race, the availability of health care and medicines, environmental destruction, cultural diversity and many other questions.

The crisis in Argentina was a central focus, both as an adverse model of the harm of neoliberal economic policies, and as a beacon in the mass protests by Argentines, and the government's default on its \$143 billion debt. Several demonstrations were held in solidarity with the Argentine people.

In Brazil, the WSF host country which holds presidential elections this October, the leading candidate was asked about the \$230 billion debt. Luiz Inacio "Lula" da Silva of the left Workers Party said debt payment would need to balance ability to pay with the need to support programs improving conditions of the poor. The WSF opposed the U.S.-sponsored Free Trade Area of the Americas, which would create an "open market" of the entire hemisphere. Lula denounced it as a "policy of annexation of Latin America to the U.S."

The WSF condemned the September 11 terrorist attacks in the U.S. and also accused the Bush administration of using the events as a pretext for positioning the U.S. military in Colombia and elsewhere in Latin America and the world to "suppress social movements."

A WSF draft position issued at the end of the conference stated that "in the name of war against terrorism, civil and political rights have been attacked throughout the world. The war against Afghanistan has been extended into other areas. It is starting a permanent global war." However, contradictions among anti-U.S. imperialism tendencies at the WSF were evidenced in one popular T-shirt on sale which favorably equated Osama bin

## Saudi executions

As the Bush administration seems poised to attack Iraq, few any longer note that 15 of the 19 September 11 hijackers, plus bin Laden himself, were from oil-rich Saudi Arabia. For over half a century, this absolute monarchy has, with massive Western military support, implemented a harsh religious totalitarianism based on the Wahabi form of Islamic fundamentalism. Women have few if any rights in a system of gender apartheid.

On Jan. 1, the government beheaded three men it accused of homosexuality. Despite protests by Act Up and Human Rights Watch, these executions received little media attention. There are also frequent executions for "adultery" (any form of sexual relations between unmarried people) and "apostasy" (daring to renounce Islam).

Both the government and this rich country's numerous religious charities support and propagate retrogressive and violent forms of Islamic fundamentalism in dozens of countries. Even when their aid is seemingly more benevolent, as in their assistance to embattled Bosnia, it always comes with conditions. Thus, Bosnian women widowed by Milosevic's genocide can today receive a Saudi monthly pension, on condition they wear "proper" clothing as defined by the Saudis.

Laden with Che Guevara and Jesus.

Some participants were critical of the WSF drift towards reformism and centrist social-democratic positions. They pointed to the presence of government ministers and cabinet members in attendance.

A number of officials from Italy were criticized for voting in favor of the U.S. war in Afghanistan.

Forum organizers said they did not aim to reach agreement on the issues: "No single document can speak for all of us. It begins here. It does not end here." In conclusion, the WSF agreed on a very general statement calling for "resistance toward neoliberalism and militarism, and support for peace and social justice."

The large attendance at this WSF, double last year's attendance and at least 10,000 more people than the planners expected, demonstrates the vitality of the anti-globalization movement, and the objective urgency issuing from September 11 and its aftermath. One challenge is for explicitly revolutionary anti-capitalist participants at the WSF to make their ideas heard and discussed.

## Lebanonization of Middle East conflict

Spurred on by one-sided Bush administration attacks on Palestinian Authority (PA) President Yasir Arafat, the reactionary Israeli government of Ariel Sharon has ringed Arafat's headquarters with tanks. Sharon has also stated publicly that he wishes he had killed Arafat during the 1982 invasion of Lebanon. This was the same period during which Sharon orchestrated a major war crime; the Shatila massacre of over 800 Palestinian civilians.

Since the second Intifada began in September 2000, 900 Palestinians and 300 Israelis have been killed. In recent fighting, the U.S.-supplied Israeli army's ability to enter Palestinian areas and kill lightly armed resisters without suffering casualties has been severely challenged. A Palestinian bomb destroyed an Israeli tank in the Gaza Strip, killing three soldiers. In another unprecedented development, Palestinian fundamentalists launched a first-ever rocket attack into Israel from Gaza. This suggested that a long-term Lebanon-type war might now be in the cards.

Sharon's provocative actions have fed the growth of terrorism. The ship that was caught smuggling arms from fundamentalist Iran was one sign among many of growing links between the PA and Iran, which backs Hamas. Equally disturbing was the forced resignation of PA leader Sari Nusseibeh, who has challenged the demand that all refugees must return to their pre-1948 homes rather than to a Palestinian state, something that would effectively liquidate the State of Israel.

On a positive note, more than 200 Israeli reservists announced that they will refuse to serve any longer as occupiers of the West Bank or Gaza. In addition, the Israeli peace camp rallied more than 10,000 people to demand unconditional withdrawal from Palestinian lands, a rally addressed by Nusseibeh. (See story, page 10.) But these actions will not deter the war criminal Sharon, as long as he has the go-ahead from Bush.

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Demonstrators in Porto Alegre in support of the World Social Forum.

Independent Media Center

## 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*.