

# NEWS & LETTERS

Theory/Practice

'Human Power is its own end'—Marx

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## WORKSHOP TALKS

### Republic of Wal-Mart

by Htun Lin

The FBI announced Oct. 23 that it had raided 60 Wal-Mart stores and arrested 300 "illegal alien" workers. The alibi of Wal-Mart, which is totally non-union in the U.S., was that these were merely employees hired by third-party contractors. The company routinely uses hundreds of such contractors which hire almost exclusively immigrant labor. These workers came from as near as Mexico and as far as Eastern Europe.

The U.S. Justice Department states that anyone who knowingly hires illegal immigrants may be fined up to \$10,000 per immigrant. Even if by chance Wal-Mart is convicted, at \$10,000 per head Wal-Mart would only face a \$3 million fine, a drop in the bucket for Wal-Mart's multi-billion dollar empire. Last year, Wal-Mart had \$245 billion in sales worldwide. The fines would be written off by Wal-Mart executives as just another cost of doing business.

#### VICTIMIZED ALIENS, GUILTY EXECES

No Wal-Mart executives were arrested during the raids for these clearly illegal corporate activities during the raids, while the workers will not only lose their jobs but be jailed and deported. A similar prosecution at Tyson Foods revealed that top executives had full knowledge of and encouraged such illegal hiring practices.

Wal-Mart is merely the most salient example in a brave new world economy where huge multi-national American companies not only exploit cheap foreign labor that has no rights domestically, but also import goods made by cheap foreign sweatshop labor.

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## BLACK/RED VIEW

### U.S.'s imperial roots

by John Alan

President George W. Bush made a brief state visit to the Philippines to reward its president, Gloria Macapagal Arroyo for supporting the U.S. war on terror. Bush told his hosts that the U.S. had "liberated the Philippines from colonial rule." This claim is not just a revision of history but an outright falsification of the history of the Filipino struggle for freedom.

Toward the end of the 19th century, during the administration of President, William McKinley, American factories are making more than the American people can use; American soil is producing more than they can consume. Fate has written our policy for us; the trade of the world must and shall be ours." This senator, indirectly, was expressing an ideology that American capitalism had to expand aggressively and take over the world market. It was embraced by the upper ranks of the armed forces, politicians and businessmen.

#### THE TAKEOVER OF CUBA, THE PHILIPPINES

The most attractive areas for U.S. capitalism's expansion were the two colonies of the Spanish Empire, Cuba and the Philippines. Cuba was rebelling against Spanish domination at the same time that American capitalism invested an estimated \$30 to \$50 million in Cuba's plantations, railroads and mines. The U.S.S. Maine, a warship the U.S. sent to Cuba to protect its property, exploded because of what is now known to be an internal malfunction. The U.S., however, blamed the Spanish and Congress declared war on Spain in 1898.

President George W. Bush should note: while the majority of Americans supported the Cuban people's struggle against Spanish colonialism, President McKinley never officially recognized the Cuban insurgents, or gave them aid. According to some historians, McKinley feared that if he supported them they would become strong enough to win and keep the U.S. out of Cuba.

The U.S. also had another grave fear. More than two-fifths of the Cuban military forces in the field were Afro-Cubans. Those men, if they won the war, would

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## Energy bill peddles weird science to loot environment

by Franklin Dmitryev

Keeping the world on its present ecologically catastrophic track is the thrust of the 1,100-page energy bill crafted behind closed doors by a group of Congressional Republicans in November.

While the bill has been shrouded in secrecy since its covert inception in Vice-President Dick Cheney's energy task force, its general direction was never in doubt: production and more production, first of all production of energy from oil and gas, at the expense of human health, the environment, the integrity of science, and conditions of life and labor.

It is the epitome of Bush administration environmental policy. The billions in favors offered to all the most powerful industries do not alter the energy bill's basic character as perpetuate the total dependence of the U.S. on fossil fuels and nuclear energy for years to come.

Those industries would receive nearly \$50 billion in tax breaks and subsidies, expedited permits for oil and gas extraction on public lands, and exemptions from some environmental regulations. The bill also encourages uranium mining using toxic chemicals—alarming Native American nations, who have suffered the brunt of uranium mining's poisons.

Limits would be removed from mergers and acquisitions of electric utilities, setting the stage for a new era of Enron-type plunder. Incredibly, the latest excuse for pushing the Bush-Cheney energy bill was the August U.S.-Canada blackout—just as an earlier excuse was



Protest against Exxon's role in global warming.

New York Independent Media Center

the 2001 California energy crisis engineered by Enron and other energy monopolists.

In an attempt to greenwash the bill, a few crumbs were tossed to renewable energy sources and energy efficiency, but the main "renewable" item is ethanol. In reality, its production uses fossil fuels and its use as fuel in cars generates smog, so this is nothing more than a mammoth subsidy for agribusiness giants like Archer Daniels Midland, which was enough to reel in Senate Democratic leader Tom Daschle.

The biggest scam of all is Bush's talk of a "hydrogen economy," conjuring images of clean cars burning hydrogen and emitting nothing but water. In fact, producing, storing and using hydrogen is energy-intensive, and the whole point of Bush and his oil and auto

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## Women in Iraq struggle for freedom

by Yanar Mohammed

It means a lot to me to be here, close to the place where the World Trade Center was, where thousands of innocent civilians died. Our hearts go out to all the families of the victims. We know what they feel like. A

Yanar Mohammed, founder of the Organization of Women's Freedom in Iraq, spoke Oct. 23 in New York City at a meeting organized by a committee of supporters and co-sponsored by News and Letters Committees. Below are excerpts from her talk. For information, including the English-language Iraqi women's rights newspaper, and to offer support: [www.equalityiniraq.com](http://www.equalityiniraq.com).

few months ago, tens of thousands of Iraqis lost their lives for reasons still unclear, except that the U.S. government wants to prove it is the superpower by starting a new war every year. State terrorism and non-state terrorism are equally bad.

When the war on Iraq happened, we who were living in exile knew that we had to go back to work for a brighter future. We said, finally the dictatorship of Saddam is gone, the fascist Ba'ath regime is out of

the way, no more genocides of other ethnicities, no more nationalists where young people were killed by the hundreds of thousands. And I went back to help the women.

When I arrived in Baghdad, every public building was bombed or burnt. The streets looked as if they had undergone many wars, not only one. And the most tragic part was that all the strong and capable women whom I had left a few years before, were now mostly under veil and unable to demand their rights. The notion of women's rights seemed alien to them. The war and occupation had unleashed the political Islamists, what you call fundamentalists, people who want governmental power to impose their beliefs on all of society, especially on women.

Women in Iraq lived under much better conditions than other women in the Middle East. We had access to education and work and greater rights, brought about by progressive movements before Saddam seized power. But in the 1980s and the '90s, especially since pan-Arab politics fell apart after the Gulf War, Saddam

looked to political Islam for support. He allowed tribal codes to rule, including the exchange of women between families. He permitted some Sha'ria (Islamic religious law), including "honor killing"—the law that a man can kill a female family member suspected of illicit love without receiving even a month in jail. This law continues in effect.

The other reality I saw at once was that the political formula imposed by the U.S. occupation as Iraq's governing Council caused ethnic splits and religious rivalries and divided people along these lines. Being an Arab meant different privileges from Turkmen, Kurds and others. Shi'ites are considered different from Sunnis, from Christians. The ethnic divisions built into the council foreshadow possible civil war. And out of 25 seats, women received only three. One of the women is a previous Ba'ath member and two are under veil. One-third of the council are political Islamists. The message is that this is the future women should expect in Iraq.

There are widespread problems for women right now. I am unable to step into the street by myself or go out in modern clothes. The U.S. occupiers fail to provide any security. Women from age 9 to 50 are abducted off the streets by organized gangs who sell them—\$200 for a virgin and \$100 for an older woman. Many are raped.

When we started the Organization of Women's Freedom in Iraq (OWFI) in June, we decided to protest the lack of security to the CPA (Coalition Provisional Authority, the occupying forces) the day of the protest and I handed it in at the door of the presidential palace. What answer did we get? Nothing. When I tried to investigate the disappearances of some women at a police station, I was told the CPA had ordered them not to release any information. OWFI held a demonstration in August against the violence and abductions, but many women were afraid to come.

We started a women's shelter in Baghdad for women

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### ON THE INSIDE

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# What late term abortion ban means

by Terry Moon

The banning of late-term abortion brings into stark reality how badly women are losing not only our right to control over our bodies, but the concept that women are full human beings. That this is, in fact, the intent of the Right is seen in how Attorney General John Ashcroft gave enforcement responsibilities for this new misogynist law, not to the Justice Department's criminal division, but to its civil rights division instead.

This is not only a thinly veiled attempt to claim that a fetus is a human being; it is an attempt to use the claims of the fetus to negate those of the woman, to have the fetus trump the woman's civil rights, to render a woman less human than a fetus. The civil rights division that is charged with prosecuting anti-abortionists who block women's access to clinics will now be responsible for policing and second-guessing the doctors that they were formerly supposed to protect.

## MARGINALIZATION OF WOMEN

The drive to humanize the fetus and dehumanize women continues with "The Unborn Victims of Violence Act" introduced in Congress that would punish attacks on a fetus separately from the attack on the pregnant woman who carries it. The intent is to establish that there are two victims and that killing a fetus is murder.

In October the Supreme Court refused to hear an appeal from a woman sent to prison for up to 20 years on the charge of murdering her stillborn child because she acknowledged using cocaine while pregnant.

The power of anti-abortion fanatics was revealed on a different level in Austin, Texas, where last month they were successful in temporarily stopping the construction of a Planned Parenthood Clinic when the builder was boycotted by plumbers and carpenters who were being pressured by a powerful, anti-choice construction industry executive.

The Bush administration's outrageous and successful attempts to legitimize women's marginalization have emboldened the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. Now they plan to begin a new campaign to reemphasize the Church's ban on contraception—something Catholic women have ignored in the U.S. up till now—and to link the ban on contraception to their anti-abortion campaign. They think if you can convince the U.S. public that late-term abortion is murder, the logic of that idea, carried to its extreme, will be to consider early abortion and contraception murder as well.

When they can't get their way by persuasion, the Catholic hierarchy lies, as did Cardinal Alfonso Trujillo, who lied on the BBC by saying that not only can sperm pass through condoms, but so can the AIDS virus! This lie will mean that many people—especially

## Ongoing struggles against mutilation

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) has dropped out of the news, but it has not dropped out of the lives of women. Teachers notice that girls subjected to FGM don't do as well in school as their uncut peers. Lifelong health problems sometimes result. Recent reports show, not only how far women have come in eradicating FGM, but also how far we still have to go.

News from the FGM front comes from Burkina Faso, Denmark, Egypt, Eritrea, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal, Sudan and the United States. In Western countries, the immigrant population, which often figures out ways to circumcise their daughters, is subject to arrest if they succeed and are caught.

In Burkina Faso, 23 villages have recently made public declarations and celebrations of their abandonment of FGM. The government there reports a decline in the practice after 300 people were fined or imprisoned for breaking a 1996 law forbidding it.

In Ghana a seminar to convince people that it is harmful and not required by Islam was held in December 2002. This shows how hard it is to enforce a law against FGM that was passed in 1994.

**Kenya had some stories of daring attempts to rescue girls from the practice, one of whom was carried off on her pastor's motorcycle after the cutting was already underway. Another girl's headmaster risked a death threat by her father as he sheltered the young woman at his house. But testimonials as to how harmful and painful FGM is and its lifetime aftermath are spreading throughout Kenya and there is a lot of political effort now to stop it.**

The Nigerian government is just now getting around to starting an eradication program, and in Senegal, on May 25, 2003, 122 communities announced together their decision to abandon both FGC (C for Circumcision) and early marriage. Since March Sudan has been arresting doctors for flouting a ban.

This brief survey exposes the fact the FGM is still rife in the countries where it has always been practiced. In spite of an eradication campaign covering much more than 20 years, in some places the program has barely begun.

—January

in the developing world—will forego latex condoms, which are 99.9% effective when used correctly, and get AIDS.

These developments and the ban on D&X abortions reveal clearly what a mistake it was to settle for less than the radical demands of the early Women's Liberation Movement, for free abortion on demand, for no forced sterilization, for safe and free contraceptives, in short, for full control over our bodies and lives.

We have to remember that the right to abortion was **not** won in the Supreme Court on what the women's movement demanded: that women

have the **right** to control our own bodies. Women do not have the right to an abortion; rather what the Supreme Court granted us was a narrow right to privacy that at this time includes the decision to have an abortion.

## NEED TOTAL VIEW FROM THE START

What these profoundly retrogressive anti-human events reveal is the necessity to start with the demand for absolute freedom, and never be bought off by anything less. When the Supreme Court made abortion legal in 1973, a huge portion of the women's movement collapsed, thinking their goal was met. Three years later came the Hyde Amendment, which cut off federal abortion funding for poor women, beginning the destruction of women's right to abortion by attacking those least able to fight back.

Now we see where the movement's capitulation has led. As one longtime feminist Marxist-Humanist said, the ban on D&X abortions "is a qualitatively different defeat from the many restrictions of the last 30 years because it is so absolutist with no exceptions, no way around it except going underground; and it so completely denies women's personhood in terms of her relation to healthcare."

In our age of fundamentalism, with forces worldwide—including the U.S.—trying to force women to accept a reality where we are viewed as less than human, we can't make the same mistake twice. For women to finally experience freedom, our vision of social change must be a revolutionary vision that is total from the start.

## Women in Iraq struggle for freedom

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fleeing the threat of honor killing, and we began a newspaper, "Al Mousawat" (Equality). It is the first radical voice for women in Iraq, calling for equal rights between men and women and a secular constitution not based on Islamic Shari'a. Our demand is not because we are anti-Islam, but because under Islamic Shari'a, it is not possible to have equality with men. A man can marry up to four women. In divorce, men have all the rights, with none for women. Women inherit only half of what their brothers do, women's testimony in civil matters is only worth half of a man's, and women cannot testify at all in a criminal case because our intellects are considered too inferior. Shari'a law allows a man to beat his wife. If the constitution is based on Shari'a, then women will have an inferior status for sure.

OWFI members' other priority is demanding jobs for women without income. Because of the war, they lost their jobs; most are widows due to consecutive wars, with lots of kids to feed. So we met with the (American) consultant of the ministry of labor and social affairs in the CPA, and told him these women needed some source of financial support right away. We got nothing. Then we took part in the demonstrations of the Union of Unemployed of Iraq side by side with thousands of workers over the summer. We sat in the street in 120-degree heat every day for almost two months. U.S. troops surrounded us, their bayonets pointed at us. Our demand was for immediate jobs or social insurance, just \$100 a month, barely enough to survive in Baghdad these days. The CPA promised to provide jobs by the end of August; we got none. They sent a letter saying there will be no payments and no humanitarian aid.

The saddest part of the occupation is that it permits the imposition of political Islam. Every single woman has to be under veil, covered from head to toe, even Christian women. And in the mosques, they tell the men that they are responsible for covering the women, and that women are not to work nor go to school beyond the sixth grade. OWFI has had many clashes with the Islamists. They have kidnapped men distributing "Al Mousawat." I am being sued by a man who claims the newspaper hurt his "religious feelings." Millions of women are not hurt when the Islamists impose compulsory veil on them, but he is hurt and can take me to court. Women who spoke out for equal rights previously had fatwas issued against them. In the face of all the threats, we depend on the support of women's and progressive movements around the world.

## WOMEN WORLDWIDE

by Mary Jo Grey

The 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence is a worldwide campaign between Nov. 25 (the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women) through Dec. 10 (International Human Rights Day). The campaign began in 1991, initiated by the Center for Women's Global Leadership. Over 1,000 organizations in 130 countries are participating this year.

—Information from *Women's Human Rights Online Bulletin*

Many vigils for recent victims of the growing violence against transgender people in Washington, D.C. have been held by friends and supporters. Three transgender male-to-female people were brutally attacked by at least two different men within a five-day period—two of them died. The brutality occurred just days after the one-year anniversary of the slaying of two D.C. transgender teens. Local clinics and colleges are sponsoring support groups for the more than 4,000 transgender people who feel their lives are in danger.

—Information from *off our backs*

Russian Colonel Yuri Budanov, the first Russian military officer to be tried for abuses in Chechnya, has been convicted of kidnapping, raping and murdering an 18-year-old Chechen woman he was interrogating. He was only sentenced to ten years in prison, including the three years he has spent in custody. "When Chechens go on trial for similar crimes, this same court metes out immeasurably more severe sentences," said the attorney for the victim's family.

—Information from *Women's Human Rights Online Bulletin*

Close to 100 women from nine countries joined U.S. women at the first International Working Women's Conference in Atlanta in October. The conference examined issues such as patriarchy, globalization and union organizing, as the women met to discuss concretely their experience as women workers.

—Information from *Women's Human Rights Online Bulletin*

If people want to practice religion, they should do so personally inside mosques, not through law and government. I say that nobody deserves to be ruled by a misogynist mentality. But in recent years, progressive movements around the world that had concepts of justice, equality, and modernity, clashed with something called postmodernism and the idea of cultural relativism, which means respecting cultural practices whatever they may be, even the oppression of women.

Cultural relativists say the women of Iraq are used to being treated that way, religious rule is good enough for them, but of course it's not for women in the U.S. This attitude is partly racist.

I am a member of the Worker Communist Party of Iraq (unrelated to the Communist Party, which is collaborating with the occupation). Iraq has a gigantic, secular working class that needs direct representation in a free council that represents it, not one based on ethnic and religious differences. Women need a say in writing the constitution. The people deserve a socialist Iraq, where everyone shares in the resources and direct representation.

I would like to see the immediate replacement of the U.S. troops with United Nations peacekeeping forces. The UN is not more humane nor much different from the U.S., but it is more neutral, and they have not pointed guns at us, did not bomb us, did not kill us in the first

place. They have more experience in handling post-war situations. And we want to see support for a secular government instead of what the U.S. has done to increase ethnic and religious rivalries that could lead Iraqis to fight and kill each other.

The U.S. plans to privatize everything except water and electricity. Already, hospitals and schools charge fees. The U.S. doesn't want real change in women's situation in Baghdad, they just want to put a few women in official places and tell the whole world that women are in power now. But there are prospects for the workers; the Worker Communist Party has workers' councils in three cities. The U.S. supports the Ba'athists against us in the new trade unions. I think if we had a year under neutral UN administration, we could have a healthy political atmosphere to organize the working class and women. And maybe work towards a socialist government and not be dragged into capitalism.

By speaking here, I am reaching out to the people of the U.S. who stood beside us, who went into the streets and demonstrated against the war. We know they will support us, the women's movement and women's empowerment.

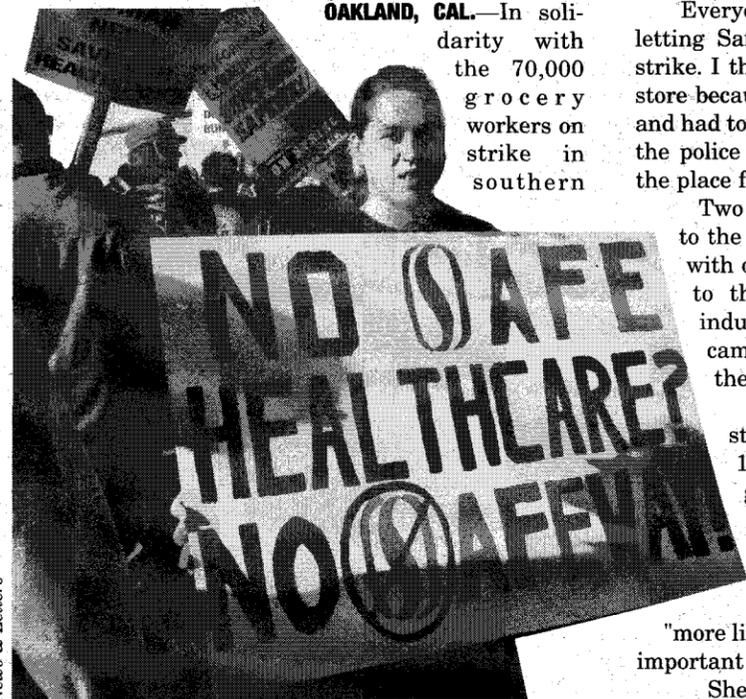


News & Letters

## Grocery worker solidarity

OAKLAND, CAL.—In solidarity with the 70,000 grocery workers on strike in southern

California, a few hundred supporters came out for a very lively march here on Saturday, Nov. 22. We marched down College Avenue to the Safeway store at 51st Street.



Everyone got into making a lot of noise and really letting Safeway know how seriously folks take this strike. I think we especially enjoyed it in front of the store because while we didn't have a permit to march and had to stay on the sidewalk going there, once there the police couldn't do anything about us taking over the place for a while.

Two strikers, a man and a woman, had come up to the Bay Area to participate in the march, help with our solidarity movement up here, and speak to the crowd. Union activists from different industries participated, a lot of anti-war youth came out for it, and some grocery workers from the area.

The strikers pointed out how crucial this strike—which started Oct. 11 at Vons and Oct. 12 at Safeway, Ralph's and Albertsons—is for grocery workers across the entire country. You just can't say it's just about these three companies, nor even just about California. Earlier in the week we spoke to a woman from Ralph's who said she views the strike "more like a revolution than a strike" because of how important it is.

She added, "Why do you think more than 95% voted to strike? Because by our calculations a family of four will be paying \$450 a month in a few years for healthcare with what they were offering. They want to Wal-Martify the whole grocery industry. This is one of the last few places someone without a lot of education, or someone who hasn't been corrupted, can make \$17 an hour. It really is about Americans losing the grocery industry to Wal-Mart and others who pay pathetic wages and saddle you with this healthcare crisis."

—Mitch Weerth

When we got to the store the crowd grew bigger, and we massed in front of the doors, blocking the foot traffic in and out of the store, and blocking the car traffic through the parking lot, chanting, "Boycott Safeway, boycott Safeway!"

## WORKSHOP TALKS

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Wal-Mart is seen today by many labor advocates, municipal leaders and even other businesses as the "big bad wolf" of industry because it super-exploits labor. But it inspires exploitation elsewhere. Safeway, in the seventh week of the strike by its grocery workers, rationalizes its demand for draconian health benefit cuts and two-tier wages by the need to compete with Wal-Mart.

### ABUSES BEGIN AT HOME

But Wal-Mart is hardly the only abuser nor the first. In the two decades since 1980, a quarter of the manufacturing jobs in America have disappeared. Today not only manufactured goods but also services have moved offshore. Services as diverse as software support, cargo inventory, library archives, HMO medical data, and banking and credit information maintenance are electronically moving their operations offshore with the help of satellite technology.

Outsourcing was homegrown before it went offshore. In my own shop at Kaiser, the union itself allowed the employer to re-engineer our jobs and made it easier for management to subcontract out union work. Kaiser has now signed a multi-million dollar contract to export its medical records to India where third parties will hire workers, as part of a new "techno-caste."

A data-entry worker in Pakistan, hired by one of these third-party contractors working for University of California-San Francisco Medical Center, threatened to post on the internet patients' confidential medical records unless she received back pay. She is among millions of Asians who have become part of a growing lucrative pool of cheap labor exploited by multi-national corporations through predatory contractors.

Patients' medical data is only the most recent example of subcontracting in a global economy where outsourcing is the new standard. Before digital technology, most hospitals already subcontracted tasks like linen services, meal services, laboratory services, and nursing services. But through digital technology, even services of medical doctors in the future can be sent offshore. Radiologists who read X-rays and make medical diagnoses are already offshore.

Marx had warned that capital's "revolutionizing processes" recruited more and more proletarians from all levels of society and all kinds of professions.

Many of the losses American workers suffered were to subcontracting right here at home. Not only are American multi-nationals expanding to offshore countries, depriving workers here of manufacturing jobs. Remaining workers here are sped-up to boost productivity to bring about a "recovery" without new jobs.

That's a recipe for wages everywhere to eventually fall to the lowest common denominator. Even the labor pool of Mexico is not cheap enough for manufacturers moving to China for even cheaper labor. Some Chinese companies in turn have lost contracts to the latest competition.

We workers feel increasingly trapped while commodities move freely about the globe. We endowed capital with the power to dominate us. Only we—collectively—can regain control of our own labor and terminate capital's dominance.

## Maquila women defeat company union

MEMPHIS, TENN.—The Mex Mode factory in Puebla, Mexico wasn't functioning on Nov. 8, 1999. At that time, there began a union and the situation was calm. They respected us, we had good productivity incentives, and a normal salary. But then the FROC-CROC (Revolutionary Federation of Workers and Farmers, a pro-boss and government union) came.

The bosses told us, "You have to affiliate yourselves with it." Many of us resisted, because we didn't believe in that union. But they affiliated themselves with us automatically. Then, things began to change.

### WAGES FALL, RODENTS RUN WILD

In Mexico, the government gives people a little extra money if they don't earn a lot, a "salary credit." If you earn a little more the government stops giving you the salary credit. Our salary never went up but they took 10% out of our salary credit. The production incentives went down from roughly \$10 a week to \$1 a week.

We also began seeing more rodents in the company cafeteria and the food was rotting. We reported this to the union, but they never did anything for us. The only time a representative came to the factory was on Friday to get his check. So one day we decided to organize ourselves, independently of the union.

The first thing we did was stop eating at the company cafeteria. Out of the approximately 1,000 workers, only 10 ate in the cafeteria. We knew this action would have repercussions. We said to ourselves that if they tried to fire anyone, they would be firing everyone. This action gave us a successful model to follow so that when we did something larger, there would be the necessary support.

The day we returned from vacation in January 2001, they fired five of us. They said we were responsible for the protest, and that they didn't want leaders. That's weird, because all companies want leaders, right? But not leaders who move with the people. The next day co-workers said that they were going to do a work stoppage, and wanted our help.

## Organize Memphis community hospital!

MEMPHIS, TENN.—We need justice. We nurses have been under fire from the Regional Medical Center (the Med) management ever since we started to organize in the early part of this year (see "Tenn. nurses organize," July 2003 N&L). We are working in a hostile environment. They are targeting union supporters. They are after us, because we want to take care of our patients.

I don't like it when I see people waiting and there are no beds for them. They got emergency room patients laying out in the hall with their paramedics watching over them. We don't even have decent headlights for the neurosurgeon to do a craniotomy.

I was a kid when Martin Luther King Jr. came here and I was working at the Med. I saw what happened. I saw Louis Donelson, the chairman of the board, standing next to then-Mayor Henry Loeb, saying it would be a cold day in hell before there was ever a union in this town. King lost his life over that.

Every single person in my department who has been disciplined has been a union supporter. One nurse was suspended and another fired. Another woman who was fired was supposed to have a grievance hearing within two weeks, but she didn't have a hearing for almost five

## John Miller, 1919-2003

We mourn the death of John Miller, a retired Black Chrysler worker who wrote the *News & Letters* column "On the Line" under the name of John Allison from 1962 until 1980. He died of Alzheimer's disease at the age of 84.

Both a long-time member of the Detroit News and Letters Committee and a UAW worker at the now closed Chrysler Highland Park plant, John constantly fought against UAW bureaucrats, against Chrysler management's drive to speed up production, and against practices of exploitation and discrimination in the plant.

John also spearheaded the rank-and-file movement in the plant to put out "The Stinger," a regular publication that exposed both management and union abuses. "The Stinger," like John's columns in *News & Letters*, helped in the union that threw out the do-nothing Reutherite union bureaucrats and replaced them with rank-and-file fighters for better working conditions and more effective worker representation. Word about the effectiveness of "The Stinger" quickly spread, and other Chrysler plant workers put out their own "Stingers."

John's wife, Mary, also worked at the Chrysler Highland Park plant and her voice was often heard in John's column as she described the abuses and discrimination women suffered in the plant and their often successful efforts to fight against them.

In his many battles in the plant, through his activity in the Detroit News and Letters Committee and in his many columns in the paper, John always represented the highest principles of Marxist-Humanism and constantly worked as a revolutionary worker-thinker dedicated to the creation of a new truly human society

—Andy Phillips

We told them, "Of course." I had found out about a student group in the U.S., United Students Against Shutdowns, and they aided in the strike.

### FROM STRIKE TO INSIDE STRUGGLE



Josephina Hernandez tells University of Memphis audience of U.S.-Mexico border factory struggles. The Tennessee Economic Renewal and Women's Action Coalition sponsored her.

When they set the riot police on us, we told ourselves that we shouldn't cry, that the struggle needed to go on. Something that stays with me is the image of some company men laughing at the women getting hit by the police. This made us think that we can't keep on like this.

We decided to organize ourselves so that people could fight from the inside. We made it so that the people could come back to the factory. In Mexico that is historic, because a leader never returns to the workplace. But we returned. Then for nine months we suffered all types of abuses, verbal and physical. We resisted until finally on Sept. 21 we officially formed the Independent Union of Mex Mode Company Workers.

The first improvements dealt with respect, because before they would verbally and physically abuse us. Now, a boss can't yell at a worker or insult her intelligence. We also got raises in wages. We also have won respect for pregnant women. Pregnant women need to eat a little more, they need more breaks. We won women the right to leave five minutes before lunch and five minutes before the end of the day, and also to have a few less work responsibilities.

It gives me a lot of satisfaction to see my friends benefiting from the struggle that we made.

—Josefina Hernandez

months. Another woman was suspended for four or five days in March. She still hasn't had a grievance hearing. She was given a final warning and 15 months probation. If she looks sideways during that 15 months, she's out the door, and they still haven't let her have a grievance hearing. This is the kind of stuff we are up against.

We took a survey asking what the nurses wanted out of the union. The first six items nurses listed were patient care-related. We want a safe environment for our patients, better equipment to take care of our patients, a better nurses-to-patient ratio. "I'd like to have a raise" didn't come in until number seven. The administration has tried desperately to make everyone think that we are just money hungry. Not one of us has asked for money. It's the people of this community that we care about.

The Med management is trying to make this a Black and white thing by pitting the Black and white nurses against each other. This started when we began the union activity last year. But they are not going to separate us, they are not going to divide us.

—Med nurses, Black and white

## From the Writings of Raya Dunayevskaya MARXIST-HUMANIST ARCHIVES

The fact that the first shot of counter-revolution in Grenada on Oct. 19 [1983] was fired by the "revolutionaries" themselves, its Army, politically and militarily headed by Gen. Austin (plus Coard), demands that we take a deeper look at the type of revolution that erupted in Grenada in 1979. It is impossible not to be moved by the last words spoken by the leader of that revolution, Maurice Bishop, as, in utter shock, he looked at the Army shooting into the masses who had just released him from house arrest: "My God, my God, they have turned the guns against the people."

That does not free us from facing the stark fact that the first shot of counter-revolution came from within the revolutionary Party-Army-State. That first shot opened the road for the imperialist U.S. invasion that, it is true, lay in wait from Day One of the revolution. This, however, in no way absolves the "Party" of its heinous crime. The fact that Castro—though an "internationalist" who spelled out his solidarity in concrete acts such as sending Grenada doctors and construction workers, teachers as well as military advisers—nevertheless failed to develop the ideas that were at stake, and left the masses unprepared for ways to confront the divisions within the leadership that would have gory consequences on Oct. 19...

The ramifications of Grenada are by no means limited to the Caribbean, or even the whole Third World, but are so global that the whole question of war and peace in a nuclear world actually touches the very question of the survival of humanity...

In opposing the American imperialist invasion, and demanding the evacuation of all foreign troops from Grenada, we must not simply limit ourselves to actions of solidarity. Indeed, we must not only criticize General Austin and the whole military "Revolutionary Council," who are to be brought to account, but also look at the 1979 revolution, both positively and negatively. That becomes of the essence now, if we are ever to stop counter-revolutions from arising within revolutions. In the half-century since the transformation of Russia into a state-capitalist society we have become witness to such degeneracy that an ideological debate is ended by murder.

The fact that these horrors can happen even where there is no material base for counter-revolution as there was in Stalin's transformation of a workers' state into a state-capitalist society, and where, as in Pol Pot's Cambodia, counter-revolution is spelled out as outright genocide against your own people—and that in the name of revolution!—demands that we never shut a relentless critical eye to all aspects of revolution and not just leave it at opposing imperialism. Nor must we limit it "internally" to bringing a General Austin to account, but also look at revolutionaries who, though they are now reaping the whirlwind, had helped shroud the void in philosophy with the absurd reductionism of "non-interference in internal affairs."

What history shows is that once the road to revolution seeks shortcuts, the revolution itself remains unfinished. What we see when the philosophy of revolution is separated from actual, social revolution is the attempt to force the concept of revolution through the barrel of a gun. That is what we saw in Grenada. This cries out for a totally different attitude to a philosophy of revolution; without that no revolution can fully self-develop. What happened in Grenada can illuminate the contradiction of contradictions—counter-revolution from within revolution. It becomes necessary to trace the Grenadian Revolution from its start in 1979—the year also of the Iranian Revolution, which likewise ended in a Khomeini-type of counter-revolution!...

### THEORY & ACTION

Theoretically, the most important of the statements Bishop delivered when he was in the U.S. May 31–June 10, 1983, related to the two points he raised in the interview with *The Village Voice*. (1) One concerned the question of "consciousness" of workers: "We tried to tell the people to use their own consciousness." The other point, in contrast to this, was the question of the consciousness of the leaders which had no such ambiguity as the one relating to the workers.

While we do not hear the thoughts of the workers, Bishop does trace the development of the leadership's consciousness in the 1950s and 1960s:

There have been periods when I was attracted to a lot of the cultural nationalist material, frankly Frantz Fanon, Malcolm, various people like that... I would say that the entire leadership

### EDITOR'S NOTE

To commemorate the 20th anniversary of the murder of Maurice Bishop by his own comrades and the U.S. invasion of Grenada, we publish excerpts from a Political-Philosophic Letter written on November 28, 1983 by Raya Dunayevskaya. Its original title is "Grenada: Counter-Revolution & Revolution. The Caribbean Today & the Challenge from 30 Years of Movements from Practice that were Themselves a Form of theory."

The letter speaks to the central problems that continue to confront the revolutionary movement today. The text is in *The Raya Dunayevskaya Collection*, 8036.

of the party and the government came out of a black power tradition, all of us...I don't think we moved beyond that until the early 1970s...

Certainly by that time, outside of the cultural nationalist question, we were beginning to read a lot of the most classical socialist works, and beginning to move outside just the question of blackness, around to a materialist conception of the world.

Q: He's having an anniversary this year. [laughter] The cursed name has not passed your lips. I think it begins with M.

A: [Laughter] I'm trying not to say his name.

Laughingly or otherwise, consciously or unconsciously, what came through from "trying not to say" the name of Marx was not the simple matter of "tactics" when visiting the imperialist land they rightly feared might be planning an invasion. Rather, it was

first to become clear that critical week between Oct. 12 when the majority of the Central Committee voted to put Bishop under house arrest, and the savage, unconscionable,

dastardly murder on the 19th of October as the masses struck for him and freed him from house arrest. That is what was inherent in what I referred to in the early part of this letter, on what both he and Castro called "non-interference in internal matters" as a "principle," when what was actually involved, however, was a battle of ideas on the decisive question of Marx's Marxism, instead of acting as if Cuba or Russia are the Marxists.

In this way revolutionary methodology—the dialectics of revolution—gets reduced to "conception of leadership methods," and that is expressed as if a unified view permeated the entire leadership: "We feel that in many respects, Grenada is a true experiment in the whole theory and practice of socialism... If we succeed in this path...there are going to be a number of lessons for other small developing island states coming after us."

It is nearly impossible to gauge the great shock Maurice Bishop must have experienced Oct. 19 as he became witness to...the Great Divide between leaders and ranks and within the leadership itself as the Party "turned the guns against the people" soon after they had freed him from house arrest. Soon his voice, too, was stifled by murder...

Nothing is more urgent at this moment than to raise the question of dialogue...as theoretical preparation for the dialectics of revolution itself.

Therein lies the rub. That is exactly what has been missing on the part of all practitioners of instant Marxism as they become masters of substitution, and reduce a philosophy of revolution, a Marxist revolutionary praxis, to "leadership methods," whatever that means. Without a philosophic vision, much less listening to the voices from below, all the majority of the Central Committee in Grenada could come up with was being opposed to the alleged "one-man rule" of Bishop, whom they hurried to expel from the Party and put under house arrest—without any thought about the consequences, either from the masses whom Bishop had led since the 1979 Revolution, or from the imperialist enemy poised for invasion. Unfortunately, Bishop, who did enjoy the confidence of the masses and was, indeed, freed from house arrest by them, had not dug into the differing tendencies within those who held "a materialist conception of the world." He had not brought into the consciousness of the masses nor shared with international colleagues the disputes which were wreaking havoc in revolutionary Grenada.

### CONFLICTS WITHIN THE CARIBBEAN LEFT

Long before the Grenada counter-revolution Bukka Rennie had discussed "The Conflicting Tendencies in the Caribbean Revolution." (2) He goes so far in concretizing the objective situation that he not only concludes with the theory of state-capitalism, but shows that "the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) has long since become a bureaucratized elitist party which in fact is the vanguard of a new class formation."

When one has been that comprehensive in the study of the objective world situation, developing it over 22 pages to show that Stalinism is indeed a new, non-working class, enemy "class formation"—state-capitalism—how can one nevertheless conclude that when it comes to the concrete situation in the Caribbean ("in Trinidad and Tobago"), Caribbean Stalinism and Revolutionary Marxism "are not hostile to each other..."

The theoretician had not been able to move from what he was against (Stalinism) to what he was for—how to begin anew. Though Rennie's movement in



Supporters of Maurice Bishop (inset) in Grenada demand his release from house arrest.

Trinidad did call itself New Beginning, he evaded the task of philosophically restating Marxism for one's own age, on the grounds of all the new Humanist beginnings of the Third World. Instead, he shifted the whole responsibility for that to the shoulders of the proletariat, to "practice"—when it has been precisely the movement from practice which has shown itself to be a form of theory by raising all these new points of departure, and which demands that the theoreticians meet that challenge.

Rennie does say that, instead of the elitist party, the New Beginning Movement prefers not to declare itself to be the Party. But is it just a question of form of organization as against the Single Party State that has kept us shackled? Isn't the key to the present question of the dialectics of revolution and of thought the battle of ideas not merely among the leadership but within the masses who think their own thoughts? The new relationship of practice to theory is rooted in what

workers do and what they think. The aim is to achieve a new unity of theory and practice. Not only did the 1970s' revolts not achieve that, but in Grenada the differences

among the leaders ended in outright murder.

Bukka Rennie placed the Black Power movement of the 1960s on the same level as the 1917 Russian Revolution—totally ignoring the fact that it not only never reached the profound depth and breadth of November 1917, but that none had even attempted the kind of philosophic reorganization Lenin did when he broke with his own philosophic past and articulated Marx's view of smashing the bourgeois state to smithereens, recreating Marx's work on the Paris Commune and *Critique of the Gotha Program* for his own age as *State and Revolution*.

Clearly, it is C.L.R. James' theory which Bukka Rennie is expounding. (3) What we are now confronted with is the stark fact that in Grenada, keeping quiet about differences within the leadership was resolved with the savage, brutal, irrational, counter-revolutionary murder of the leader. It is true that a small part of the search for shortcuts reflected the workers' impatience to do away with the exploitative, racist, imperialist society. But the greater truth is that, like all intellectuals, those leaders suffered from the preoccupation of all elitists—giving the answer "for" the workers. It meant an evasion of theory as well as of the fact that the movement from practice is a form of theory.

It is this which we traced through the actual revolts of the early 1950s as we greeted the three new paths to freedom that were seen in the Hungarian Revolution, the Montgomery Bus Boycott, and the revolts in the Russian forced labor camps in Vorkuta. *Marxism and Freedom* was structured on the movement from practice not alone in our age but from the age of revolutions 1776, 1789—and on the Hegelian dialectic from then to today. What predominated, however, was the question that tore at the vitals of all revolutionary movements: "What Happens After" power is achieved. The decentralized committee form instead of the vanguard "Party to Lead" seemed to be the answer. We found that, however, to be only part of the answer once the turbulent 1960s and their decentralized activism led only to unfinished revolutions because it was devoid of philosophy.

In *Philosophy and Revolution*, where we returned to the Hegelian dialectic in and for itself and to Marx's dialectics of revolution, we tried to articulate "Why Hegel? Why Now?" for our age. And it was the 1970s, which finally revealed Marx's work as a totality, that led to the return to Marx's Marxism—Marx's, not Engels'; Marx's, not Lenin's; Marx's, not Mao's nor its variant, Castro's. In a word, Marx's "revolution in permanence" is ground not alone for theory but also for organization.

There can be no successful revolution without an historic sense both of past and present, of a battle of ideas, a clearing of heads not for any academic purpose but with full realization that a serious Marxist discussion is needed as preparation for revolution and its deepening once the first act of overthrow of the old has been achieved. When, instead, revolutionary methodology is reduced to "leadership methods," individual or collective, the very basis not only of theory but of the revolution itself has been lost. That is what happened in Grenada.

### NOTES

1. Interview with Bishop in *Village Voice*, June 28, 1983.
2. In *Pan-African Journal*, issued from Nairobi, East Africa, Summer 1975, Volume 2.
3. In 1984, C.L.R. James wrote an analysis of Grenada in *Communist Affairs*, July 1984, and gave an interview in *Third World Book Review*, Vol. 1, No.2, 1984.

## ESSAY

## Revolutionary life of Charles Denby

by Susan Van Gelder

The publication of a 40th anniversary edition of *American Civilization on Trial* by Raya Dunayevskaya and the long-awaited *Dialectics of Black Freedom Struggles* by John Alan Reminds us, on the 20th anniversary of his death, how significant Charles Denby was to the development of Marxist-Humanist philosophy and its organization, News and Letters Committees. As Raya Dunayevskaya put it,

The 75 years of Charles Denby's life are so full of class struggles, Black revolts, freedom movements that they not only illuminate the present, but cast a light even on the future... Listening to him, you felt you were witnessing an individual's life that was somehow universal, and that touched you personally... The genius of Charles Denby lies in the fact that the story of his life—*Indignant Heart: A Black Worker's Journal*—is the history of workers' struggles for freedom, his and all others the world over.(1)

## A UNIQUE INDIVIDUAL

Charles Denby was a Black auto production worker who grew up in rural Alabama and came north to Detroit with many other young Black men in the 1920s to work in the auto factories. He became involved in race and class struggles and was recruited into the Trotskyist movement. He quickly discovered the increasing division between rank-and-file labor and the union bureaucracy and refused to become a part of the union leadership. During the 1950s he chose to work with Raya Dunayevskaya and remained with her through several organizational splits. Their experiences led him to accept editorship of *News & Letters* when it was founded in 1955 because he "felt strongly that there was an imperative need for a new kind of workers' paper" (emphasis added).(2) His column "Worker's Journal" appeared on the front page of each issue until his death in 1983.

What does it mean to say "Workers as revolutionary thinkers?" First, Denby's experiences as an African-American Southern farmer and autoworker had given him a desire for freedom that was total. He fought a life-long battle against the fragmentation of himself that capitalism forces upon us all. In Marxist-Humanism Denby helped develop a philosophy of liberation which in turn helped him develop and concretize his drive to be a full human being. Marxist-Humanism strives toward Marx's vision of a society centered on human needs and capacities. Denby understood how alienating capitalist society is and how totally it must be uprooted for a better world to begin.

Denby's writings, as he was the first to insist, reflect dialogues, discussions, debates with other workers. His was an individualism that always retained his awareness of connection to the mass movement, or as Hegel had put it, "individualism that lets nothing interfere with its universality, or freedom." In the pamphlet *Workers Battle Automation* written in 1960, Charles Denby is the primary author, but brought in other workers to tell their own stories and share their own views, often differing from his own, of automation in steel, light manufacturing, and even offices. This is indeed revolutionary in a society where workers are supposed to be ignorant and unwilling to think.

"A unique combination of worker and intellectual"—this is not only a principle of Marxist-Humanist journalism and organization, but a description of Charles Denby himself. The stories of his life that make up his autobiography, *Indignant Heart: A Black Worker's Journal* are not abstract discussions about philosophy. Philosophy is present throughout.

In 1943 after returning South, Denby came to Detroit again to find a better-paying job in the auto factories:

They had recently had a stoppage because I was not in that department...

I said [to Put, Denby's roommate], "How come? Isn't there a union now?"...

Wide said, "The union doesn't mean everything to Negroes that some people think"...

The employment office was practically filled. I met up with a white fellow from Tennessee who had just come to Detroit... He asked me what I was going to ask for.

I told him riveting.

He said he didn't know the names of any jobs and would ask for the same thing. He'd never been North before or in a plant. He was in the line behind me.

When I reached the desk I asked the man for riveting. He told me that rivets weren't any riveting jobs. He asked if I had riveted before.

I said, yes, in Mobile, on bridges and in shipyards. I was lying to him but wanted to get the job.

He said that was an altogether different kind of riveting and that my experience wouldn't apply. If I wanted to learn, he could send me to the school and they would pay me sixty cents an hour. He said he had a laboring job open, it only paid eighty-seven cents an hour... The man promised I might get on another job in a day or two that paid more...

I waited for the fellow from Tennessee... He said they had given him a job, riveting. "And I just come in from the field."

I asked him if he had said that he had experience or if he had said going to school.

He said, no.

I got kinda mad and went back to the man at the desk. He said he was busy and that he had given me the last available job.(3)

Denby's story reveals the persistence and depth of the racism even unionized workers confronted. It also points a direction for overcoming it: dialogue between white and Black workers that all with a stake in systemic racism strive so hard to prevent.

Denby continued to struggle against injustice in the shop, fighting for Black women workers to be given jobs in the sewing department. He insisted that there be no compromise on full integration, and that the Communist Party's support for the "no-strike pledge," which the government had convinced the union leadership to agree to in support of the war effort, would only hurt workers.

Throughout the 1940s and 1950s Denby continued to write about the increasing gap between the union bureaucracy and rank-and-file union members. Racism continued unremittently and profoundly to drive a wedge between white and Black workers and limit their power to challenge the direction of the union leadership. Denby recounts his experiences with the Communist and Trotskyist parties during this period, where he sought for Blacks and all workers to be treated as full, thinking human beings.

He found that despite what was said, prejudice against African Americans persisted in the radical parties. He also became disillusioned with their vanguardist philosophy, that they were the ones to teach and lead the masses to revolution.

However he recognized a foundation for his own thinking and activities in Raya Dunayevskaya's view of the central role of the Black masses in America, and in her concept, based on her study of Hegel's Absolute Idea, that theory and practice are inseparable. In 1955 the Johnson-Forest Tendency, to which they both belonged, underwent a split. Co-leader C.L.R. James disagreed with Dunayevskaya and Denby on the need for a revolutionary organization to reconstitute dialectical thought for modern struggles.

## A LIFE OF STRUGGLES

*Indignant Heart: A Black Worker's Journal* was first published in 1952. Part II was written in 1978 after Denby retired from the plant and had been editor of *News & Letters* for 23 years. In this part Denby reflects not only his personal experiences but the whole breadth of John experience he gained as a Marxist-Humanist. As Alan expresses it in *Dialectics of Black Freedom Struggles*:

The range of his columns included stories about wildcat strikes, how the union bureaucracy participated in the writing of sell-out contracts, the relation between automation and unemployment in the Black communities and his own activity in the Civil Rights Movement. He wrote on the crucial dimension of race in America's freedom struggles and on the importance of philosophy to articulate the meaning of his own and the movements' activities... Today's activists would do well to reconnect with Denby's way of recollecting the meaning of the freedom struggles during his lifetime.(4)

The difference between the two parts is remarkable. Some critics, incapable of recognizing workers as thinkers, believe Denby was "brainwashed" in News and Letters Committees. But read Denby's speech at one of his local union meetings in 1962, and then still try to say that this man was brainwashed.

I also pointed out that the great profits the corporation was making, which everyone had talked about, were going back into machines, into automation to make us work harder. It wasn't just a question of labor, I said, it was a question of the laborer; and I knew the company understood that very well, because they always kept putting more and more into the machines, and nothing for the human beings. Karl Marx, I said, had been the one to first point this fact out, a fact that every worker knows very well without having a long explanation

about it. It meant the dead labor, the machines, were always on top of living labor, the workers. And if anybody wanted to find out the truth about that statement, all they had to do was go into any auto shop in this country, and they'd find out about it soon enough. In the shop, it's not a question of theory, it's a matter of fact that every worker knows: every year the machines are improved to run the workers more and more, to get as much out of them as possible...

From the yelling that followed—hand-clapping, foot stamping and whistling—it's clear that the workers knew exactly what I was talking about. And after that demonstration, the bureaucrats turned off all of the microphones that had been set up throughout the hall and behind which workers were lined up to speak. And to this day in my local union, they've never set up microphones the way they used to at contract ratification meetings.(5)

Alan underscores the importance of Charles Denby's relationship to Raya Dunayevskaya:

Dunayevskaya recalled exciting moments when ideas were exchanged back and forth between herself and Denby. What she described was nothing less than a concretization of the Absolute Idea, the unity of the movement from theory with the movement from practice which is itself a form of theory. The unity created new directions in the thinking of both Dunayevskaya and Denby.(6)

Dunayevskaya recalled that Denby's response to the news of Stalin's death was in sharp contrast to others in the Johnson-Forest Tendency who felt that workers did not see any relation to their own lives:

It was March 5, 1953 when Stalin died. Denby called me the minute he got out of the shop. He said he imagined I was writing some sort of political analysis of what that meant and he wanted me to know what the workers in his shop were talking about that day: "Every worker was saying, 'I have just the man to fill Stalin's shoes—my foreman.'" It impressed me so much that I said not only that I would write the political analysis of the death of that totalitarian, but that the workers' remarks would become the jumping off point for my article on the trade unions.(7)

On the 20-year anniversary of his death, Charles Denby is very much alive in the philosophy of Marxist-Humanism. His writings on Black opposition to militarism and the importance of Marx's revolutionary ideas to the Black world (some are included in the new *American Civilization on Trial*) are important for all who oppose globalized capitalism today and wish to create new human foundations for society.

In the last year of his life Denby, though quite ill, was enthused by Raya Dunayevskaya's new discoveries of Karl Marx's writings on the Black world. He urged Dunayevskaya to develop this in her 1983 Introduction to the pamphlet. When completed, it showed the development of Marx's understanding of Black oppression and that Marx saw overcoming it would lead to greater freedom for all of humanity.

He had concluded *Indignant Heart: A Black Worker's Journal* similarly:

I consider my life story as part of the worldwide struggle for freedom. As a Black from South U.S.A. and a Black auto production worker in Detroit, my experience has proved to me that history is the record of the fight of all oppressed people in everything they have thought and done to try to get human freedom in this world. I'm looking forward to that new world, and I firmly believe it is within reach, because so many others all over the world are reaching so hard with me.(8)

## NOTES

1. Dunayevskaya, Raya, Afterword to *Indignant Heart: A Black Worker's Journal*. Wayne State University Press: Detroit, 1989. pp. 295-303
2. Ibid, p. 299.
3. Denby, Charles, *Indignant Heart*, op. cit. pp. 87-88
4. Alan, John, *Dialectics of Black Freedom Struggles*. News & Letters: Chicago, 2003.
5. Denby, op. cit. pp. 255-257.
6. Alan, op. cit.
7. Dunayevskaya, op. cit. p. 297.
8. Denby, op. cit. p. 294.

## NEWS &amp; LETTERS

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Raya Dunayevskaya

Chairwoman, National Editorial Board (1955-1987)

Charles Denby

Editor (1955-1983)

Olga Domanski, Peter Wermuth, Co-National Organizers, News and Letters Committees. Jim Mills, Managing Editor. Felix Martin, Labor Editor (1983-1999).

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**WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH LABOR TODAY?**

I was glad to find, on my daily "net" searches, the article by Htun Lin in your November issue, on "Strikes for Health." Though I'm not a true Marxist, I'm glad to find people taking the position he put forth because, as the UFCW strike is showing, this country is approaching a crisis which we finally have to do something about.

My initial response to the signs of socioeconomic inequality—the statistics, political trends, changes in neighborhoods and so on—was to expect either the free market system to work it out on its own, or smart people to figure it out. But it hit home when I lost my job. I also had a lot of time to look around and see what is actually going on out there from the UFCW strike to Wal-Mart's "super-centers." I'm growing fearful—and angry. I suspect part of the problem is that people on the bottom are not making their voices heard where they need to be heard. I'm reaching out to find others who feel the same way, to exchange ideas and figure out how we can do something about what's happening in America.

**Henry Browne  
California**

+++

I'm in an ad-hoc non-profit organization that just got two corporate types in. They introduced new vocabulary and now instead of "outreach" we have "marketing." At first it seemed harmless enough, those are just words. But the more that ideology creeps in, the more the discussion gets reduced to how much money is available for a project. So I hear "if the marketing is good, we may have a little profit left from the project." That turns non-profit into for-profit private enterprise.

**Still a non-profit worker  
California**

+++

For decades everyone has known what a "McJob" is. When it was officially put in the dictionary, McDonalds claimed it infringed on their trademark, but living language is more democratic than any corporate spin. Until now, Wal-Mart has been the largest purveyor of "McJobs," but now unionized retail grocery workers are in the fight of their lives to keep health benefits and stop two-tier wages as their employers seem determined to match Wal-Mart's standard for exploiting labor.

**Strike supporter  
Oakland**

+++

The economy is really bad these days. Elk Grove Village has one of the biggest industrial parks in the country. My brother is working near O'Hare Airport. He told me recently that every day, when he looks out his window, he sees another business closing down and disappearing. He's definitely worried about his own job.

**Mike  
Chicago**

+++

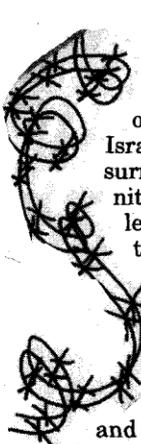
On the picket line at the Mass Transit Authority in Los Angeles, workers were connecting both the situation in this country and the war in Iraq with the struggle for healthcare. One worker said

the struggle for a better health care system is turning into a national struggle. "We need a national health insurance program," he said. Another worker added that "the government is spending a lot of money for the war machine, but not for the benefits of citizens here." Still another declared, "All workers are fighting against the same enemy, the big corporations."

When they saw the copies of *N&L* we were distributing one MTA worker said it was the first time in his life that he saw a paper that prints the ideas and expressions of workers the same way they were expressed.

**Strike Supporter  
Los Angeles**

**TEAR DOWN THE WALL**



When I read how the 400-mile barrier, which includes an electric fence, concrete walls, trenches "and other obstacles," being built by the Israeli government will totally surround 12 Palestinian communities, leaving residents able to leave only through gates controlled by Israeli security forces, all I could think of was the Warsaw Ghetto. That was when the Nazis walled in the Jewish section of Poland and starved and murdered the men, women and children within its walls.

Even as those Jews were being starved to death, they were able to mount an effective resistance. This wall, which the whole world condemns, will certainly only deepen Palestinians' resolve to fight for freedom.

**Another Jew against the Occupation  
Memphis**

**TODAY'S IMPERIALISM**

The article in the November issue of *N&L* concerning imperialism came as a ring to my fingers because I had been talking with a friend who is an economist about the situation of the U.S. and its global domination. He agreed with me on everything except the idea that the U.S. is a debtor nation or that other nations would lend money to a nation that does not have any solvency. I sent him a copy of Peter Hudis' article on "What is new in today's imperialism?" as evidence of my point of view.

Many of the so-called Left cannot see the transformation of imperialism into its different stages. They live in the past and are still dealing with "Imperialism, Highest Stage of Capitalism" as it was written by Lenin. At the time it was written it was a master work. But I consider it to be the same question Raya Dunayevskaya challenged us to answer: are we continuators or are we just followers?

**Marcos  
Los Angeles**

+++

Kudos to you for your article on "What is new in today's imperialism?" It really filled in the blanks as far as explaining the motivations of the power elite and the role capital plays in the current end-

**READERS' VIEWS**

less "war on terrorism."

The U.S. has become the most feared nation in the world thanks to Bush. I thought the second most dangerous nation was Israel. Any religious extremist (fundamentalist) in charge of a nation with nuclear weapons poses the scary potential of the end of civilization because, when threatened sufficiently, the religious fundamentalist becomes fanatic and frantic.

**M.C.  
Nebraska**

+++

Peter Hudis' analysis in the November essay is right on. However, it is only in the last two paragraphs that he gets to what I think should have been half the text: how are we going to get out from under the present system? We don't need to convince people that things are bad. We need to work out an alternative.

**Urszula Wislanka  
Oakland**

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**CLOSING THE SOA**

Over ten thousand gathered this year outside the gates of Ft. Benning, Ga. in the most diverse demonstration yet of opposition to the School of the Americas—a combat-training school for Latin American soldiers, whose graduates have tortured, raped, or assassinated hundreds of thousands of Latin Americans. Since protests against the SOA began over ten years ago, 170 people have served prison sentences for civil disobedience.

This year, in addition to the thousands gathered in Georgia, thousands of others gathered in Miami to protest the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) and 200,000 gathered in London during Bush's visit to protest the invasion and occupation of Iraq. The three mobilizations released a joint statement of solidarity. As Fr. Roy Bourgeois, founder of SOA/Watch put it, "Our struggles are interconnected. From the SOA, to FTAA, to the invasion of Iraq, our government's foreign policy is serving the interests of a few, and making us a lot of enemies."

**SOA Supporter  
Chicago**

**FOCUSING ON DIALECTICS**

*News & Letters'* primary focus on dialectics was at first so confusing as to drive me away from such theoretical considerations. As time has progressed, however, I find myself further intrigued by the synthesis of conflicting and contradictory theses. Prevailing ideology today prefers good and evil, up and down, hot and cold. I fell under the sway of this kind of polarity with no inkling of the connections that must be found and studied. I feel that by now I have been intellectually actualized because of reading *N&L*.

**Michael S.  
Texas**

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I especially enjoy reading the articles on Hegel. I find your criticisms of our

international leaders food for thought, but the total condemnation seems like a Trotskyite indulgence that is completely undialectical. The negation of the negation is a common phenomenon in nature and life. What's so deep about that? Mao had a saying, "a good thing can turn into bad, a bad thing into good." Of course, you're dialoging with a confirmed Maoist, so maybe you'll just write me off. Thanks for your efforts anyhow, and keep on working to keep the pot stirred up.

**V.M.N.  
Los Angeles**

**WORLDWIDE STRUGGLES FOR WOMEN'S LIBERATION**



Sheila Sahar's article in the

November issue of *N&L* on Shirin Ebadi, who just won a Nobel Peace Prize, set her in a context that shows her as completely indigenous to the Iranian women's struggle for freedom.

**Feminist  
Memphis**

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I keep thinking of the hundreds of thousands of women who have become victims of sexual violence since the civil war began in Congo in 1998. Abandoned by their families and ostracized by their communities, victims in many areas are uniting to provide support to each other. With some support from the United Nations and various women's groups, they have collected money for each other and perform traditional purification rituals so their sisters can be readmitted to society. Of special importance is how hundreds marched to Goma earlier this year to protest the culture of rape.

**Women's Liberationist  
Michigan**

+++

In Texas, where I live, the crime of rape is only a third degree felony punishable by two to ten years in prison, while burglary to steal a few material items is a second degree felony punishable by two to 20 years. Rape where serious bodily injury is inflicted is a second degree felony, but non-sexual assault is a first degree felony punishable by five to 99 years. In other words, in this traditionally patriarchal state, a rapist faces less punishment than someone who steals a horse or a few head of livestock! Yet today more than at any other time in the history of Western society, women have the potential ability to seize control by majority vote and force a true gender equality on this nation. I would like to see a national demonstration organized for gender equality in 2004.

**A male for equality  
Texas**

**VOICES AS REASON FROM WITHIN THE PRISON WALLS**

As individuals we have to figure out our priorities on an individual basis. That means thinking for ourselves and asking questions for ourselves. It has been the authorities, the political, religious, educational authorities who have attempted to comfort us by regulating our free thought and giving orders, rules, regulations by informing and forming in our minds their view of reality. To rethink for yourself you must question the questionable and learn in a state of open mindedness. Society is a voluntary association of persons for common ends. If our thoughts are regulated and/or programmed, we have no voluntary association, so we have no real society.



**Prisoner  
North Carolina**

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Yours is by far the best "underground" newspaper out there. Its journalistic integrity is superb and it offers perspectives the mainstream media refuses to cover. While I find the Marxist writings a bit esoteric, they have caused me to change my viewpoints on a lot of issues and that was all to the good. Please tell the dapper who sponsors my sub that it allows 15 to 20 people "inside the walls" to get truth and insight every issue.

**Prisoner  
Connecticut**

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It is very hard to be incarcerated. But to be incarcerated and kept blinded to what is really going on in the world is much worse. Thank you for a journal that keeps me in the world.

**Prisoner  
Michigan**

+++

*N&L* presents information and points of view that I often ponder but rarely see or hear from politically correct main-

stream media outlets. The diverse points of view you present are all rooted in the battles against injustice and oppression. In America we should never have to worry about the basic necessities like food, shelter and clothing. That should be provided for all citizens as long as billions of dollars are available and continue to be sent to other nations each year. That does not mean we should not have to work to earn a living. But I believe that in that kind of society, so long as one is physically and mentally capable of doing some kind of work to contribute to the well-being of his community or nation, if he refuses to contribute it would indicate a serious and deeper mental issue. That is an entirely different question. Thanks for continually challenging my ideas.

**Black Cheyenne prisoner  
Texas**

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One of the little known facts of prison life is that people have to stop going to

doctors because of the required co-pay. Many deaths result that could have been avoided. The problem is that many get only \$8 a month to spend for necessities, and their co-pay is \$7.50. Some of us in segregation don't even get the \$8 others might.

**Sick and tired prisoner  
Wisconsin**

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The Supermax prison in Boscobel has been controversial from the time it was built. There is no outside recreation at all. I haven't seen the sky for seven months, nor have I had any fresh air in all that time. They have a "recreation" area which is a concrete room with a small outside vent about 10 feet up from which you may catch a glimpse of the sky if you are lucky. All the authorities think about is locking people down in a modern concentration camp.

**Prisoner  
Wisconsin**

## THE BLACK DIMENSION AND THE NEEDED AMERICAN REVOLUTION

The importance of Raya Dunayevskaya's Political Letter on *American Civilization on Trial* in the November issue

*Struggles* and I can't wait to read it, because democracy is the voice of the people.

B.H. Rustburg, Va.

+++

I've been thoroughly impressed with the quality and subject matter addressed in *News & Letters*. What is the most striking to me is that issues that are prominent to a Black Have Not in America are seen and written about not only by Black people. The service you provide in your efforts to resuscitate intellect is priceless. My brain is salivating thinking of how I could receive copies of your new pamphlets on the Black dimension. I am worse than indigent since my litigation in federal court concerning prisoner rights has brought reprisals with it so that 100% of any money sent to me is garnished. Is there any way you could find a donor to pay the cost of those two pamphlets for me?

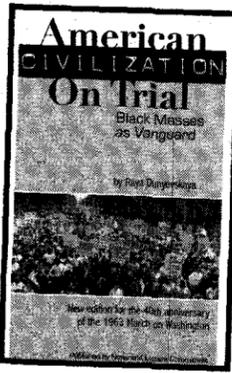
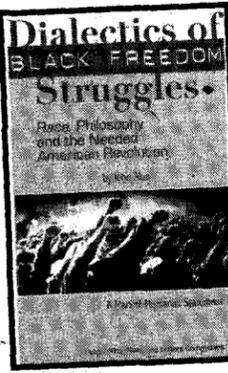
Incarcerated Ohio

+++

### BANNING ABORTION

It was important to have the article on the banning of DX abortions in the November issue of *N&L*, but I disagree that it is "the most far-reaching limit on abortion since it was legalized by the Supreme Court in 1973." It is the first time an actual procedure has been outlawed, and no doubt the Right will try to follow that up with more. But when the Hyde Amendment cut off abortion funding for poor women, that affected many more women than banning late term abortion. So do parental consent laws. It is because we were unable to stop those truly far-reaching limits on our right to abortion that the Right was emboldened to take this next step in attacking abortion rights and to cross the line by banning an actual procedure that, until now, had held firm.

Women's Action Coalition member Memphis



is that she is talking about the today—living and one-worldedness of history—it's not just a question of not repeating history. In the history of freedom struggles, high points are reached. We need to know those as jumping off places for our struggles today.

History Student Tennessee

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John Alan is correct in his article on "Black Latin America" (*N&L*, October, 2003) that the struggle of the "Latinos" is the same struggle as that of the Black people. There are places in Latin America where the majority are Black, as in the Dominican Republic, Cuba, Haiti, Jamaica and Brazil. Many people refer to Latin America as only those countries where Spanish is spoken, but that is not correct. In other areas the majority are descendants of native people or mixed with different races. But the struggles are the same as those of the Black people in Africa and the U.S.

Dominican American California

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I was introduced to *N&L* by a longtime friend and saw the excerpts you published on revolutionary Black struggles and ideas from your new publication on *Dialectics of Black Freedom*

## SOUTH AFRICA'S ANTI-TERROR LAW

In a massive attack that will change the face of South Africa forever, the new Anti-Terror Act (PROCONDEMATARA, for short!) will, among other things, make illegal strikes and demonstrations "terrorist" and open unions and workers to civil suits by monopoly capital. It will usher in the rule of decree by the Presidency and amounts to a permanent state of emergency in SA in the interests of imperialism. We have made a special appeal to the union leadership to come out publicly against this attack on the working class. To date, their silence has been deafening!

Anti-War Coalition Salt River, South Africa

## ANTI-WAR MOVEMENT AND BUSH'S PYRRHIC VICTORY

What kind of victory is it other than Pyrrhic when every day brings reports of more U.S. soldiers killed since Bush declared the war over, using his photo-op on the USS Lincoln to make it dramatic? And when his military commanders are now casually predicting we will be in Iraq until 2006?

Protester California

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I was shocked when I heard Daniel Schorr's commentary on NPR that the Senate could vote "unrecorded" to pass the \$87 billion Iraq war appropriation. Have I been on the wrong planet? I never knew they could do this! What else have they hidden their votes on? How can we get it changed? The only "bright spot," if you could call it that, in the fact that all but six senators chickened out of having their vote recorded, is that it shows they do fear public opinion on funding the war.

Alarmed citizen Detroit

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In view of the wide-spread concerns

over the war in Iraq, I have been urging people here to approach their members of Parliament to express their views and ask them to support the following two points: 1) it is time for Mr. Blair to go; 2) it is time to bring the troops home. The House of Commons has been misled on the occupation of Iraq. The breach of international law it represents does not bode well for the future. We need to reopen the question of the war and achieve its speedy conclusion.

Patrick Duffy England

## ANGOLA 3 VICTORY

The Angola 3 won a victory with regard to the civil law front of their struggle on Oct. 20, when the Supreme Court denied Louisiana's attempt to dismiss their challenge to continued solitary confinement in Louisiana State Penitentiary.

Herman Wallace and Albert Woodfox are demanding that they be returned to the general prison population after almost 32 years of life in a small cell for all but one hour a day, depriving them of human contact and personal property. Theirs is believed to be the longest solitary confinement in U.S. history. Robert King Wilkerson, the third plaintiff in the case, was finally freed in 2001 when a state judge overturned his conviction. Woodfox and Wallace, however, are still on lockdown. A legal team is pushing their cases forward in both the civil and criminal courts. The ACLU of Louisiana is representing the Angola 3 in the civil matter. Their attorney says a trial date will probably be set for sometime early next year. "We're going to win," he said.

Beth Shaw Chicago



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# October 22 Coalition controversy

**CHICAGO**—About 150 to 200 people came to the October 22 rally and march against police brutality at the Federal Plaza this year. There has been a history of debates over speakers at the annual rally, centering on the question of police brutality against gays, lesbians, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people and whether people from those communities should be allowed to speak.

In a previous year's rally, a speaker from the Black Hebrew Israelites was allowed to denounce homosexuality from the stage. The Revolutionary Communist Party, which is a big influence within the October 22 Coalition, has only recently reconsidered its view that gay people are products of capitalist decadence. This year the Coalition finally scheduled a transgender speaker, a week before the rally, as a result of debates over these issues.

The speaker, Jennie Mutation, was introduced from the stage as representing gays, lesbians, and bisexuals, but not as what she is—a transgender activist. She spoke about what it means to be transgender and the numbers of nationwide killings by police of trans people, especially trans people of color, many of them youths and sex workers. She said that she wants a society without police and landlords.

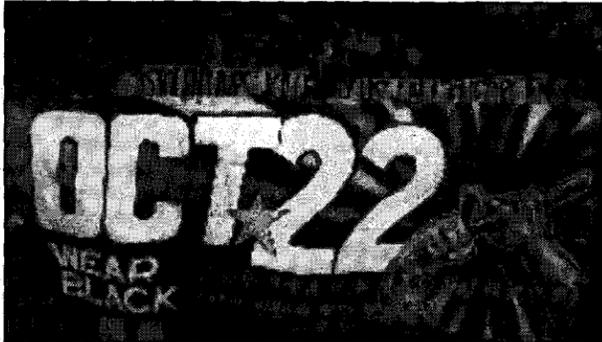
**There was nothing in her remarks that should have been objectionable. But her speech was rushed, while some other speakers were allowed much more time, including Fred Hampton Jr. An unscheduled speaker, Tommy Brewer, a candidate for Cook County Sheriff, was also given time.**

These issues were discussed at a follow-up meeting of the October 22 Coalition. Some people there claimed that Jennie "didn't address the issue of police brutal

ity," which is simply untrue. It was also said that it was inappropriate for her to address the transgender issue. One woman complained, "There is a gay pride parade to raise that. We don't raise race issues" at the annual rally—which is not only untrue, but it retreats from what has been best and most important about past October 22 rallies.

**It was explained to her that transgender isn't a "gay issue," since many trans people are straight. And people who would be at the pride parade probably know that already, but a lot of people at the October 22 rally probably don't.**

Rally organizers admitted that there was a problem with other speakers going over their time limits, but said that there was "nothing they could do." There was however a double standard, as the political content of their speeches wasn't criticized as it was with Jennie's speech. It is unfortunate that these kind of signals, this attitude of disrespect for a whole class of oppressed people, could be spread to youth and others at the



**New York—200 people including victim's families rallied in Union Square Oct. 22 against police brutality.**

rally and afterward.

Once again this year, the national October 22 Coalition mission statement, which people here didn't see until the last minute, didn't mention LGBT people. In previous years, when it sometimes has, it has been as a result of struggle within the coalition against the Revolutionary Communist Party's historically anti-gay politics, by members of the Chicago Anti-Bashing Network and others here and around the country who refuse to be kept "in the closet." The October 22 rallies here have been getting smaller, and haven't been the kind of galvanizing events that they could be.

—Darrell Gordon and Gerard Emmett

## Memphis homeowner's airport nightmare

**MEMPHIS, TENN.**—My family moved near the Memphis International Airport in 1976. It was a beautiful neighborhood with a 500-acre park with a golf course across the street. The neighborhood was destroyed by 1990.

Now we have no neighbors in sight. There is a seven-foot barbed wire fence erected in 1998, almost surrounding our house. The only egress we have is to the front. There is a huge tracking device for planes less than 2,000 feet from our house. When it's operating it roars loudly and the vibration is awful.

**In 1976 we were not aware that the Office of Planning and Development had done a study forecasting that the noise exposure around the airport was unacceptable for people living in the area. In 1986 the airport announced a proposed buyout. The property value dropped dramatically.**

In 1987 a Noise Compatibility Program was set up according to the noise level experienced and the length of time people lived there. The buyout area shrank drastically—by five miles east to west and a smaller amount north to south.

A class action suit was filed in 1989 with about 28 named plaintiffs, mostly elderly people. The named plaintiffs were instructed to represent, protect, and report to the other plaintiffs—more than 12,000 homeowners were affected.

We asked counsel to add claims for the residents in the buyout area. He refused! We filed a motion to amend the complaint to add inverse condemnation, because they had taken our property without compensation. We also filed a motion asking that the Tennessee Eminent Domain statute be used fairly since

they were only condemning some properties, and paying for them, but not all the affected ones. It was discriminatory.

Counsel for the plaintiffs eventually refused to represent us and dropped our name from the list of named plaintiffs. The judge ordered us back on. The class action was certified in 1993 and set for trial in 1994. Then the judge announced he was retiring! In 1996 the lead counsel for the plaintiffs was appointed as D.A. for Shelby County. Then we were told by the remaining counsel that the previous lead counsel had taken the escrow money that had been raised by our group.

**In 1997 we were told that a \$22 million settlement had been reached. The group turned that down. The named plaintiffs were then called, one by one, to meet with counsel—all except us. After that meeting they didn't talk about what happened and no more meetings were held. They then the 12,500 homeowners were offered between \$325 to \$4,200. Plaintiffs were given the option to take the settlement or to opt out and fight on their own.**

Many objected, including us. We didn't feel the settlement was fair or just. We did not opt out, however, we appealed the settlement and so did some of the others. All appeals were denied except ours.

It has been 16 years and we've recently received a Joint Motion from the Class Counsel and the Memphis-Shelby County Airport Authority to close our case. They wanted us to sign a release and agree never to collect personal or property damages for what was done in the past or will be done in the future. We refused.

—Mattie Lindsey

## BLACK/RED VIEW

(Continued from page 1)

demand a share in the government and the result would be a new Haiti, whose revolution against France in 1804 led to a first nation governed by Blacks in the New World.

Thus McKinley never seriously considered a free and independent Cuba. Once they drove out Spain, the U.S. established a military government for a short period, after which the U.S. imposed a new form of colonialism on Cuba. Cuba was forced to incorporate in its new constitution a so-called "protectorate provision" known as the Platt Amendment. It stipulated that Cuba could not enter into treaties or financial agreements with any other country and gave the U.S. the right to intervene at any time. In other words, once Cuba ceased to be Spain's colony it was transformed into an American colony.

The taste of empire was in the mouth of American capitalism. It was whetted by the 1898 peace treaty Spain signed, to officially turn over to the U.S. Guam, Puerto Rico and the Philippines for a payment of \$20 million.

### IMPERIALIST LIES, THEN...AND NOW

Contrary to President Bush's claim that the U.S. "liberated the Philippines," the U.S. actually **bought** the Philippines, at a cheap price, from an old decayed empire. President McKinley attempted to hide this shabby transaction by saying: "We could not leave them by themselves—they were unfit for self government—and would soon have anarchy and misrule over there worse than Spain."

McKinley's fear of "misrule" by Filipinos meant that the U.S. opposed a movement for Philippines independence headed by Emilio Aguinaldo during the period of Spanish colonial rule. Condoleezza Rice should have told Bush about the bloody war—1899 to 1903—that the U.S. military waged against those Filipinos who opposed U.S. colonialism. The U.S. gave no quarter in this anti-guerrilla war. Villages were burned, prisoners were tortured and innocent people were killed. The Filipino casualties were 20,000 (though some historians place the figure at 100,000) while 4,000 Americans were killed.

African Americans equated the barbarism of the U.S. forces in the Philippines with the barbarism of racism they were experiencing in America. Many African Americans thought that it was hypocrisy of the worst kind to kill Filipinos for the purpose of "good government" while the U.S.'s own government did not prosecute the lynchings of African Americans or other practices of racism within the United States. This hypocrisy caused African Americans to create a mass anti-imperialist movement within the African-American community, which coincided with the white anti-imperialist movement.

This struggle against U.S. imperialism and for full liberation at home did not end with the acquisition of the Philippines, but, as Raya Dunayevskaya points out in *American Civilization On Trial*, continues as an essential struggle that has been going on for a century. Lying about history is part of Bush's lies about the present U.S. imperial reach, by which real forces for self-determination and democracy cannot be fooled.

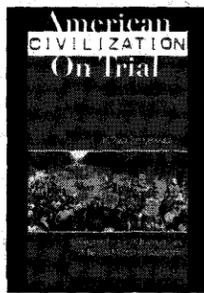
### Of Time and Emergence

While honored Scholars seminar about varying Perceptions of Time, the sociolinguistics of emergent boundaries, Culture as a proper noun, and the semiotic implications of Coca-Cola and porcelain as signifiers of post-modern identity, they sip colas from cans stamped by mechanics whose days are orchestrated by a Charlie Chaplin on speed, colas lugged up the stairways of Academe by herniated drivers whose kidneys are bruised daily by suspensionless trucks rushing through potholed New Brunswick streets, through streets where homeless teens chase Time in 15-minute repetitions of syringe-assisted chemical culture, while their mothers' sponges tap out the rhythm of the hours before shift's end, before the ever-dirty porcelain toilet bowls glisten awaiting corporate asses, and their fathers do Time within boundaries of moldy cement, do seconds, do minutes, do months, seasons, years, indeed decades of Time before they can themselves be emergent from boundaries, can walk past potholes to beg a cog, a job, a mop, and carcinogenic solvents to scour the floors of each seminar room once a semester lest moldy post-modern musings comprehend need and its angers, lest they mutate into ideas of freedom for all.

—Sam Friedman

### American Civilization on Trial: Black Masses As Vanguard

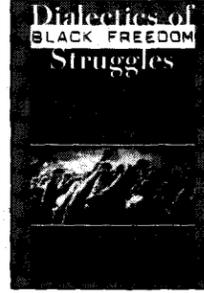
by Raya Dunayevskaya, with appendix by Charles Denby, and "To the People of the United States of America" by Karl Marx



The classic *American Civilization on Trial*, first published in 1963, presents the Black masses in motion as the touchstone of the development of all of American history—from the unfinished revolutions of both 1776 and the Civil War where the slave revolts and Abolitionism wrote the most glorious pages; through the rise of Populism; through the turning point reached with the coming together of Black and labor movements in the birth of the CIO; to the unfinished revolutions confronting us today.

### Dialectics of Black Freedom Struggles: Race, Philosophy, and the Needed American Revolution

by John Alan, with an appendix by Raya Dunayevskaya on "Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Grenada"



We know from American history that the Black revolt is ongoing. The idea of freedom has to be worked out and deepened from within this racist, alienating society. That means taking on all political-theoretic-philosophic tendencies that truncate aspirations for full freedom and self-determination. We can't stop with opposition to this racist society, but must work out what we are for in terms of the power of the idea of freedom. *Dialectics of Black Freedom Struggles* includes chapters on Black opposition to imperialist war, today's Black labor struggles, and the role of the prison-industrial complex, as well as Marxist-Humanist discussions of major historical figures like Frantz Fanon, C.L.R. James, and Maurice Bishop.

Pre-publication price, both for \$15, including postage • To order, see page 7

## EDITORIAL

**Will U.S. lose control of Iraq?**

The U.S. government finds itself in an increasingly difficult position in Iraq. None of its efforts in the country seem to be proceeding according to plan. Physical reconstruction, political reorganization, and the provision of ordinary security are all facing significant roadblocks. Most worrisome for Washington is the relentless pace of the attacks on U.S. soldiers, foreign relief workers, UN representatives, and local police forces reconstituted by the Americans. The deadly car bombing of the Italian military headquarters in Nasiriya on Nov. 22 showed that even minor partners of the U.S. occupation are confronted with serious risks.

The entire U.S. adventure in Iraq has had an improvisatory character, and this latest turn is no exception. The drafting of a constitution has been tabled for the time being, and instead the schedule for turning over political power to Iraqis has been sped up. According to a plan announced by the Iraqi Governing Council on Nov. 15, an interim government elected by a national assembly will assume responsibility for the country in June next year. U.S. forces will remain in Iraq in strength, but on paper at least, the occupation will be over. Not coincidentally, this formal change of arrangements will take place when George W. Bush's reelection campaign will be in full swing.

**IRAQI GOOD WILL RUNNING OUT**

At the same time as these plans were announced, the U.S. launched a major military response to a serious wave of attacks that, among other things, brought down two helicopters over the northern city of Mosul. This military crackdown—referred to as Operation Iron Hammer—is not likely to win the U.S. friends among ordinary Iraqis. The intensified checkpoint stops and intrusive searches of the offensive have increased the number of everyday indignities inflicted

on the residents of Baghdad and other cities.

Furthermore, the handling of technical matters in which the U.S. was supposed to excel, like the restoration of reliable electrical power and the improvement of the water and communication systems have not impressed the Iraqi people. Despite the best efforts of the U.S., Baghdad still doesn't enjoy electricity 24 hours a day.

The reality facing the U.S. is this: whatever store of goodwill for the removal of Saddam and his cronies is left among ordinary Iraqis is close to exhaustion.

**VIETNAM ANALOGY DOESN'T HOLD UP**

Despite the ongoing attacks and the growing antipathy toward the occupying forces, it is important to recognize the flawed nature of the analogy with U.S. involvement in Vietnam that many on the left have invested so much of themselves in. The conflict in Vietnam was inherited from French colonialism, not eagerly and unilaterally embarked upon. At its height, it involved a prodigious commitment of U.S. military personnel, while the Iraq war is remarkable for the relatively few numbers of troops involved.

The chief difference, however, lies in the nature of the forces combating the U.S. soldiers. In Vietnam, the U.S. faced both guerrilla and regular forces operating under a centralized leadership with one aim: to bring the country under a unified political rule that, however authoritarian, had considerable popular support. The combatants in Iraq are linked to a discredited political regime with little hope of making a comeback. Their persistent and bloody attacks seem focused on simply making Iraq as unstable and as close to ungovernable as possible rather than attempting to win the confidence of the country's people.

In this respect, the situation in Iraq much more

closely resembles the current one in Afghanistan than it does Vietnam circa 1970. In Afghanistan the remnants of the Taliban are succeeding in making the south and east of the country dangerous places for humanitarian workers and UN representatives, but have little prospect of returning to a position of power over the whole country.

It is still too soon to tell whether or not the Iraq adventure will turn out a success or failure for the Bush administration. In some respects, Iraq now more closely resembles the picture of it painted by Bush before the war, that is, a dangerous and chaotic place in which terrorist plots are hatched. It is however, not impossible that Iraq's people will actually succeed in formulating a democratic and sustainable political structure.

**OPPORTUNITIES AND DANGERS**

But if this development takes place, it will be despite the plans of the U.S., not because of them. The top-down political consolidation the Coalition Provisional Authority is implementing is incorporating traditional and conservative elements of Iraqi society. Together with the resurgence in power of the ayatollahs, this development spells grave danger for the freedom of women, who have already suffered from the deterioration of safety on the streets.

A democratization that goes beyond the control of the U.S. and the conservative figures that hope to assume control of Iraq is an outcome that, if it takes place, should be welcomed by friends of the Iraqi people worldwide. A real democratization will be one that permits workers to organize in their own interest, women to safely participate in public life and one that will allow Iraq's ethnic minorities to determine their own destinies. This development would expose the hollowness of the democratic rhetoric employed by the ideologues of the Bush administration and could have consequences far beyond the borders of the country.

**Struggle of Hondurans continues**

*Below we print excerpts from a talk given in Chicago by Berta Caceres, an indigenous Honduran woman active with COPINH (Civil Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras).*

COPINH is an alliance of 400, mostly indigenous communities in Honduras. At least 80% of Hondurans are living in poverty and there is a high incidence of infant mortality, disease and poor health.

When COPINH was founded 10 years ago, the struggle centered on land. Recently we have integrated ourselves into the global struggles against Plan Panama and the FTAA. We confront transnationals that seek to re-colonize our land and the U.S. military which has had bases on our land for over 100 years, from which they invade our brother and sister countries.

About 30% of the land in Honduras is owned by transnational corporations that export our products to the world. Another 30% of the land is going to transnational mining companies. Our Congress may soon approve of building hydroelectric dams. In my department there would not be a single river without a dam.

We have struggled against the privatization of water and now against the hydroelectric dams, the concessions they want to give to corporations for our land and the areas of tourism they are planning with Plan Panama—the mark of death to our communities.

Along with the policies of free trade we see increases of militarization and a return to the 1980s rates of violence in our areas. Just among Black and indigenous leaders there have been 50 deaths due to the struggle to defend the land, water and communities. No one has been put in prison for these assassinations. Five more were recently killed who were environmental justice activists. The landowners, police and investigators have collaborated in the assassinations.

Despite our limitations the Honduran people have constantly mobilized for the rights of our land, water

and lives. We've created a new process of unity among women's groups, the indigenous, urban, and student groups—among those who never had unity before. We've taken over the Capital for hours and coordinated this with the takeover of highways and other sites.

As COPINH, we've struggled for eight years and as a result not one brick has been laid to dam our rivers. The national process of unity we've been creating has allowed us to call the whole of the Honduran people into resistance against privatization. As a result, entire municipalities have said they will not allow water to be privatized. These actions have been a big hit against neoliberalism, the IMF, World Bank, Bank for Central American Investment and the transnational corporations. In many regions they won't even let the planners of the transnationals come in. The people raise their arms with machetes, a traditional symbol of resistance, to keep them out.

Building unity has not been a perfect process. But we are all learning from each other. We indigenous groups especially are making others learn and unlearn about us. Secondly, unity among women and men is primary. We are very self critical in this regard because we can't have unity where men dominate our struggle. We can't reproduce the problems of the power structure within our own struggle. Women must be more involved in the organizations and in the leadership.

Colin Powell is coming to visit Honduras and we know it is not just for a visit. It is to continue the militarization of our country. This is why it's important for you to involve yourselves in this struggle. We need you to be our voice in Miami because we may not be able to be there. That's why it's important for you, who are in the stomach of the beast to fight against the FTAA. We usually don't ask for solidarity. Solidarity is something that is freely given. But our country has been so invisible that I must ask for your solidarity today.

**General strike in Dominican Republic**

On Nov. 11 more than 20 mass organizations in the Dominican Republic called a 24-hour general strike. The strike shut down businesses, the transportation system, schools, factories and offices around the country in a protest against deteriorating living conditions, high inflation, and corruption in the public and private sectors. The strike was also directed against the reelection of President Hipolito Mejia.

More than 70,000 military personnel have been deployed to suppress the strike, and buildings of Mejia's ruling party have been set on fire by crowds of protesters.

Several people were killed by police and military forces and leaders of the mass organizations have been imprisoned. Fernando Morillo, a leader of an organization formed by leftist groups, unions, and neighborhood committees, declared: "The security forces of the state have started a witch hunt against all our leaders and prominent members. Many of them have been arrested and others are under strict surveillance....wherever we move they follow us."

Mejia's government has received millions of dollars in loans from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), funds which ended up in the hands of big landlords, corrupt politicians, and bankers. Industries that were once in the hands of the state have been privatized for the benefit of American and European investors, while most of the populace lives in extreme poverty, insecurity and despair.

The loans from the IMF have led to a devaluation of the currency, high inflation and increased taxation on the poor. Workers' salaries are denominated in depreciating Dominican pesos, whereas the price of commodities (which are equivalent to prices in the U.S.) keep going up. The Dominican peso is now worth 42 to a dollar; in the 1960s, it was roughly equal in value to the dollar. Dependency on U.S. dollars, high inflation, and the import of petroleum and other goods have produced a massive deficit. Many commercial banks are in bankruptcy and even the Central Bank of the Republic is in total collapse. Huge loans are being taken out to cover these deficits. The Intercontinental Bank (Baninter) has a deficit of \$2.2 billion, which workers are asked to pay back with their own sweat.

The inflation rate is 42%, and an energy crisis has affected the entire nation. Most of the country experiences regular blackouts (for as much as 15 hours a day) and many industries have been forced to shut down due to lack of electricity.

The high price of gasoline has destroyed public transportation. Workers have been forced to get to their jobs on motorcycles and bicycles. Many public employees haven't received salaries for months. Many doctors and nurses are working without being paid by the government. The high cost of medicine has led to many deaths, and many public hospitals have closed. Some teachers haven't been paid in two years.

Many professionals, along with peasants, factory workers and youth have been forced to emigrate illegally to Puerto Rico in small boats, where some have died without reaching their destination. Those who succeed become farmers, factory workers, homeless, or slave laborers. Amnesty International reports that

(Continued on page 12)

**MARXIST-HUMANIST WRITINGS ON THE MIDDLE EAST****Selected Writings by Raya Dunayevskaya 1961-1982 and News & Letters 1988-2002**

The U.S. military intervention in Iraq resulted in the quick collapse of the corrupt Ba'athist police state and reshaped the political reality of a region formed by decades of national movements, wars and revolutions. The refusal of the Iraqi people to fight for Saddam Hussein's brutal regime, and the subsequent effort to determine their own future against the U.S. occupation provides an opportune moment to revisit the turbulent history of the post-World War II Middle East. This is not only for the sake of knowing this important history, but also an effort toward building the new left that is emerging from the struggle against U.S. imperialism, religious fundamentalism, and all the corrupt forms of state-capitalism that have attempted to substitute themselves for the realities of human liberation.

"Marxist-Humanists work toward the goals of national liberation and social revolution for a totally new society. 'A plague on both your houses' is a religious, not a human slogan. But a separation from all plague-ridden houses is the only way at this moment to express the truly independent Marxist stand."

—"The Middle East Cauldron Explodes: The Civil War in Jordan," October 1970

**\$5 See order form on page 7**

# Energy bill peddles weird science to loot environment

(Continued from page 1)

company cronies getting behind hydrogen is to ensure that the energy comes from oil, coal, natural gas and nuclear power, thus keeping the fossil/nuke basis of the economy intact.

It now appears that the energy bill will only be passed after removal of product liability immunity it grants to manufacturers of MTBE, a gasoline additive that has polluted water supplies in over 1,500 communities. Be that as it may, much of the Bush energy policy has already been quietly implemented—including three-quarters of industry requests, according to Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham in a speech last year. And those are only one section of a long list of environmental rollbacks perpetrated by the Bush-Cheney administration and Congress, usually snuck in and always justified with lies.

## BUSH, ENVIRONMENTAL OUTLAW

In the **air we breathe**, Bush's Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) made several rule changes that broke the Clean Air Act—some under the lying name "Clear Skies"—to allow increased toxic emissions, especially from power plants and refineries. Having promised to keep pursuing enforcement actions, the EPA turned around and dropped cases against dozens of polluting coal-fired power plants.

In the **water we drink**, the EPA stripped Clean Water Act protection from 20 million acres of wetlands and millions of miles of streams, dropped actions against factory farms dumping millions of tons of animal waste into waterways, and allowed mine waste dumping in rivers and lakes—an illegal rule change that was earlier proposed by Clinton's EPA.

In the **communities where we live**, the EPA lifted the ban on selling PCB-contaminated land for redevelopment, slashed cleanup activities at Superfund toxic waste sites, and proposed allowing radioactive materials into hazardous waste dumps, which are disproportionately located near people of color.

For the **species that inhabit the earth**, Interior Secretary Gale Norton stopped listing of endangered species and altered a number of reports to hide detrimental consequences of Arctic oil drilling, mountaintop mining and other practices.

On the **public lands**, Norton repealed the roadless rule that protected many national forests, halted designation of wilderness lands, and opened up 8.8 million acres of Alaska's North Slope and vast areas in the Rocky Mountain region to oil drilling, mining and logging, with weakened environmental protection.

## DEATHLY FORESTS INITIATIVE

In the **forests**, Bush permitted national forest and grassland management plans to be made without environmental impact studies. While the energy bill distracted attention, Congress passed Bush's falsely named "Healthy Forests" bill opening 20 million acres of federal land to subsidized logging. Using the fires that rampaged through Southern California as an excuse, Bush claimed that his giveaway to loggers would prevent such fires. In truth the fires mainly burned on sage and chaparral land where trees are sparse and the main cause of fires is human population.

"Healthy Forests" would increase two of the biggest causes of catastrophic forest fires: logging and roadbuilding. Administration policy also promotes other major causes, including global warming and sprawl.

The Congressional mob fell in line with the President, scapegoating environmentalists for the fires, and bleating for an end to environmental analysis and chal-

lenges by the public. Yet, Congressional auditors found that few Forest Service projects to cut wildfire risk were delayed by appeals.

The deceitful name "Healthy Forests" is a perfect example of the lot of science in today's crisis-ridden state-capitalism. Where it can be applied in production

or war, science is well-funded. Where its results reveal too much, they are misrepresented or silenced.

In the case of forests, that means portraying logging—which scientific studies show "has increased fire severity more than any



Bush's energy policy promises capital-friendly air "quality."

other recent activity"—as the solution. It also means disregarding the letter signed by over 200 scientists calling for an end to all logging on federally owned forests.

In the case of global warming, it means deception, as urged by an infamous leaked memo from Republican strategist Frank Luntz, to stave off mass demands for action: "you need to continue to make the lack of scientific certainty a primary issue in the debate."

## APOLOGETICS TRUMP SCIENCE

Indeed, heavy industry and its political representatives have long used the lack of total certainty as an excuse to avoid putting limits on greenhouse gas emissions, although the evidence is overwhelming. The first harsh consequences of global warming are upon us, from the thousands killed by extreme heat waves in India and Europe, to the fourth year in a row of global grain harvests falling short of demand.

To provide "intellectual support and political cover," in the words of Reagan accomplice Jack Kemp, the oil, coal and auto industries lavishly fund a gang of scientists and pundits to slander, discredit and challenge scientists investigating global warming. Evading the issue, the Bush administration deleted the section on global warming from the EPA's annual report on air pollution, then tried to stack the EPA's "state of the environment" report with junk science, but was saved by EPA staff, who simply deleted the discussion of global warming for fear of getting caught lying.

That is only the tip of the iceberg of lies as the axis of state, industry, and far-right fanaticism tries to bury science under ideology. First, they hide scientific results, such as the suppressed EPA study on health effects on children from coal-fired power plants.

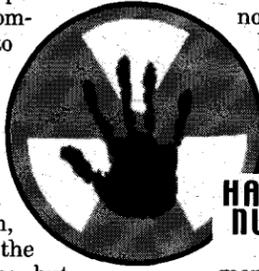
Second, they use outright lies. One of the most shocking came a week after September 11, 2001, when the White House had the EPA falsely claim that the air around ground zero was safe.

Third, the axis of reaction handpicks who will evaluate science projects, priorities and funding. Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy Thompson put lead industry cronies on a committee on childhood lead poisoning, and stacked the environmental health advisory committee with friends of the chemical industry.

Today's science brings into view capitalism's destruction of its own conditions of existence through its relentless expansion of exploitative production. Frantic to hide the historically transient nature of this stage of human development, the state cannot allow science to proceed without interference.

Where deception falls short, the administration favors stealth, quietly making over 50 rule changes to

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**HANDS OFF NUCLEAR!**

ment capable of setting in motion a transformation deep enough to alter the basic inhuman trajectory of this society. That will require overcoming the mental chains binding the movement.

The mainstream groups continue to mislead environmentalists into the dead end of reformism, with its focus on lobbying, lawsuits, and the desperation of "Anyone But Bush" electoral politics—disregarding the many deregulation moves either started or continued under Clinton.

The latest push by the professional environmental reformists is a joint venture with labor bureaucrats for a new "Apollo project," a crash program to restructure the country's economy around clean, renewable energy like solar and wind power.

Greatly preferable as that is to the Bush-Cheney fossil-nuke course, it bases itself on markets plus state planning, and buys into the illusion that "there is no alternative" to capitalism, implicitly accepting its limitless hunger for more and more energy and materials. It is this we must stop if humanity is to have a future—to begin with, by opposing Bush, and at the same time turning away from the rulers' ground. Otherwise, nothing can uproot this inhuman, nature-destroying world at the brink.

## Activist outlines scope of struggle against martial law in Aceh

Indonesia extended martial law in November for another six months within the northern province of Aceh in an attempt to extinguish the separatist Free Aceh guerrilla movement (GAM) and the widespread civilian movement for self-determination. Prominent Aceh human rights and peace campaigner Aguswandi in a November speech urged the European Parliament to call on the Indonesian government to stop the offensive and resume talks with GAM. We publish excerpts of his remarks.

by Aguswandi

Nobody is winning the war in Aceh at the moment, not the Indonesian government, not the Free Aceh Movement, not the people of Indonesia, and obviously not the Acehnese. The only winner is the Indonesian military. Its operation in Aceh has not achieved significant progress, but it has succeeded in exploiting the conflict there to regain domination over Indonesian politics. While Acehnese are the immediate victims, the Indonesian people and their democracy, their dreams of reform, are the invisible victims of the war.

It is impossible to tell the story of this senseless war without also telling the story of the Jakarta politics

that precipitated it. Politics in Indonesia post-New Order [since the fall of the Suharto dictatorship in 1998] is still very messy. The problem of impunity has not been dealt with, the problem of corruption, the problem of justice; all contribute to the inability to solve the problem of Aceh. Many government critics say that the reform agenda (reformasi) is dead.

The military controls the media, restricts travel and news, and stamps all opponents of the war as unpatriotic. It has become a war against all Acehnese, both those who are against Jakarta and those who are not. People have to show the flag to show their loyalty. Acehnese are forced to sing the national anthem loudly and clearly; the ability to sing the national anthem is becoming a matter of life and death. There is screening of all civil servants to identify their loyalty. Everywhere there are road blocks, military sweeps, and recruitment of militia.

The conflict in Aceh is political, and a political solution is needed. It can come about through a genuine dialogue between the people of Aceh and Jakarta, one which leads to discussion about what kind of society we are going to build. A new kind of creativity is needed. For this, Indonesia and GAM should agree to involve civil society in the peace process.

People talk a lot about Aceh in terms of the contin-

ued killing, the destruction of life and humanity. Civil society is the potential creative element in this gloomy situation. The conflict has given rise to a new generation of Acehnese civil society who want to create a better life for both Aceh and Indonesia.

This civil society is made up of young intellectuals, student groups, and all sectors who have been struggling to create a democratic and just society since the collapse of the Suharto regime. There is a very limited space for them in Aceh right now, but they are working to create space. For them, the conflict is not only about national self-determination, but beyond that, it is about self-determination of the Acehnese and Indonesian people.

Violence is negative, but conflict itself can be positive if we drive it in the right direction. Conflict can change the present unjust system and structural relationships. Peace that maintains the status quo, the unjust system, domination and oppression would be a negative peace. Acehnese civil society has been working to create a positive peace, one that brings a transformation of the status quo and the society. The struggle in Aceh is not the struggle of a certain ethnic group demanding the right to self rule. It is a not about territory, but about people.

# My life as a warehouse worker

by Brown Douglas

I work at a warehouse here in Memphis. Many people don't know that Memphis is known as the "distribution center of the United States." Jobs picking products (finding their location in a huge complex of wooden pallets and rows and rows of boxes), packing them, and shipping them all over the world are found everywhere here. Many people you talk to have at one time or another had some type of job in a warehouse or at the FedEx shipping hub; whose world headquarters are here.

The products that we pick are Nike products, all from their line of golf apparel. All of us walk around for 10-12 hours surrounded by boxes that say "Made in Thailand" (or Vietnam, or Sri Lanka) looking at a screen on a scanning gun that tells us where we can find the piece of clothing and how many we need to pick. It's all pretty alienating, solitary work. If it weren't for the camaraderie of your co-workers, it would probably be unbearable.

## INTERNATIONAL WORKPLACE

My warehouse is largely Latino and Black and most people are under 30 years old. Maybe most people don't think of it this way, but work for me is the most multicultural, international experience that I have. You learn a lot about where people come from and how and why they ended up in the southern United States packing Nike golf shirts and pants for rich people. In a city that is still so violently segregated, work becomes a place that throws you in with all sorts of people that you may live near, shop with, and see all the time but never get to know.

From the time you walk in to the time you leave, production is the name of the game. You have to pick or pack as many pieces as quickly as you can, or the supervisor thinks you're not working hard enough. After the first few hours, even the most experienced workers' legs start to ache, but you don't want to get caught sitting down anywhere or even walking the night because they might fire you right on the spot. One young co-worker said to me, "They just want you to forget about your life when you come in here," because of the never-ending stress on production, production, production.

## FIRING IMMIGRANTS

So far, the most disturbing thing that has happened has been seeing three co-workers told not to come back to work because of their immigration status. They were three of the most hardworking and fun co-workers in the whole warehouse. Someone told me that little by little, the Latinos are disappearing from the site because of the employment agency's audit process, and how the agency has to have all their workers "clean."

The whole thing made me think about how capitalism makes it so that people have to leave their lives and home countries to find work, but when they get

here they are constantly kicked out of the workplace for not being "legal." It's so contradictory how capitalism needs human labor to fulfill all its needs, but at every step proves itself to have an overall inhuman direction.

Another thing that I think about a lot when I'm with my co-workers is the attitude that some people on the Left have towards working class politics. Some will go so far as to say that there's no more working class in America, or that it exists but that workers are already bought off by the system and completely happy to pursue the "American Dream" of wealth and prosperity, therefore not worth listening to.

It seems to me that the only way to have this opinion is to have not ever worked a job or taken part in anything involving working class people, because it's just not true.

Workers aren't happy with capitalism for making them work six or seven days a week for over 10 hours a day. And they aren't bought off merely for wanting stability for themselves or their families. As long as capitalism exists, there will be people producing, packing, shipping, and distributing products that they have little to no control over, from the moment they work on it to the moment they buy it in the store—even here in the richest country in the world. That will continue until capitalism is overthrown and we build a human society based on more than an inhuman profit motive.

## YOUTH

# The doublespeak of 'Leave no child behind'

**CHICAGO**—The way in which schools, teachers and children are determined to be "at risk" and "failing" has been called into question by many researchers in the education field. One urban program outpaced its wealthy, suburban counterparts in math and science, but was deemed "failing" because students couldn't pass their reading English comprehension test.

Among the early childhood community which I'm more familiar with, the phrase "Leave No Child Behind" sounds so lovely in the 1984 land of doublespeak, but has come to be known as "Leave No Child Untested." Why? Because all the research for the last two decades, which led to the promising new Early Learning Standards for Illinois, has been truncated into testing and assessment.

Not only that, "tests" which were developed for one purpose, such as diagnosis and placement, are now being used incorrectly as final assessments. And when school administrators are questioned about this, their response is that this is all they have. These evaluation tools have no external validity or reliability for the ways in which they are being used. No one can escape, not even three and four year olds, who are now being submitted to developmentally inappropriate standardized testing.

The field of literacy development research in young children now spans an entire generation. It consistently shows that reading is the number one predictor of school success. But reading is not learning about the letters and sounds associated with the alphabet as completely unrelated to a formalized standard test. Children learn best about reading, and all other areas of knowledge, when they are taught in ways that are meaningful to them and when they can have a say in making choices about their own learning in creative ways that don't separate, but integrate all curriculum areas (reading, math, science, art, music).

All this wonderful, creative and successful work is being reduced to its most meaningless elements. Every teacher can see this. Every teacher realizes the fallacy of what "passes" for education. Every teacher is dealing with constantly changing policies and new requirements (such as losing your job and closing your school if the school "report card" and tests don't make it).

The speedup is incredible. Add into this mix all the dysfunctional families in chaos and the shattered children that show up in your classroom, and it's no wonder that Chicago teachers recently said "enough!" by threatening to strike. The alienation of teachers from the boards of education is a given in most school districts because teachers are expected to work miracles by fixing all the world's problems alone in their classrooms with no support.

The story doesn't change in adult or continuing education either. In March of last year, the suburban community education program I work in which, among other things, teaches ESL and GED classes to adult students, many of them immigrants, suddenly had its budget cut by the state. In a Monday morning memo, teachers were suddenly told there would be no photocopying budget for the remainder of the school year. Since the students and program already could not afford any textbooks, all the materials that were used in the classes were copied. This now meant that for three months, from March to June, that wouldn't be possible either! If you were a teacher in this situation, tell me how you would cope!

The public school "problems" of Chicago do not end at the city borders, as we can see reflected in the teacher strikes in Park Ridge and Niles. What would be very effective is if those suburban teachers received support from those in Chicago, such as help in walking the picket lines and other solidarity. —Erica Rae

# Miami police attack FTAA protesters

Thousands protested in Miami the week of Nov. 17 to oppose the meeting of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) which will undercut workers' rights, gut environmental protections, and undermine direct democracy. Protesters met an unprecedented level of police violence, including attacks on elderly people, union members, student activists and other peaceful protesters with rubber bullets, truncheons, pepper spray, teargas, tasers and water cannons.

More than 100 demonstrators were treated for injuries; 12 were hospitalized. There are estimates of more than 250 arrests—at least 50 jailed while holding a peaceful vigil outside the jail in solidarity with those inside. They were surrounded by riot police and



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ordered to disperse. As they did, police opened fire and blocked the streets preventing many from leaving. One Latino man was hospitalized in the intensive care unit after being beaten on the head with a nightstick.

Those released reported excessive brutality, sexual assault and torture in jail. People were denied access to attorneys, visitation rights, proper food, warm clothing and access to medical attention and medication.

Robert Irminger, a delegate to the San Francisco Labor Council (AFL-CIO), reported that a young Black man was arrested after being pepper-sprayed directly in the eyes and not allowed to wash out his eyes. The people arrested were all stripped of their clothes and blasted with pressure hoses every two hours.

Ana Nogueira wrote "I was arrested because I had not embedded myself with the police department before doing my job of covering the protests for the nationally syndicated public radio and TV program Democracy Now! I was swept up with about 70 others as we tried to obey an order to disperse from an 'unlawful' jail solidarity rally. If not for all the emails and phone calls the police received demanding my immediate release, I would still be there. I am still facing charges."

There is an urgent need to raise funds to free those still in jail. Appeals are going out around the country for donations and support. More extensive information on the entire week can be found at [www.ftaaimc.org](http://www.ftaaimc.org).

—Autonomia Network, Chicago Anti-Bashing Network, and others

# Bolivia hunger strike

Bolivia's MST (landless workers' movement) began calling for renewed land seizures on Nov 23, after being told by Carlos Mesa, Bolivia's new president, that he has no interest in meeting with their leaders. That same day campesinos began a blockade of the highway from the city of Trinidad to Santa Cruz (towards the east of the country) for the central government's failure to follow through on a series of promises. This was the first such road blockage since Sanchez de Lozada was ousted on Oct. 17.

A second hunger strike was begun in the capital, in front of Mesa's new offices, by families of the more than 80 who were killed in October, after the police continued to abuse the first group who began their strike on Nov. 4. The hunger strikers are demanding payments of about \$16,000 for each family who lost someone to the military's rampages, most of whom were killed on Oct. 13 and 14.

Mesa's approach so far seems to be to see just how long he can continue to ignore these various groups while giving the bourgeoisie time to reorganize itself. The latter has assembled four new parties already, with such names as New National Identity, and National Renovated Alliance, with the aim of controlling municipal elections in December, 2004. Mesa will be in power until 2007—if he lasts.

—Mitch Weerth

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## OUR LIFE AND TIMES

by Kevin A. Barry

In November, Istanbul was the site of four horrendous suicide bombings in the course of five days. On Nov. 15, two near-simultaneous car bombs exploded outside two Istanbul synagogues filled with people. One blast tore apart the facade of the Neve Shalom synagogue, which is the center of Turkey's 25,000-member Jewish community. The other blast destroyed the Beth Israel synagogue three miles away, which is

### Haiti's anniversary

In January 2004 the world's first Black republic, born of an anti-slavery revolution, will mark the 200th anniversary of its hard-won independence from France. Since that time, Haiti has often experienced tyranny, most notably under the rule of the Duvalier family (1957-86), as well as direct U.S. occupation (1915-34).

In 1994, U.S. troops returned to power President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, a liberation theology proponent who had been ousted in a military coup. Although hemmed in by the U.S., the European powers, and Haiti's own wealthy establishment, the Aristide forces initially represented many of the aspirations of the Haitian masses. Those masses willingly answered Aristide's calls for general strikes and flocked to the polls again and again to trounce his opponents, whose only real support seemed to come from abroad.

Over time, however, Aristide isolated himself from those same masses. He began to rule through secretive militias, which intimidated not only his establishment foes, but even allies expressing questions or doubts. Most now believe that the 2000 assassination of Jean Dominique, a courageous progressive radio broadcaster long allied with Aristide, was in fact carried out by these militias. All efforts to investigate the case were stymied by intimidation.

Since then the militias, which call themselves "chimeras" or even the "Cannibal Army," have run amuck. Meanwhile, the neoliberal bourgeoisie and its backers in Washington are itching to overturn Aristide and take power. The masses, seeing no real improvement in their conditions of life and labor, have lapsed into indifference.

### Georgia collapse

In just three weeks the Georgia government of Eduard Shevardnadze, in power since the collapse of the Soviet Union, crumbled in the face of mass demonstrations. Shevardnadze, who once stood on the world stage as Soviet foreign minister alongside Mikhail Gorbachev, was forced into a humiliating resignation and probably exile.

The immediate crisis began on Nov. 2, when Shevardnadze rigged parliamentary elections in an attempt to remain in power until 2005. Both opposition parties and foreign observers denounced these sham elections. Spurred by Kmara, a student organization, the demonstrations built quickly. (Kmara openly modeled itself on Otpor, the Serbian student group that helped organize the 2000 overthrow of Slobodan Milosevic.) On Nov. 22, demonstrators seized parliament. The next day, with a push from Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov, who had arrived to "mediate," Shevardnadze resigned.

Georgia, which borders war-ravaged Chechnya, has seen its standard of living plunge amid economic crisis and high-level corruption. Any new moves by Russia to gain a deeper foothold are sure to be countered by the U.S., especially since a consortium of U.S. oil companies is building a massive pipeline through Georgia. Scheduled for completion in 2005, it will bring oil from Azerbaijan to Turkey, bypassing Russian territory.

## Suicide bombings devastate Istanbul

located in a neighborhood inhabited by Muslims, Christians, Greeks and Armenians as well as Jews. Twenty-five people (14 Muslims) were killed, and over 300 were wounded.

Five days later, two truck bombs exploded outside the British Consulate and the headquarters of the British HSBC Bank in one of the city's busiest pedestrian districts. The blasts were timed within five minutes of each other.

One driver blew up his truck in front of the HSBC Bank during heavy traffic. The other drove into the British Consulate's gate. Chunks of debris and glass rained over a 10 square block area. Thirty-two people, including the British consul Roger Short, were killed. More than 500 were wounded. Most victims were pedestrians.

The "Great Eastern Islamic Raiders Front" and the

Turkish Hezbollah claimed responsibility for all four explosions. The "Great Eastern Islamic Raiders Front" has claimed responsibility in the past for Molotov-cocktail attacks on churches and bars. Its leader currently is in prison for previous murders. The Turkish Hezbollah which claims to be Sunni (different from the Lebanese and Iranian Hezbollah which have Shi'ite origins) has had a history of murdering and persecuting Kurdish fighters for self determination. Clearly both organizations are native to Turkey and may have ties to Al Qaeda and other Islamic fundamentalist groups.

The Turkish government, which is led by the Islamic "Peace and Justice Development Party," has claimed that it will do its best to stop this wave of suicide bombings. However, in September it had released 130 members of the Turkish Hezbollah from prison. Prime Minister Erdogan himself was jailed in 1998 on charges of inciting religious violence.

The Nov. 20 explosions were timed to coincide with the press conference held by George Bush and Tony Blair during Bush's state visit to London. While the purpose of that press conference was to claim that the "war on terrorism" has been successful, the suicide bombings in Istanbul once again show that this campaign has actually strengthened Islamic fundamentalists internationally.

Islamic fundamentalists have used the war on Iraq to intensify their anti-human, misogynist and anti-Semitic attacks. In the four explosions in Istanbul, more Muslims were killed and wounded than any others. This was also the pattern in an earlier suicide attack in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia in which a residential compound inhabited by families of Arab executives from different parts of the Arab world was destroyed. The victims were targeted for engaging in a "repulsive lifestyle" which included men and women socially mixing, sharing a swimming pool and drinking alcohol.

—Sheila Sahar

### London protest march



Independent Media Center/London

**LONDON**—Over 100,000 people marched in London on Nov. 20 to protest the state visit of George W. Bush and the ongoing war in Iraq. Although the turnout was smaller than the million-strong pre-war mobilization in February, it took place on a weekday afternoon and consisted mainly of people living in London. The organized Left, as well as the Moslem Association, were there in force as usual, but were very much a minority among the array of people who turned out: university students, striking school students, trade unionists, professionals, senior citizens and ethnic organizations.

Unfortunately, on what was supposed to be the day the protesters stole the fire of the "George and Tony show," Al Qaeda suicide bombers in Istanbul attacked the British Consulate and the HSBC bank, killing 28 and injuring hundreds. Not surprisingly, this atrocity provided the cue for Bush and Prime Minister Blair to come out of "hiding" to stress the importance of standing "firm" and "united" in the "war on terrorism."

But as the war in Iraq had nothing to do with fighting Al Qaeda and fundamentalism anyway, these words are not likely to sway anti-war opinion. The huge numbers of people in Britain who voiced opposition before it started, now know that the government claims about weapons of mass destruction were false and they are back on the streets.

If the anti-war movement is to grow further, however, it will have to achieve more than large set-piece mobilizations around a single-issue ("End the Occupation, Troops Out Now"). The Left urgently needs to address the problem of how the Iraqi labor organizations, secular Left and the women's movement can win their struggles for freedom—from Saddam and Bush/Blair.

—Dave Black

### Dominican Republic

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many Dominican farmers are working under conditions of slavery in Puerto Rico, despite its being a commonwealth of the U.S. Faced with this situation, people have gone into the streets to confront the police with rocks, burning tires and political slogans. They claim the government has sold the country's sovereignty to the yanquis and to international corporations.

The Dominican Republic is one Latin American nation where the process of globalization has hit the economy extremely hard. "Free Trade" zones, maquiladoras, low salaries, no fringe benefits, no unions, and industries where most of the employees are poor women exist side by side with the privatization of public beaches for the enjoyment of rich people and Hollywood celebrities. Forests have been destroyed by foreign lumber corporations and precious metals have been stolen from the soil, so the country now lacks the resources to replenish the national treasury.

The Dominican Republic is not the paradise presented by the U.S. and European press and tourist agencies. It is only paradise for runaway criminals from other countries in Latin America who came here to evade prosecution for stealing the public funds of their own nations. Nor is it a democratic nation. The Dominican Republic's government has sent troops to Iraq, while its own people live under oppression, dictatorship, poverty, and hunger.

The struggle of the Dominican workers is part of the long history of struggle by all of Latin America against internal enemies and outside imperialists. As a nation mostly of Black people, its struggles are also related to fights carried on by African Americans in the U.S. against racism and exploitation.

—Marcos

## 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*.