

# NEWS & LETTERS

THEORY / PRACTICE

"Human power is its own end" —Karl Marx

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## WORKSHOPTALKS

### Scapegoating cheaper than healing

By Htun Lin

Recently my shop was abuzz with discussions about the rape of a teenage girl at a high school dance in Richmond where I live. What bothered my peers was that 24 kids looked on without helping the 15-year-old while she was being gang-raped. We all agreed that this behavior is depraved.

Then I asked, where do you think these children learned to behave this way? They learn in this society that each one sinks or swims on their own. Our kids learn how to survive in a harsh cold world that they did not create, and that doesn't care where they end up.

It made me think how, even at the Kaiser HMO hospital where we work, management fosters a similar attitude in the workplace. A hospital is about collectively caring for others, but it has bureaucratic procedures for abandoning someone when they are down and most in need of help.

A patient who was a Kaiser member for 25 years lost her job in 2008. When, after exhausting COBRA coverage, she applied for a Kaiser individual plan, they rejected her because she had had breast cancer in 2004. She was shocked at this betrayal. She loved her caregivers who had cured her.

Kaiser just sent her a computer-generated form letter with a long list of pre-existing conditions that trigger rejection with the explanation that their "medical underwriting screening process" is how they remain "cost-effective." She then appealed with a letter from

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## BLACK/REDVIEW

by John Alan

### 'I want justice'

John Alan's column is turned over this issue to excerpts of Larry Marshall's remarks to a Chicago Local meeting of News and Letters Committees on Oct. 26.

On April 3, 2001, at about 3:30 p.m., my 11-year-old granddaughter was sent to the store. She never made it three houses past her house. Three white officers called her to their unmarked car. She had just turned the corner and she thought, I better get back to the house. One officer jumped out of the car and chased her across the street. When she realized she was running the wrong way and came back, the driver decided to run over her. He just missed her. Then she stumbled and they grabbed her, beat her, and put her in a choke lock.

#### RACISM IN CHICAGO

By that time all the community—I thank God for my neighbors—came out and were asking, what do you all think you're doing to this girl? The officers had some drugs in their hands and the idea was to put these drugs on the girl and make her a drug dealer girl. But they couldn't get the drugs on her and they took off. That's the point when I became really angry. At my age I've seen some of the worst discrimination that you could ever witness. Living in a town where you have to go in the back door and a white person will sell you a hamburger and give it to you through a window.

I picked up the phone and knew I was going to say something really bad to the commander. When I found

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## Permanent unemployment, capitalism's hallmark

by Ron Kelch

The Nov. 6 announcement of a dramatic surge in U.S. unemployment to 10.2%—really 17% counting discouraged workers—brought home that, far from an ordinary downturn, the economy has sunk into a deep structural morass. A year ago the dreaded worst-case scenario, projected to garner support for President Obama's stimulus plan, was that without a stimulus unemployment would peak by now at an unconscionable 9%. Today's revelation of the depth of misery in the real economy contrasts sharply with the financial market's renewed exuberance over a reported third quarter growth rate of 3.4% and an officially declared end to the Great Recession.

New "growth" in the economy has come not from investment but from stimulus spending and increased productivity as companies force remaining workers to work harder. The "growing" economy lost 190,000 jobs in October. Every day there are 6,600 new foreclosure evictions in the U.S. In many places foreclosure rates are not slowing but accelerating. In Orange County, California, September's foreclosures were up 5% over August and 90% from a year ago.

There are now 19 million vacant housing units and 3.5 million homeless people, of whom 1,350,000 are children. Tent cities are sprouting up across the country. Each night 350 people are turned away at St. John's Shelter for Women and Children in Sacramento, California whose growing tent city has attracted national media attention.<sup>1</sup> There are now 36 million



On Oct. 27 over 5,000 protesters marched in Chicago against the American Bankers Association's annual meeting (see article p. 10)

Americans on food stamps, 10 million added over the past two years. The Department of Agriculture reports that hunger stalks over a million children, and in 17 million households, encompassing 49 million people, food periodically runs short in this richest country in the world. In Elkhart County, Indiana, suicides went from an annual average of 16 to 22 already this year. In many areas of severe unemployment, suicide rates due to economic distress are comparable to the time of the Great Depression.

#### BIGGER TOO-BIG-TO-FAIL

The lords of finance, who brought the system down and precipitated this crisis, are indeed a minuscule minority. The same investment banks—minus one after the collapse of Lehman Brothers—are now even bigger too-big-to-fail. They are on top again, making record profits, dishing out record bonuses, and inflating a new bubble with the same kind of speculative instruments that caused

the financial collapse. Since they were rescued, bailed-out banks spent \$70 million lobbying Congress, which dutifully forced accountants to weaken standards put in place after the Enron scandal, so that these banks could hide their toxic assets.

What can't be hidden is the naked truth of this totally inverted world, which is causing consternation among the great majority who work in the real economy. The political system will do anything and everything to preserve finance capital as an alien power over workers' real-life human activity that constitutes social production.

Incredulity and a boiling outrage continue over the no-holds-barred effort to save the system of finance

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## An announcement and an invitation

This is an announcement and an invitation to participate in a celebration of the life and work of Raya Dunayevskaya during the 2010 centenary of her birth. It will continue throughout the year ahead, in the pages of *News & Letters*, and in a number of special events to mark the rich legacy of the body of ideas she founded as the philosophy of Marxist-Humanism.

Far from any look backward, this celebration looks to the future. It will be what Dunayevskaya called and practiced throughout her life: a "Retrospective as Perspective." We aim to explore the meaning of Marxist-Humanism for the 21st century, in particular the concrete problems we are confronting today in the struggle for a new world to be built on human foundations.

**That discussion was never more needed than when the continued existence of capitalism has been openly questioned by theoreticians and workers alike—leading to significant calls to return to Marx, not only from the Left but from bourgeois economists as well. The burning questions, however, to be answered are: "What kind of return?" and "Which Marx?"**

To work out these questions for today and tomorrow, we want to explore the philosophy of Marxist-Humanism. It began through the creation of the theory of state-capitalism and the Johnson-Forest Tendency in the 1940s. Without state-capitalist theory the philosophy of Marxist-Humanism could not have been born in 1953, when Dunayevskaya broke through on the Hegelian Dialectic and initiated a new kind of revolutionary organization. Adrienne Rich described Dunayevskaya as "living the revolution," a phrase that describes her political-philosophic-organizational developments unseparated from her vital activities with the movements from below. It included everything from the Black struggles in the midst of World War II, to her participation in the first ever miners' general strike against Au-

tomation after World War II, and her focus on women's struggles as Reason throughout history. Her voluminous correspondence with philosophers and activists in all the revolutionary developments of her lifetime is another of her activities of "thinking and doing" which defined her life.

During this centenary year, we plan to complete a collection of Selected Writings by Raya Dunayevskaya on Marx, from the 1940s to the 1980s, that will make explicit a methodology with which today's revolutionaries can confront new objective-subjective developments.

**Finding answers to today's questions in our exploration and development of Dunayevskaya's work does not mean the objective situation has not changed or that we do not face new challenges. It means grasping the methodology by which Marxist-Humanism was developed as the needed philosophy of revolution for our age, in order to develop it all the way to a new society.**

It is why we want to turn over space in *News & Letters* through the year ahead to print and hear your thoughts on the way Raya Dunayevskaya's work speaks to your life: to hear not only from those who met or corresponded with her during her life, but as well from those who met Marxist-Humanism later. We hope to hear from workers and intellectuals, students, women, and prisoners, who have been influenced by her philosophy in their own work and lives.

At the same time, we are looking forward to special meetings that are being planned to continue a dialogue with Marxist-Humanism in this centenary year. Already in the works is a public meeting in Detroit, Michigan, at the Wayne State University Archives Library, where her archives are housed and are open to all to study. Mike Smith, the Director of the Archives Library, will give the keynote address. All are welcome to attend and participate in the discussion.

## WOMAN AS REASON

By Terry Moon

About 1,600 people, mostly women, participated in the National Women's Studies Association (NWSA) Conference in Atlanta, with over 360 workshops, papers and poster presentations. This year's theme was "Difficult Dialogues," with keynote speaker Angela Davis.

**NWSA, never a static organization, continues to evolve. Remarkable about this year is that the organization's decades-long struggle to become a genuinely multi-racial organization seems to have made significant progress. NWSA's president is now Beverly Guy-Sheftall, who has done more than anyone to build and bring into being Black feminist scholarship and Black women's history and archives. Further, the conference brought together Black, Brown, and white U.S. women with women from Haiti to South Africa, and from Morocco to Poland. Many workshops were an exciting mix of women from all over the world with differing opinions and experiences (see article below).**

Given this remarkable turnaround for an organization that started off very white and almost self-destructed over the issue of racism, it was disappointing to see, despite its remarkable membership, that the slide away from explicit discussion of revolutionary theory and philosophy continues. (See "Need to dig into revolutionary theory," Aug.-Sept. 2007 *N&L*, and "Theory/Class Debates at NWSA," June-July 2008 *N&L*.)

### DISCUSSIONS OF PHILOSOPHY MISSING

This was foreshadowed in Davis' keynote speech which touched on many different topics of concern—such as racism, classism, homophobia, the production of knowledge for the movement, and the difficulty of moving freedom forward. Yet it came off more as a congratulatory talk about how far the women's movement and NWSA in particular have come. And while it had plenty of points that women would reference throughout the conference, they were nothing new, for example, how often the category of "woman" does not include all women

## NWSA Experiences

An unprecedented number of sessions at the National Women's Studies Association (NWSA) Conference took up "intersectionality" and women of color. While approaches varied from religious veneration of "foremothers" like Audré Lorde to dialoguing between "the academy and the streets," to a recognition that "activism without dialogue cannot sustain us," women's passion to be multi-dimensional was unmistakable.

One presenter saw Black feminism as an alternative to the "either/or" gender categories reflected in hip-hop culture, and stressed that Black feminist musicians Erykah Badu, Goapele, India.Arie and Jill Scott all are linked to organizations which assist young Black women. But another, rather than developing the revolutionary social implications of Audré Lorde's writing, saw it leading to spiritual practice.

**In contrast, Layali Eshqaidef explored how Muslim youth use social networking technologies to change the discourse: blogging as a social movement. In 2007 Egyptian women came together via their blogs to write about the same thing on a given day: "We are All Laila." Between Dec. 24-30 they are expanding this to the whole Arab world. Eshqaidef said the movement is calling for social justice and is anti-war, anti-capitalism and against patriarchy, is non-violent, inclusive, for democracy, human rights and the rule of law.**

Directors of Women's Studies programs "who are still committed to the liberatory work that brought us to feminism from different racial, ethnic and class locations" conducted a powerful session to share ways they "sustain this vision." Dr. Becky Thompson said we need to think about the radicalism that informed women's studies and use guerilla strategies to diversify our programs. She used "indigenous methods" to search for and hire a Native American professor, overcoming the mantra that there are no qualified candidates.

**Dr. Diane Harriford related that her white, upper-middle-class students read Black feminist texts as something happening to others. She is developing methods to overcome that alienation.**

Dr. Ruth Zambrana spoke of the relationship between Latina feminism and Black feminist thought and their needed collaboration. Latinas and Latina feminism are extremely heterogeneous; it is time to move beyond *Borderlands* (a groundbreaking book by Gloria Anzaldúa). Dr. Kesho Scott insisted, "Don't do any more diversity work unless it's about power-sharing!"

Several visitors to the News and Letters Committees literature table were glad of a Marxist presence, especially one that made explicit Marx's feminist dimension. Many women of color wanted to share the difficult dialogues that brought them there and to continue to develop them in a quest to end artificial borders and the limits of academia.

—Susan Van Gelder

## NWSA's evolution

and hides women's specificity rather than revealing it.

What surprised me about Davis' talk was how devoid it was of theory and philosophy. While she mentioned she was a Marxist, and had studied German philosophy in 1969 including Hegel's "master and slave relation," those references had more the feel of name-dropping rather than anything substantive.

### CATEGORIES AND THE MOVEMENT

Her anti-dialectical approach was evident when she spoke of "categories," a concept very important in theoretical work. She said that categories always fall short of the movement and that's one reason we have to change our language. Her point was that if we look at the category of freedom, we have to go very far to say we've shifted freedom's terrain.

**But counterposing the creation of a category to the movement short-changes both. While the movement from below brings into the world and makes concrete the Idea that freedom also has to mean women's freedom, philosophy, by creating categories of what comes from the movement, connects the present with the past and the future so that the Idea can have a lasting impact. It is not only the self-emancipatory movement but the self-determination of the Idea that is needed to create a new human foundation for society.**

As always, we did meet many women who were working towards the liberation of society. For example, participants in a workshop on AIDS prevention programs concluded that to end the AIDS epidemic it would take a whole new society, not just promoting the use of condoms. Yet explicit discussions of philosophy, and Marxism in particular, were missing.

Several sessions took up that the faltering economy means that women's studies' very existence is threatened. Unfortunately, most were during the day on Thursday, the day with the fewest participants, and didn't penetrate the self-congratulatory atmosphere that appeared to pervade much of the conference. And it seemed fantastic in a world where the ever more obvious failings of capitalism are prompting many, even including some in the bourgeoisie, to take another look at Marx, that Marx's name was not mentioned in any of the 360 presentation titles except ours.

Despite the ever present problems, many important things happened at NWSA, including the book launch and the conversation with the editors of a new anthology, *Still Brave: Legendary Black Women on Race and Gender and I am Your Sister: Collected and Unpublished Writings of Audré Lorde*. It let us know how far we have come, while so much of the conference showed us how far we still have to go.

## Down with Stupak/Pitts amendment!

**Memphis, Tenn.**—On Oct. 7, the U.S. House of Representatives passed the Affordable Health Care for America Act with the addition of the Stupak/Pitts amendment, which prohibits the use of federal funds "to pay for any abortion or to cover any part of the costs of any health plan that includes coverage of abortion." This means that if the insurance company receives federal funds, a woman cannot buy insurance that covers abortion (which is currently covered by 85% of all insurance plans) even with her own money. Even if she has insurance that currently covers abortion, she will lose that abortion coverage if the insurance company makes the decision to receive federal funds.

As always, the majority who will be harmed are poor women who will not be able to pay for abortions out of pocket. Waiting to come up with the money will lead to more abortions performed later in pregnancy when it is more dangerous for the woman.

This amendment has no requirement for insurance plans to cover birth control or the components of a reproductive health exam such as sexually transmitted infection counseling, domestic violence counseling, pelvic exams or pap tests. Plans are also not required to cover maternity or newborn care, pediatric dental and vision services, or substance abuse counseling.

Loretta Ross, National Coordinator of Sistersong Reproductive Health Collective, stated, "Health care is not an option, not a privilege but a human right," and the Stupak/Pitts amendment legislates "a loss and injury to the human rights of women."

The religious right is celebrating the amendment as a potential "nail in the eventual coffin" of *Roe v. Wade*. The religious right has been grooming its followers to become political leaders who follow their ideology instead of listening to their constituents.

On the day the House voted on the amendment, Sistersong rallied hundreds of protesters in Washington, D.C., 70% of whom made advocacy visits to their representatives. Many are considering another March for Women's Lives in Washington D.C. like the one in 2004 in which over a million demonstrated.

—Adele



## After 8 years of war

**San Francisco**—Over a 100 people crowded into a room to hear Zoya, a representative of the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan (RAWA), on Oct. 25. We here print excerpts of her talk.

...Afghanistan is now a free country: free for the rapists of women and children, free for the warlords, for drug lords, terrorists and occupation forces. It is not free for the people of Afghanistan. There is an Afghanistan not seen in the image presented in the U.S. news. There is resistance to the bitter realities created by the war; there are human rights organizations and others trying to help.

In the last eight years, billions of dollars poured into our country. Most of it was for the foreign troops. Obama is now considering whether to increase them. What is their objective? Why are they here?

**In 2001 the justifications were: first, to liberate the women of Afghanistan...** Women are oppressed by their families. Domestic violence is related to the political situation. For example, when a young girl was raped by a member of Parliament, there was no justice for her... President Karzai pardoned rapists of yet another girl because they were connected to warlords... Schools are supposedly open, but on their way to school girls have acid thrown in their faces, or are abducted, raped and/or forced to marry warlords' soldiers or the Taliban.

**The second justification for the 2001 invasion was to bring democracy to Afghanistan.** But today Afghanistan is a mafia narco-state and the world capital of opium... The recent election was a sham from the beginning. Karzai and Abdullah are the same donkey but with a different saddle... RAWA, because we believe in democracy, is against both the Taliban and the Northern Alliance. We cannot work openly in Afghanistan, and still struggle semi-underground...

**The third justification was to fight terrorism.** Yet the Taliban is getting stronger, mostly because of U.S. policies. Afghans had high hopes eight years ago for peace and security. But U.S. support for the Northern Alliance crushed that hope...

More troops are not a solution for Afghanistan, they mean more civilian deaths, that's all... The U.S. should not only withdraw their troops, they should disarm the private armies, disempower the warlords and all fundamentalists they have been supporting in the past three decades... After eight years of U.S. presence, the terrorists are more powerful in Afghanistan and the region than they were in 2001 and the Taliban are present in 80% of Afghanistan and kill civilians through their suicide bombings.

The people's power and the anti-war movement in the U.S. needs to be stronger, more active. You should expose the real nature of this war and put pressure on your government. We need your solidarity, your human, financial and political solidarity.

## WOMENWORLDWIDE

by Mary Jo Grey

Right-wing militants in Somalia are rounding up and whipping women who are not wearing veils or socks. More than 130 people were detained in three days for "violating" sharia law. Women have also been flogged for wearing bras, and forced to remove their bras and "bare their breasts."

The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission has ruled that Belmont Abbey Catholic College in Belmont, N.C., discriminated against its employees on the basis of sex by denying them healthcare coverage for oral contraceptives. In 2007, the college stopped its insurance coverage of oral contraceptives, voluntary sterilization and abortion.

A nearly \$500,000 judgment awarded to a Library of Congress employee, who lost that job while undergoing a gender change from a man to a woman, will stand and not be challenged by the Obama administration. The American Civil Liberties Union filed a lawsuit on her behalf in 2005 and two months ago a federal judge gave her back pay and damages because of sex discrimination. She said she saw support of the judgment as recognition that transgender discrimination must end.

## Stroger Hospital employees fight cuts

**Chicago**—The Cook County Health and Hospitals Board is dismantling the public health system. This drastic move is an effort to rid the County of its traditional role as healthcare provider, disguised as a response to its budget crisis.

The Board plans to close all inpatient care at Oak Forest and Provident Hospitals, leaving Stroger Hospital, which is already overcrowded and understaffed, to pick up the slack. At the same time, they have begun to lay off Stroger Hospital's physicians, nurses, social workers and others, with hundreds more layoffs promised. The neonatal and pediatric units at Stroger are scheduled to be permanently closed, as are several outpatient services and clinics.

The supposed mission of the County hospitals and clinics is to provide care to the poor and uninsured regardless of their ability to pay. This principle has been whittled away for years, but it remains a safety net.

We provide care for patients with extremely high rates of unemployment, homelessness, substance abuse, mental illness and histories of incarceration. The vast majority are Black. It is the only place where undocumented immigrants or immigrants not eligible for benefits—because they have not been legal permanent residents for five years—can receive healthcare.

The Board's plan demonstrates that the people served are not considered worthy of life. The workers, who are majority Black, are equally disregarded. In fact, the County hired an army of consultants at over \$10 million to spy on the workers and make "scientific" recommendations for cuts. They have also spent millions on contractors to replace us.

William Foley, the new CEO, held two "town hall" meetings for Stroger employees to outline the strategic plan for "restructuring." He made the arrogant mistake of scheduling these meetings the day after the first pink slips went out. Workers denounced the plan and defended their integrity and the dignity of the patients.

One woman asked why her department was being forced to train their own replacements—the contrac-

tors. She insisted that the workers are the experts, not the consultants who recommended hiring the contractors. She called for the workers to play the lead role in the decision-making regarding any restructuring and to be able to keep their jobs.

Most workers are unionized, but they're in three different unions that have not worked together. SEIU Local 73 called for a demonstration outside of Stroger Hospital on Nov. 4. The nurses' union, NNOC, refused to take part. It actually scheduled a membership meeting for the same time, thereby preventing the nurses from participating. AFSCME was absent too. The rally was small, although patients walking past joined in.

The three unions appear to be more interested in protecting their own turf than in working together to protect public healthcare and thereby the workers' jobs and dignity. Why should we cede our voices to the union? Why should they determine the level of solidarity we have with each other? At the rally, I felt as silenced by the unions as I do by the Board and CEO. But many workers felt it was better than doing nothing.

—Stroger Hospital worker

## Mexico: mass strikes for fired workers



**Mexico City**—More than 100,000 trade unionists, students and civil society activists streamed into Mexico City to the central Zócalo as part of a national civic work stoppage on Nov. 11 in support of 40,000 electrical workers who President Calderón had summarily fired a month ago while dissolving the state-owned light and power company (*Luz y Fuerza del Centro*).

The marches were the culmination of a one-day partial strike of union workers, including the telephone workers, as well as workers, professors and students from the major public universities. Workers and students demonstrated in front of buildings of *Luz y Fuerza* that Calderón's federal police had been occupying.

In the days prior to this mass mobilization, electrical workers had been holding demonstrations in front of the Congress and the Supreme Court and at the union headquarters. They had sought solidarity with other unions and had appealed directly to student activists at the public universities.

I was at the Economics Faculty at the giant  
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## Wal-Mart fake smiles

Where would unions be today if they failed to organize GM with the great sit-down strikes in the 1930s? We as workers must begin to ask, why haven't the big unions taken on Wal-Mart? We the workers should be in direct action with the unorganized and show them how to sit down. If the union leadership has lost the will to organize, then the unions are on the road to death.

Workers themselves must stop the money from flowing throughout all Wal-Marts by just not working. Our work is the only real power we the workers have. We must take back our real value, which is labor itself.

At my local Wal-Mart store a young Black woman cleaning the restrooms had a big smile on her face. My first thought was, she must be really happy. I asked her, "How do you like working here?" She said, "I hate it here. Why do you ask me something like that?" She began looking to see who was around "We all hate our jobs here. I can get fired for talking like this."

I told her, "I have had a lot of jobs that I learned to hate too!" Then she really began to talk. "They don't want us to talk with people. Around here, it's keep a damn smile on your face and do your job. A person that doesn't smile they will find a reason to let go. They even make us sing their damn Wal-Mart song every day!"

On her break outside, I asked her, "Do you think a union will help?" "Hell no," she said, "All they will do is take more money out of my check. The union was okay for my grandpa, he was in the Steelworkers Union for all of his life. Everybody else I know that was in a union has lost their job one way or another."

The young workers I have talked with know that their dreams will never happen within this worldwide capitalist system. When the workers themselves take back their labor at the point of production, then and only then, will we see a system set up by us, the workers. Then we will really smile, for we will be free.

—Martin

## Ford workers reject concessions

**Detroit**—Rank-and-file Ford auto workers overwhelmingly rejected contract concessions proposed by UAW President Ron Gettelfinger and his bureaucracy. More than 70% of production workers and 75% of skilled trades workers voted against proposed concessions.

They included a six-year wage freeze on entry-level employees (\$14 an hour, compared with \$27 an hour before recent concessions) and binding arbitration (no strikes allowed) on disputes over wages and benefits that may arise in the next 2011 contract. Many skilled trades job classifications would have been consolidated, which simply means work speed-up.

**In an August conference the Ford UAW national council delegates, mostly local union presidents, had rejected any idea of opening contract talks to consider concessions. The UAW bureaucracy then pulled a language trick, declaring that they weren't reopening the contract, just seeking contract "modifications."**

The UAW bureaucracy, Ford and the national media tried to persuade workers by claiming that Ford had to have concessions to remain competitive with GM and Chrysler, with concessions gained through government-orchestrated bankruptcy. In return, Ford offered a \$1,000 signing bonus to each of its 41,000 UAW workers, new investments in plants and new jobs and job protection for as many as 7,000 positions.

The Ford workers knew that on the production line more concessions would add to the miseries of the previous March concessions. They knew that Ford had been long on promises but had failed to deliver. They did the simple math, and knew that if Ford was willing to pay \$41 million in bonus money, the concessions would be worth billions, all taken out of their hides.

Under the impact of record unemployment, especially in the auto industry, everybody just knew that Ford workers would approve the concessions—everybody except the Ford workers themselves.

**Ford workers at the Kansas City assembly plant, in one of the largest locals with 3,737 members, voted 92% against concessions and voted to authorize a strike. That doesn't mean the workers will necessarily strike, but it shows their anger.**

They have filed a huge number of grievances against the company, and disciplinary actions are ruthlessly punishing the workers. This is just the tip of the iceberg. With the kinds of concessions that have been forced on all of the auto workers, GM and Chrysler as well as Ford, the anger and resentment are certain to increase and erupt throughout the industry.

—Andy Phillips

## Young girls fed to China's sweatshops

Leslie T. Chang, a former foreign correspondent for the *Wall Street Journal*, writes in a highly readable book, *Factory Girls: From Village to City in a Changing China* (Random House, 2008), of her experience in the factory town of Dongguan, China. Ms. Chang lived a decade in Dongguan, following the lives of two 16-year-old factory girls who worked in a tennis shoe factory, migrating there from the countryside. They are part of the biggest migration of peoples into an urban area in history—an estimated 130 million.

Hundreds of factories dot Dongguan. Entrepreneurs exploit the labor power of girls, some as young as 14. Working conditions are terrible, with young women often working around the clock for low pay that keeps them in a life of misery.

Chang follows the lives of two factory girls. Her theme is the fast-moving pace of China's industrialization and its effects on these individuals. It is young women who are the backbone of producing goods that have become the inexpensive consumer products of the world. **What makes this story unique is that it singles out great changes occurring in individuals who are in the midst of China's "industrial revolution."**

Chang, who knows the language, lived alongside the girls and read the diary of one, and was able to give an insightful human feeling to their lives. Perhaps the biggest change the girls underwent was their feeling of independence and ability to better their economic standing by hard work.

To better themselves they had to utilize their feminine wiles and be able to meet challenges with confidence, even if it meant a false confidence. Along with a better materialistic life, the girls lost a lot of traditional qualities their families held dear back on the farm.

Chang brought into this migration tale from the farm to the factory a parallel story of her own family's migration to the U.S. She saw the same work ethic in her parents that she sees in the factory girls.

*Factory Girls* is an enlightening look at working girls in China. It is a humanistic look at their living conditions, their hopes and dreams, and their striving to achieve a better life in the midst of the fast changing economic conditions of China.

—Nobu

## WORKSHOPTALKS

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her doctor that stated she is "currently disease free." The computer then spit out a second rejection letter.

This patient thinks she may overturn these denials on appeal and the healthcare reform law going through Congress would outlaw this particular form of routine abandonment of those who are sick. However, the law doesn't overturn the way management's "cost-effective" imperative infects healthcare delivery itself.

Management undermines our natural cooperative spirit by fostering antagonism between us. New software tracks each individual employee's performance. The measure they obsess over is our co-pay collection rates, and fulfilling state-mandated documentations.

We workers know from practice that these tasks can be done better as a team. However, managers are fixated on individual scorecards. They want to have individuals to blame whenever the state finds the hospital in violation. They make us sit through canned computer-video compliance training, which drills into our heads that compliance is an "individual" obligation.

Work is oriented around answering to the computer, which is our new boss, foreman and disciplinarian. The mantra is, we can't stop "progress." Our relations with each other are greatly diminished. It is just each one for himself through the machine. This militates against cooperation. Patients come to be seen as the adversary that drains hospital resources.

To curtail the spread of infectious diseases, patients with tuberculosis and certain other infections must be placed in isolation. Patients with a variety of heart conditions require rooms with monitors, and a higher nurse-to-patient ratio. Yet management, to keep costs down, not only reduced the number of those specialized rooms, but keeps staffing levels too low.

Unassigned patients are subject to long waits. Yet, if the individual charge nurse fails to meet the state-required 24-hour deadline to place those patients, it is she who will be disciplined. Every manager is obsessed with passing the buck. This pervasive attitude even affects frontline workers. Each new admission is viewed as a drain on our time.

When our job has been dumbed down by the computer, management reminds us daily that we can be discarded at any time. Is it any wonder then that our kids, too, have problems with their self-esteem and feel that it is just the way of the world to not give a damn about anyone else but yourself?

Outlawing denial of care for pre-existing conditions is a good reform. But the problem in healthcare will not be resolved until we overcome capitalism and its "cost-effective" imperative, which alienates us from our own labor and from each other. We have to create our own social relations in production and liberate the cooperative power of our labor.

## FROM THE WRITINGS OF RAYADUNAYEVSKAYA

*Editor's note: On the occasion of the death of Claude Lévi-Strauss, we present excerpts of Dunayevskaya's "Letter to the Youth on the Needed Total Uprooting of the Old and the Creation of New Human Relations." The original, dated Aug. 13, 1983, can be found in The Raya Dunayevskaya Collection, #7803.*

Because of my deep confidence in the youth striving to be "thought-divers" (whether or not they are superb swimmers just by being young and strong), I'd like to appeal to you to dive into the battle of challenging post-Marx Marxism. That battle will reveal the much greater maturity of this historic period as against that of the generation of the 1960s. It is true that they were so massively active in that decade that 1968 had reached the threshold of a revolution. The fact, however, that it remained an unfinished act made it clear to the following generation that they had better probe deeply into how the lack of serious theory vitiated activism's goals. The idea that activity, activity, activity would absolve them from the hard labor of recreating Marx's theory of "revolution in permanence" for their age and that theory picked up "en route" would solve the totality of the economic-political-social crises, as well as end U.S. imperialism's war in Vietnam, ended in total failure.

Nevertheless, one of the most famous debates in that period was that between Jean-Paul Sartre and Claude Lévi-Strauss (...accepted as gurus by the youth movement), as the 1960s generation continued to follow new philosophies like Existentialism and Structuralism, instead of trying to find the historic link of continuity with "old" Marxism. While Lévi-Strauss critiqued Sartre's adherence to dialectics, holding that Structuralism required the analytic, empiric, scientific method, Sartre—since he, himself, was enamored with Structuralism and had as ahistorical an outlook as Lévi-Strauss—could hardly win the argument for meaning as against Lévi-Strauss's emphasis on non-meaning. Here is how Lévi-Strauss put it:

*"In my perspective, meaning is never the primary phenomenon; meaning is always reducible. In other words, behind all meaning there is a non-meaning, while the reverse is not the case. As far as I'm concerned, significance is always phenomenal."*<sup>1</sup>

A profound critique of Lévi-Strauss' Structuralism came, not from Existentialism, but from an independent Marxist anthropologist-dialectician, Stanley Diamond:

*"The ethnologist is actually saying that he is not interested in meaning (significance), which he regards as merely (and always) phenomenal. For him, the primary phenomenon is not meaning, but the non-meaning which lies behind meaning and to which, he believes, meaning is reducible."*<sup>2</sup>

**THE POINT IS THAT** the lifeblood of the Hegelian dialectic—when it is not diluted by Existentialism but seen in its essence as a ceaseless movement of becoming, disclosing the meaning of history—is exactly what saved Hegel from the Kantian, impenetrable "Thing-in-itself" and its absolute idealism. Though Hegel may have wanted to confine history to history of thought, the single dialectic which characterizes both objectivity and subjectivity moved Hegel to objective idealism. That single dialectic became the ground for Marx's dialectic of revolution.

It was this, **just this**, which led proletarians to accept dialectical development, not alone for its "dynamism" but for its meaning in historic confrontation. Contrast the non-Marxist, intellectualistic, abstract approach to dialectics with that of a Marxist-Humanist proletarian attitude—and consider that it was precisely on the question of phenomenology. That does not mean phenomenal but the science of phenomena, of experience. I am referring to Charles Denby, the editor of *News & Letters* and his favorite quotation from Hegel:

*"Enlightenment upsets the household arrangements, which spirit carries out in the house of faith, by bringing in the goods and furnishings belonging to the world of the Here and Now."*<sup>3</sup>

The whole point of Denby's interest in the Hegelian quotation was this: What does philosophy have to say on the relationship between reality and revolution? It was because he saw Hegel introducing reality into the critique of the Enlightenment that Denby's attraction to Hegelian dialectics deepened. He could then see that dialectical development signified the **transformation** of reality....

Please remember, dear Youth, as I appeal to you to engage in this battle of ideas, that it is not only the post-Marx Marxists we challenge but **all** alternatives to **Marx's** Marxism. *Philosophy and Revolution* critiqued not only revolutionaries like Mao and Trotsky,

1. Claude Lévi-Strauss, "A Confrontation," *New Left Review* no. 62 (July-August 1970, orig. French edition 1963), p. 64.  
2. See "Anthropology in Question" in Section 6, "The Root Is Man: Critical Traditions," of *Reinventing Anthropology*, edited by Dell Hymes (Vintage Books, 1972), p. 427.—RD  
3. G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Mind* (New York: Harper, 1967), p. 512.

## Letter to the Youth

# Lévi-Strauss and the battle of ideas

but also Sartre, the "Outsider Looking In." It is true that I deal with him there as Existentialist and I deal with the structuralist Communist intellectual guru, Louis Althusser, all too briefly, very nearly dismissing him in a few footnotes. I do not mention Lévi-Strauss at all. Nevertheless, they represent the very same subject—Alternatives—that I began this letter with. Later I will contrast that to a true re-creation of Marxism for one's age. For us that began in 1953 with the breakthrough on the Absolute Idea. It will be easier, I believe, to dig deep into that if we look first at what we are familiar with—the Youth Revolt in this country, the Free Speech Movement burdened by American pragmatism.<sup>4</sup> Revolutionaries though they were, they certainly resisted philosophy of revolution. Though they had asked me to address them on Marx's Humanism, the interest was more on the subject of alienation than on philosophy of revolution.

**IT WAS ALL MOST EXCITING** when Mario Savio was released from jail at midnight and arrived at 2 a.m. in a spot several miles outside of Berkeley to hear me speak on Marx's Humanism. Though they were very interested in Humanism, and, indeed, related it to their own new lifestyles, Mario was the next day also going to meet Aptheker, because he had promised Bettina, who was also part of the Free Speech Movement, and he was open to "all ideas" and was not the least bit interested in any Party or organization. In a word, the supposedly non-partyist, non-elitist, non-organizational person who was only for activism, activism, activism, did not see the contradiction in organizational form that lacked a philosophy of freedom and that form that was inseparable from a struggle for freedom, for revolution.

Permit me here to go back to 1953 to reexamine the process of working out, or seeing the emergence of, a new philosophic dimension. It is the year I first broke through on the Absolute Idea, removing its abstract, mystical veil and seeing it as not only a unity of theory and practice, but a totally new relationship of the two **because** a new historic beginning had been reached with this live movement **from practice**. This was the period we completely rejected both the designation of the youth as "the beat generation" and the pragmatic view of the epoch itself as "an end of ideology."

**THE BREAKTHROUGH ON** the Absolute Idea helped us to perceive a new generation of revolutionaries in that so-called "beat generation" who were rejecting a world they never made; and to see in the revolts in Latin America and Africa the emergence of a Third World. Indeed, toward the end of the 1950s, retrogression and McCarthyism in the U.S. notwithstanding, we declared it to be a totally new epoch: in production; in political freedom battles, whether that be the new

4. See *The Free Speech Movement and the Negro Revolution*, by Mario Savio, Raya Dunayevskaya, and Eugene Walker (Detroit: News and Letters, 1965). Philosophically, the Black dimension, especially Frantz Fanon, far from being pragmatist, worked out its critique of Hegel's concept of reciprocity in a revolutionary-dialectical manner. See both *Black Skin, White Masks* and my "Revolutions and Philosophies" of Aug. 1, 1983 [*Raya Dunayevskaya Collection*, #7819].—RD  
5. Dunayevskaya's speech on Marx's theory of alienation, given in Berkeley at the height of the Free Speech Movement and titled "Marx's Debt to Hegel," can be found in *The Free Speech Movement and the Negro Revolution*.  
6. Bettina Aptheker's father Herbert Aptheker was a leader of the Communist Party USA.  
7. Daniel Bell's *The End of Ideology* was published in 1960.  
8. See the News and Letters Committees pamphlet *Workers Battle Automation* by Charles Denby.

Black dimension in the Montgomery Bus Boycott or in the East European Freedom Fighters against Russian state-capitalism calling itself Communism; a new stage of cognition as the Hungarian Revolution highlighted it by bringing Marx's Humanist Essays onto the historic stage. The breakthrough on the Absolute Idea was not only on the **movements** from practice and from theory but also on **ORGANIZATION**, as we held that its dialectic would illuminate also the dialectic of the Party, as we had long since rejected "the party to lead" concept. We were here driven to go also to Hegel's *Philosophy of Mind*, and there, as we approached the three final syllogisms in Absolute Mind and trod on ground none had ever walked before, we felt that in place of a "dialectic of the party" we were, with Hegel's Self-Thinking Idea, with the masses' Self-Bringing Forth of Liberty, face to face with a new society. After all, Marx had unchained the dialectic as he had recreated the Absolute Method as a "revolution in permanence."...

**IN THE MID-1970s** we finally got to know Marx's *Ethnological Notebooks* which let us hear him think. By not being a work finished for the press, it compels us to work out, to labor at what Marx has only in notes. This is what we must all work at for our age. Here is why we so urgently need a new type of member and need to see ourselves as a new type of member, to continue the development of what *Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution*, in completing the trilogy of revolution, has begun. In the process, let us not forget what that great revolutionary, Rosa Luxemburg, did for us, not only in letting us discover her unknown feminist dimension, but in posing the question of the relationship of spontaneity to organization so insightfully that, though she had not worked out the answers, she helped create an atmosphere that makes it impossible any longer to ignore all the ramifications of spontaneity.

Marx's *Critique of the Gotha Program*, when reread with the totality of Marx's Marxism—where we found the "new moments" Marx experienced on what we now call the Third World and the new forces of revolution as Reason, be it Women's Liberation, Black or youth—demanded a reexamination of all the great revolutionaries, especially Lenin and Luxemburg, who seemed to be so deeply divided on the question of organization. It was that reexamination in this year of the Marx centenary, in this nuclear world, in the imperative nature of the challenge to post-Marx Marxists, which would not let revolutionaries off scot-free of the organizational question.

The youth need also to dig into the first chapter of Part III of *Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution* to grapple with the Promethean vision of the young Marx before he was a Marxist, when he was still a Prometheus Bound, when he was still a young Hegelian (1839-41) just filling in some minor gaps in Hegel's monumental *History of Philosophy*—and asking himself that imperative question: "where to begin?" When we talk about "thought-divers" we can see that Marx was the greatest of all.

That's what I'm really appealing to the youth to do. Becoming a thought-diver and an activist in this period demands nothing short of **practicing** the challenge to all post-Marx Marxists, and thereby creating such new ground for organization, such concretization of Marx's revolution in permanence, as to find a new way to let the actual revolution **be**.

## Anthropology and Marx's philosophy of revolution

### Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution

With his study of works on primitive societies, Marx was diving into the study of human development, both in different historic periods and in the most basic Man/Woman relationship. The concept he held fast was the one he had worked out in his *1844 Economic-Philosophic Manuscripts*. This was not, as anthropologists would have it, simply a move from a philosophic to an empiric, scientific, and anthropological view. Rather, as a revolutionary, Marx's hostility to capitalism's colonialism was intensifying. The question was how total must be the uprooting of existing society and how new the relationship of theory to practice. The studies enabled Marx (*Marx, not Engels*) to see the possibility of new human relations, not as they might come through a mere "updating" of primitive communism's equality of the sexes, as among the Iroquois, but as Marx sensed they would burst forth from a new type of revolution.



### Women's Liberation and the Dialectics of Revolution: Reaching for the Future

All too many of today's Women's Liberationists have rejected "Marxism" as if Engels' *Origin of the Family* was Marx's view, without ever digging into *Marx's* Marxism.... What we now know as the *Ethnological Notebooks*...when set in the context of his philosophy of revolution and human development, led to the conclusion that revolution could come first in a backward land, *provided* the historic conditions were ripe and the revolution related itself to the rest of the world.

To order, see ad, p. 7.

## ESSAY

## Iran: Secularism and social emancipation

by Raha

## The Present Historic Moment

Long before the mass discontent appeared as a popular political uprising in recent months, the Iranian ruling powers sensed the awakening of the repressed yet un-conforming population as the foreboding of an approaching storm. They were more perceptive than the opposition leaders who had turned inward after the failed attempts of the 1990s that focused on the state as the locus of social change. The "silent revolution" simmering in the depths of the collective consciousness, was fast reaching the surface and turning outward.

Ahmadinejad's regime clearly understood itself as the counter to the coming revolution. But despite all repressive measures during his first four-year term, it became clear that his task remained largely unfinished. Hence the need to "will," from above, his "re-election" in 2009. Even within the traditional conservative camp, constant social unrest led to fragmentation and strife.

The re-emergence of the multi-dimensional popular uprising, before and after the elections of June 12, proves that the so-called "quiescent" decade was really a time of political maturation, re-thinking and recollection. This intellectual fermentation was reflected in translations of works of Hegel, Marx, Lukacs, Luxemburg, Marcuse and Dunayevskaya, to name a few, as well as conferences celebrating the 200th anniversary of Hegel's *Phenomenology*, and the unprecedented popular reception of lectures by such scholars as Antonio Negri and Jürgen Habermas.

This "epoch-making renaissance in political and cultural discourse"<sup>1</sup> caused such discomfort in official circles that the director of the Iranian Institute of Philosophy exclaimed, "Of the 15 doctoral candidates at the institute, 11 are working on Western philosophy. Only 4 of them are writing Ph.D.'s on Islamic philosophy."

A 23-member peacemaking delegation, coordinated by the Fellowship of Reconciliation, observed after visiting Iran in 2007, "Iran's love of philosophy can be found outside the corridors of academia as well." Everywhere they went, they saw "a deep passion for ideas, a palpable craving for intellectual dialogue..." (<http://www.forusa.org/programs/iran/march07report2part2.html>).

This thirst for ideas is now combined with a new political maturity. Under the impact of the ongoing struggles, reform leaders have turned to the ideals of the 1979 Revolution by highlighting its unfulfilled promises. The Green Movement is neither monolithic nor the full expression of the still developing social consciousness. As one student activist observed, the reform leaders "do not create breakthroughs. After all, they too are part of the 30-year power structure in Iran...What is important is the impact that Mousavi's presence at that position will have on the public sphere, and the activism that it will promote and advance." He concludes by saying that his support for a reform leader in an election "does not blur my identity with those reformers in the power structure" (<http://www.roozonline.com/english/interview/article/2009/january/27>).

Many publications have been created. Innumerable organizations have been formed. Thousands of weblogs and on-line journals have appeared. Public debate and dialogue are everywhere—in the Metro, in a taxi, at the workplace or in informal gatherings at home. There is no end to the energy and creativity of the people. As one worker stated, the workplace is where "everybody does nothing except find ways to get around blocked web sites and read the day's news" (<http://globalpost.com/print/3636975>).

This self-activity has generated a leap in self-consciousness—a whole new sense of **what is possible**. Had anyone, reformist or revolutionary, anticipated this new objective reality? Is there something inherently deficient in emancipatory theory that perpetually condemns it to arrive on the scene only **after the fact**? **Can theory and practice ever be united?**

Today's movement has not reached the scope of 1979 at its high point. But that's hardly an excuse to avoid a self-critique. It is high time to re-conceptualize theory as wholly immanent within the movement from practice, making the movement relate itself to itself, and become fully aware of its own potential, goals and aspirations. Once the masses gain self-knowledge and the corresponding judgment, the entire old system will no longer be tenable.

## Islamic Republic's Conflicted Self-Understanding

For 30 years the theocratic state in Iran claimed legitimacy as the embodiment of the universal interests of society. The popular uprising demanding regeneration of society on a new basis has removed this justification.

The Islamic State's presupposition was the 1979 Revolution. In its self-confident 1980s it devoured its own children, turning against the very forces that helped bring it to power. A ruthless counter-revolutionary terror even drove its first ever elected President, Bani Sadr, into exile.

1. Danny Postel, "Iran and the Future of Liberalism," [http://www.theliberal.co.uk/issue\\_12/politics/iran\\_postel.1\\_12.html](http://www.theliberal.co.uk/issue_12/politics/iran_postel.1_12.html)

The eight-year war with Iraq fed religious nationalism and perfected the terror. The despotic state became an end in itself subordinating civil life. The "citizen" was a fiction, an abstract appendage to and mere servant of the state. For three decades the absolutist regime politicized the citizenry by reinventing enemies. The vengeful regime's eternal warfare against "infidels" tolerated no dissent. Every expression of opposition, however mild, was immediately branded as *Moharebe Khoda*, "the Enemy of God," to justify its eradication.

Religion became a means to a thoroughly secular aim. It was nothing but the religion of expediency, an empirical religion, fused with politics and nuclear science. This theocratic edification of political power brought the state religion into a direct clash with the consciousness of the people for whom religion was "the sigh of the oppressed and the soul of a soulless world."<sup>2</sup>

Having resorted to violence, torture and even rape in face of an unarmed but deep and widespread grassroots movement, the state has lost the battle for the minds of the people. With its "spiritualism" fully exposed for what it is, a crass materialism, it has no other strategy but the savage unleashing of brute force to guarantee its secular survival. When the so-called heavenly realm comes crashing down, and discloses itself as but the sheer instrument of secular domination, the people can no longer take refuge in a celestial "beyond" and escape from the here and now. The political and the religious alienations intermerge. **The critique of "heaven" becomes a social critique of the contradictory reality on earth.**

Political fissures in established ruling circles are reflected in theological divides. The contradiction within religious thought has assumed the shape of the "theology of doubt" among a formidable section of the clerics. Political religion, a religion that thinks politically, has come to a certain self-understanding that it is the religion of domination. Some within the religious camp no longer want to continue with self-deception, and now take refuge in what they call "the pure Mohammedan Islam" (*Islam-eh nab-eh Mohammadi*). Prominent theologians, among them the renowned Abdulkarim Soroush (<http://www.dr.soroush.com/English.htm>), want to free civil society from state religion and advocate freedom of religion. They resemble modern day Islamic Lutherans who want to overcome the "faith in the authority by restoring the authority of faith."

Religious consciousness has reached a moment of internal combustion. The clerical establishment, headed by the Supreme Leader, seeks to relieve this internal torment by safeguarding their power at all cost. No more playing with the idea of "religious democracy." After the fiasco of the latest election, their claim to "legitimacy" has become merely a direct link with "God!"

The "idealism" of this hypocritical state is manifest in a most materialistic way—the display of the force of arms. Those who pretended to be at war with the materialism of the modern world sustain their power only with the most sophisticated modern technologies. The "Islamic Republic," stripped of its ideological religious shell, has evolved into a security-military-police state.

Where does the new social critique start? Should the spectrum of forces that identify themselves with "secularism" start by a critique of religious consciousness in general or religion as such? Is the achievement of a secular society an end in itself?

## Reaching for the Future: A Perspective

The despotic regime in Iran that denies its citizens freedom of conscience, freedom to think and even to worship, is far worse than a 21st century version of the inquisitors of the Middle Ages. It is more technologically advanced in its arsenal of torture, and in its use of modern media to deliver its message when it puts hundreds of political prisoners in front of the screens to abjure and recant. The Shah, too, shortly before his downfall, dared to put poets, writers and journalists on public trial!

The new regime combined politics with an ideology that administers every aspect of people's lives, public or private, while replacing the Monarch with the office of an unelected Absolute Leader whose command is Law. Under such tyranny, the desire for political emancipation from state religion has gained a near universal appeal. The call for a secular society is certainly legitimate and a great step forward.

Yet in the wake of this great ongoing upheaval, it is imperative not to limit our vision of the future; not only because despotism can also take a secular form, but also because **we have witnessed how an epochal revolution 30 years ago got aborted when**

2. Karl Marx's *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), p. 131.

**all the concrete demands for a new way of life after the overthrow of the Shah were completely submerged under what was also a legitimate demand: "anti-imperialism." Can we meet the challenge of our time with a fuller, concrete response?**

"Secularism" was born of a widespread revolution in manifold forms of science and culture, culminating in the great French Revolution. This revolution ushered in the modern age, driving religion out of political power and into the private realm. It was a great leap forward to dethrone religion by bringing in "the goods and furnishings of the Here and Now" (Hegel, *Phenomenology of Mind*, p. 512). Yet over 200 years later, there is not just the rise of political Islam in the "East" but also the invasion of the "public sphere" by Christian fundamentalism in the "West."

Secularism's worldliness did not confront human self-alienation in its material form. The antithesis of faith and knowledge fails to touch on the human content of either religion or secular knowledge. Soroush appeals to the "right of reason," based on the enlightened "I," against dogmatic faith. He attacks the idea of revolution as incompatible with reason because revolutionaries, defined by what they are against, are a "long way from knowing what they favor" (<http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2007-03-30-soroush-en.html#>).

However, it is not the enlightened "I" but rather the **historic reason** of Iranian masses who brought this momentous historic turning point, including the challenge to dogmatic faith.

Therefore, the positive within the negative, what Hegel called the negation of the negation, must be found **within** the revolution. The critique of religion as such will, yet again, leave the movement unprepared for **what happens after** the existing theocratic regime is overthrown. Are we now con-

demned to undergo the vicissitudes of a secular capitalistic development, a development which today has put a question mark over human survival on this planet? The positive human content of both secular life and religion is a social endeavor. It can only be realized through social emancipation beyond the political form of the state.

Soroush's goal of restoring the religious human as a moral, pious being apart from the worldly realm separates religion (faith) from history and the historical religious consciousness. He does resemble Luther, who, after all, betrayed those who wanted to realize the human content of religion. Luther's challenge to the religious hierarchy unleashed a revolutionary peasant movement led by religious leaders like Thomas Munzer. They fought the aristocracy and the Church, which was a huge continent-wide money-making enterprise built on the backs of the peasants. Munzer and his followers thought they were following Luther's teaching about realizing principles in real life without the mediating hierarchy of the Church. But Luther betrayed them by siding with the German princes in a great slaughter.

Secularism challenges religion without confronting its material basis in human self-alienation. Workers, who have no commodity to sell but their own labor power, are alienated from their own labor and are related to each other through things. Freedom under a secular state, says Marx, is only defined negatively. The other person is "not the realization of...freedom, but the barrier to it" (Marx, "On the Jewish Question," *Marx-Engels Collected Works*, Vol. 3, p. 163). The positive expression of freedom is not in the isolated individual, the ego, but, in the case of labor, the human content of cooperative labor realized by freely associated labor.

In Iran today, many tendencies are inside an ideological bubble detached from material life, the production and reproduction of life through human labor. Yet where are the workers' rights in the demands for civil liberties? Are workers a "sphere in civil society that is not of civil society" as Marx put it? Workers are vocal in demanding the right to organize, the right to strike, but the reform leaders cannot hear them. Workers have gone on strike for unpaid wages, in some cases unpaid for six months to a year. They are bludgeoned and imprisoned when they take to the streets and ask for it.

The explicit inclusion of labor could add a new universal dimension to the spontaneous forms of social solidarity in today's liberatory struggles. At its high point, the emancipatory movement is not yet alienated from its social content in the form of an abstract whole, either as a monolithic political Party or a State power. Now is the time to work out how to avoid yet another unfinished revolution and finally achieve what Marx called "human emancipation" when "the actual, individual man has taken back into himself the abstract citizen...when he has recognized and organized his own powers as **social** powers so that social force is no longer separated from him as political power" (MECW, 3:168).



Iranian woman confronts authorities at demonstration

## AFGHAN LIVES SUCKED INTO U.S. QUAGMIRE

Malalai Joya said it as plainly as anyone could: "Eight years ago, women's rights were used as one of the excuses to start this war. But today Afghanistan is still facing a women's rights catastrophe. Life for most Afghan women resembles a type of hell that is never reflected in the Western mainstream media." The Lead article in the Oct.-Nov. *N&L*, "Afghan lives and freedom sucked into U.S. quagmire," did more than powerfully reflect that real situation. It put it in the context of what all principled opposition to war must stand on, pointedly quoting it from our 1960 Resolution on "War and Peace": "Our opposition to war must spell out not only what we are against but what we are for: a world of new human relations, beginning at the point of production, and encompassing all the dimensions opened up by humanity's many-faceted struggles for freedom."



Member *N&L* Committees  
Chicago

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It's about time to read a good narrative on Afghanistan. I just got through reading the Oct.-Nov. issue of *N&L* and it's clear nobody else really knows this stuff. Thanks for following it so closely. I didn't know the descent into backwater Islamism was so recent. It's a slippery slope. Just wait until we descend into backwater jesu-fascism.

Ceylon  
Memphis

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Afghanistan has been falling by the wayside, overshadowed by the healthcare reform debate and other issues. But Afghanistan has profound implications for the rest of the world. It is a microcosm of many problems because it could end up being Obama's Vietnam.

Afghanistan represents the larger quagmire we're all in despite having a "nice person" sitting in the White House.

Htun Lin  
Bay Area, California

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Obama's pragmatism may not go far enough. He may succeed in vanquishing al Qaeda, but he doesn't address what it means to have human relations in Afghanistan. "Peace" is not enough. It is why people like Malalai Joya keep reappearing and demand more than just peace.

Asian-American  
San Francisco

## AN 'OFFICIAL' DEATH TOLL FOR IRAQ?

The Iraqi government recently issued an "official" death toll of 85,000 killed in almost five years of war, which doesn't include the year of chaos immediately following "shock and awe." I took note of the significant number of deaths of journalists and university professors, ten times higher than assassinations of lawyers and judges. I was mystified at first by the high number of university professor deaths and then wondered how many more students' deaths there must be. I thought the high journalist deaths might be because of their direct involvement on the ground. But university professors? I decided that it must have to do with the battle of ideas.

I accept as more accurate the death toll issued by Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore and Al Mustansiriya University in Baghdad. They estimate over 600,000. If you consider the deaths from events which are not "immediate" i.e., mortality rates from a shattered healthcare and civilian infrastructure, malnutrition, suicides, medical neglect, war refugees, homelessness, etc., then the 600,000 figure is much more credible.

Healthcare Worker  
California

## CHILDCARE AND MARX'S VISION OF THE FUTURE

The first lady of California, Maria Shriver, just published *A Woman's Nation*, which stems from her discovery that 49% of the U.S. workforce is now comprised of women. The focus of her book is that women have become more educated, and now have more choices. But having choices does not negate the need to care for her children. While the decision to enter the workforce is challenging for any woman with a family, Maria Shriver failed to address the issues faced by the multitude of women without the class privilege she has.

The essay by Beth Sandner and Urszula Wislanka (*N&L*, Oct.-Nov. 2009) lays out the harsh realities those women are confronted with daily. Draconian budget cuts, made by the Terminator himself, Gov. Schwarzenegger, eviscerated the last remnants of social programs designed to assist the most vulnerable people of society. Those cuts, necessitated by a need to shore up capitalism, are an infamy similar to the austerity programs imposed by the International Monetary Fund on the Third World.

In contrast are the continued efforts of teachers to provide the kind of education that all children deserve. The educational requirements of children are inextricably linked to the future of humanity.

Faruq  
California

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Teachers used to have full-time positions with benefits. Then they got part-time jobs, with fewer benefits. Now I have three jobs, two as a teacher hired as an "independent contractor," with no benefits and no protection. The institutions ask me to make a commitment for at least a year but they make no commitment to me. This continued push to

privatize at all levels reduces accountability and oversight.

Jeff  
San Francisco

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The essay, "Childcare & Marx's vision of future," raises crucial points regarding the current educational system in the U.S. As an elementary teacher in a public school, I can attest that many issues noted in the essay are those we live with every day and that they demand deep changes.

However, I found one point confusing. It is where the essay links the man/woman relationship, as Marx categorized it, with child raising:

"The present crisis calls for revisiting Marx on many fronts, but especially what he considered the most fundamental way we reproduce our humanity: the man/woman relation and the social endeavor of raising children."

Raya Dunayevskaya singled out the man/woman relationship as extremely important for Marx. She highlighted that Marx believed it was that relationship which revealed "to what degree, man as a species has become human." However, Marx did not connect that relationship to reproduction or to raising a family. He totally opposed the way families existed under capitalism and was horrified at the way child labor was used under capitalism. As the authors point out, the only use capitalism has for any living beings (adults or children) is in the production of value they create for continuation of that system. Marx also wrote on how the educational system under capitalism is alienated from genuine knowledge and learning.

More discussion is needed, and *N&L* can provide a forum that will continue to be important to its readers.

Erica Rae  
Chicago

# READERS' VIEWS

## THE MANY ISSUES OF WOMEN'S LIBERATION

The talk that Angela Davis gave to the National Women's Studies Association Conference made me angry. She had no trouble saying that her activism included intense battles over the role of women in the Black Panther Party who thought women didn't deserve leadership positions, yet she had not one word to say about the disgusting sexism and totalitarianism within the Communist Party, of which she was a member from 1968 until 1991 and actually ran for Vice President on the Communist ticket in 1980 and 1984! This, despite the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in August of 1968.

When she was on a tour of Russia in the early 1970s, Czechoslovak freedom fighter Jiri Pelikan appealed to her in a letter to speak out against the Soviet leaders and help free political prisoners, including Karel Kosik. She stonewalled him. Her friend Bettina Aptheker is more honest in her autobiography detailing the CP's extensive, and by now well documented, sexism.

Women's Liberationist  
Illinois

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I had thought the rumbling by Blue Dog Democrats about stronger restrictions on abortion in the healthcare bill was a sideshow, but then I watched a solid majority adopt the Stupak amendment extending bans on abortion coverage to private plans partly subsidized by the government. It would be appalling enough to reintroduce and pass the Hyde Amendment 33 years after the fact, when the politics should be when do we repeal it, but I am stunned by the degree to which demonizing abortion in 2009 is called good politics, even after the murder of Dr. George Tiller.

Bob  
Chicago

## AN OPEN LETTER ON POLICE BRUTALITY

I am sending this as an Open Letter to President Barack Obama, the 44th President of the United States: I would like to know if you would want your oldest daughter protected by the three Chicago Police officers (Mark Lamberg, Chris Nitintan, and Chris Trusoukalas) who brutally beat an eleven-year-old African American girl in Chicago on April 3, 2001? They were given 15 days, without pay, and then were given pay for 12 of those days. They are still in the Police Department. My question is whether you would allow these officers to watch over your or anyone else's daughter? I write to hear your answer.

George W. Smith, Jr.  
Chicago

Editor's note: See *Black/Red View* column, page 1 this issue.

## IN MEMORIAM TO IAN MACDONALD

With great sadness, I have to tell you that Ian MacDonald passed away in hospital on Sunday morning. Ian had been in poor health for some months, but less than two weeks ago he was admitted to hospital and diagnosed with cancer. Even then, we had hopes that he could fight the disease, and his sudden passing comes as a great shock. Ian was a fine friend and comrade, and we will miss him terribly.

A tribute to Ian has been posted on the website of his union branch: <http://www.surreycountyunion.org.uk/> Under the heading, "Ian Macdonald—Social

Worker, Trade Unionist, Marxist-Humanist—1957-2009," it noted: "Ian was one of a kind—an honest, hardworking and committed trade unionist and socialist—who always put the needs of members first. Ian was never afraid to speak up for workers and spent his life organizing and defending workers in Surrey, in Britain and internationally. Many of the rights, terms and conditions we take for granted in Surrey would not exist if Ian had not been at the fore."

Richard  
England

## TRANSGENDER REMEMBRANCE

On Oct. 20, the Eleventh International Transgender Day of Remembrance commemorated people who have died because they were transgender or did not fit gender norms—more than one person every month.



Duanna Johnson

In Memphis 30 attended a church service and vigil at the Neshoba Unitarian Universalist Church, for a reading of over 500 names of the deceased. Casey Lanham of Perpetual Transition stated that the cousins of Duanna Johnson, a Memphis transgender woman who was murdered last year, were here.

Rev. Bill Neely of Neshoba Church compared the murders of transgender people to those of gay man Matthew Shepard and African American James Byrd, Jr., whose names are on anti-hate-crime legislation. He stated that the LG-BTQI community needs to stop putting transgender people "in the back seat" of their human rights movement.

Adele  
Memphis

## DIALOG ON 'RISING FASCISM'

Gerry Emmett's article on "Rising Fascism Grounded in American Racism" (Oct.-Nov. *N&L*) misses the point. The Sept. 12 march in Washington, D.C., was certainly ominous and racist, and we need to watch the situation closely, but we must not jump to conclusions. That march does not represent a spontaneous and indigenous fascist movement, but is instead well-financed and orchestrated by huge corporate interests with vast media support. That corporate degeneracy is a reflection of the deep economic crisis in which we find ourselves.

Dangerous as it is, it is not any kind of mass movement, and in reality, despite appearances, the far right is actually "on the ropes," at least for now. The real story is still the fact that huge numbers of white workers voted for Obama. The best thing Obama could do to defuse the far right is to move to the left.

Critic  
Oakland

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It was sobering to read the article on a "rising fascism" today. As one who came to the movement way back during World War II, I was made aware of what fascism is and how it arises, and objected to the ease with which the New Left in the 1960s called all reactionaries "fascists," without any understanding of what fascism really is. What was sobering to me in Emmett's article was its warning of what now is threatening. The first real chill I felt in that direction was the vicious hatred expressed toward McCain himself, at one of his election rallies, because he dared not to be as rabid as they.

Octogenarian  
Chicago

**ENVIRONMENTALISM'S WORLDWIDE STRUGGLES**

I want to urge all who can to sign the petition being circulated by environmental activists in New York, that asks Governor Paterson to withdraw an imminent statement on oil and gas mining. The petition demands that, instead, he continue the present moratorium that can prevent the threatening high-volume, horizontal well hydrofracking hazards in New York's Marcellus Shale region. (See "'Fracking' in New York," Oct.-Nov. *N&L*.)

**Environmental Activist  
Ithaca, New York**

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On Pacifica Radio's *Democracy Now*, Nov. 10, an environmentalist stated that groundwater in New York after "fracking" was tested to contain radiation. One of the many toxic chemicals is probably some form of uranium or radium used to fracture the rocks. This is just one more example of toxic capitalist production's insanity.

**Basho  
California**

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We want you to know about the rally for climate justice Nov. 30 by the community of Mehdiganj in Varanasi, India, that demanded the closure of the Coca-Cola bottling plant. Groundwater levels have fallen drastically in and around Mehdiganj since Coca-Cola began operations in 1999, impeding access to water for the rural and agricultural communities. At the same time, India is experiencing its worst drought in the last 40 years, with thousands losing their crops as the groundwater levels dropped. Coca-Cola responded to the campaign to have its plant shut down by announcing that it has become "water neutral"—a preposterous suggestion that it has no impact on water resources. Readers can visit our position paper on the rally and protest at <http://www.Indiasource.org/campaigns/coke/2009/mehdiganjrally.html>.

**India Resource Center  
San Francisco**

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On Nov. 17, the self-organized assembly of neighbors in the area of Tino-

gasta, Argentina, issued a "red alert," anticipating the imminent arrival of machinery to begin uranium mining. They called for "all neighbors to be alert to come to the defense of our land. Please spread the word." Since 2007 they have fought to prevent open-air uranium mining at sites close to Tinogasta, warning of cancer and birth defects.

"Neighbors of Tinogasta Catamarca" is part of a nationwide movement, expressed in the Union of Citizen Assemblies against Looting and Pollution. Their demands include: NO open-air chemical mining; NO radioactive mining in any form; closure and environmental restoration of all abandoned mines and



of working mines that violate the General Environmental Law; genuine, effective citizen participation prior to approval of mining activities.

Tino-gasta's struggle

against uranium mining needs support from all of us!

**Environmental justice activist  
Chicago**

**ONGOING PALESTINE/ISRAEL STRUGGLE**

I went to a forum at DePaul University, "Acknowledging the Past, Building a Landscape for Future Reconciliation: Palestinians and Israelis on 1948 and the Right of Return."

It featured Ali Abunimah of the Electronic Intifada; Rula Awwad-Rafferty, a Palestinian American; and Eitan Bronstein of the Israeli peace group Zochrot, which attempts to educate Jewish Israelis on the terrible things done to the Palestinians in the name of Israel from 1948 through today.

Rula talked and showed slides of her trip to the village where her family once lived. It is now rubble. The only reason she was allowed to go was because she

is a U.S. citizen. Ali Abunimah talked of the impossibility of a two-state solution because of facts on the ground. The Palestinian lands are like swiss cheese divided up by Jewish Israelis. The only access roads are checkpoints at the wall. The wall is mostly on Palestinian land, thus more Palestinian land is being stolen. Ali believes that Jewish Israeli thinking is changing because of the work of Eitan on Zochrot, which is featured in the Israeli mainstream media.

I don't know if there is hope, but there is much sadness and a long way to go. The day before, I went with a Muslim elder to Muslim Community Center. We agreed that the most important thing is that we are all human beings.

**Mark Blair  
Chicago**

**AN IMPORTANT CORRECTION**

Please print a correction in the next *N&L* to the article on p. 10 of the Oct.-Nov. issue titled "Quebec: Taking Back 'Les Plaines.'" The singer who read parts of the FLQ Manifesto should have been identified as the "Haitian-Québécois singer Luck Mervil," rather than: "...Haitian singer...."

An important part of his presence there was that he represents the pluralism of today's Québec in which Haitians play a prominent role, and he is also an important Québec "indépendantiste." Without this correction, the article loses some of its message. I would also like to see it made to the online version of that issue, if that is possible.

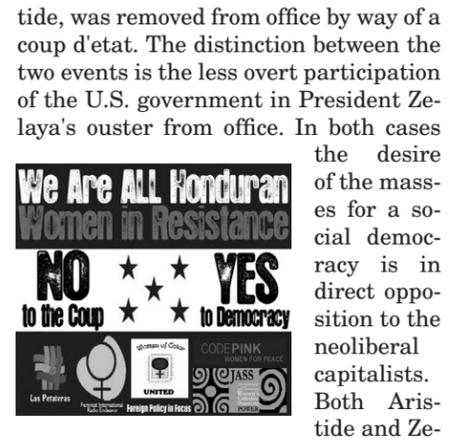
Remerciements!

**D. Cheneville**

*Many thanks for calling this to our attention. The correction has already been made on our website.*

**HONDURAS RESISTANCE**

The first-hand account in the Oct.-Nov. *N&L* of what precipitated the coup d'état in Honduras bears striking parallels to what unfolded in Haiti on Feb. 29, 2004, when another democratically elected President, Jean-Bertrand Aris-



tide, was removed from office by way of a coup d'état. The distinction between the two events is the less overt participation of the U.S. government in President Zelaya's ouster from office. In both cases the desire of the masses for a social democracy is in direct opposition to the neoliberal capitalists. Both Aristide and Zelaya tried to bring about socioeconomic change that would provide some relief in the masses' daily struggle for subsistence. They attempted to restructure fiscal policy that would in a small measure create a redistribution of wealth. What is clear is that those who are unwilling to be mere minions for capital are subject to the jeopardy of a coup.

**Prisoner  
California**

**PUERTO RICAN STRUGGLES**

I was a subscriber some years back but have been a long time out of touch. The struggle for a decent society continues. Here in Puerto Rico we recently had a successful general strike against the neoliberal government, which has laid off thousands of government workers and is privatizing public schools and public service on the pretext of a California-style economic crisis, while big corporations get fat contracts. I want to start getting *N&L* again and to report on the workers' struggle here. As an example, some workers at the Rafael Hernandez Airport in Aguadilla, who work as firemen, disaster response and security, were recently fired for not showing up to work on the general strike day. Most either marched in the protest that day, Oct. 15, or just called in sick. The reason given for firing them was the Patriot Act, in that they allegedly left the airport vulnerable and at risk by not reporting to work.

**Supporter  
Aguadilla, Puerto Rico**

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# Prisons influence the world

by Robert Taliaferro

Torture, class and cultural wars, financial scams—these are issues we hear about in daily news reports or that visit us each evening in television programming.

During prime time the networks call such issues "compelling drama" or "riveting entertainment," yet for so many in this country—and around the world—these issues are real events that are far from entertainment.

Nowhere is this more true than in U.S. prisons. In one of the ironies of American culture, how people are treated in the community and the issues they must face, often find their roots in prisons.

We live in a social environment that requires multiple levels of dialogue to understand the need to discuss an issue, and then other multiple levels of dialogue to even start to find a solution. Further, we live in a politicized fear-based culture that tends to challenge the need for change.

More often than not, these are the same individuals who challenge the need for discussing a variety of social issues that may be deemed controversial, such as the continued disparity between races, cultures and classes; continued gender disparity issues; and issues relating to discriminatory treatment of individuals due to their sexual orientation, just to name a few.

**Prison issues often seem the most controversial, yet it is a necessity to talk about prisons and the men, women and children who populate them because they are the testing grounds for many policies, practices and procedures which find their way to the general public.**

Feodor Dostoyevsky wrote, "The degree of civilization in a society is best judged by entering its prisons." It is this concept that Charles Dickens considered when he visited Eastern State Penitentiary in Philadelphia and was appalled by the treatment of prisoners. His commentary helped spark the movement which eventually closed that prison.

One of the ironies of U.S. jurisprudence, however, is that the same Victorian ethics which found the conditions in prison to be barbaric was sold a bill of goods in developing the electric chair as a "humane" form of execution.

Today we should not be surprised that torture was used in the "war on terror," as it has been a part of the criminal justice process in this country for decades.

Sleep and sensory deprivation, the use of stress positions, degradation—these are all processes that are used on a daily basis in police departments and prisons around the country. Any Amnesty International or Human Rights Watch report will indicate that torture is not restricted to U.S. police agencies or prisons. But there is a level of refinement that the issue receives in the U.S. as prisons try to keep such events hidden.

Yet torture is only one part of the U.S. prison experience that finds its way to the community. Lobbies for universal DNA testing, national identity cards and implanted GPS tracking devices for humans, all have their foundations in the Prison Industrial Complex.

Prisons, administrators and legislatures have also—in the interest of "protecting the public"—been harbingers of other criminal actions for years. From financial scams that are much more sophisticated than a country warden skimming money from the Inmate Welfare Fund, to prison staff who knowingly promulgate class and cultural problems inside of prisons so that tensions result in overtime, these children of capitalism are used as weapons of fear to arm disparity within the community, thus strengthening the impact and dissonance of the prison industrial complex.

**In the Oct.-Nov. *News & Letters*, Georgiana Stewart writes about the corruption one finds in California prisons, and Gerry Emmett writes about the growing fascism that is grounded in U.S. racism. Seemingly dissimilar in scope, we come to realize that each separate issue allows the other to exist.**

"Capitalism," wrote Joseph Schumpeter in *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy*, "inevitably and by virtue of the very logic of its civilization creates, educates and subsidizes a vested interest in social unrest."

It is this social unrest that breeds both contempt

and revolutionary thoughts and processes that must be made into practical solutions if we are to change compelling dramas and riveting entertainment, into flesh and blood social transactions that reforms disparity and fear-based governance, and creates the tactile foundation of democracy.

John Ruskin noted that a reformation of our educational system would go far to create the means by which we would be able to change the way that we use our prisons, and that is one direction to follow.

Perhaps the best solution is to not go into the process of change like some defeated warriors seeking to win at something that could have been solved, not by legislated criminality that is said to be lawful, but by forming a political community that demands accountability from its citizens, and even more so from those who are delegated to both create and interpret the law.

We all live in the generation that has witnessed one of the biggest changes in U.S. history. We need to ensure that its effects are more far-reaching, equitable, and universal.

## BLACK/REDVIEW

continued from p. 1

myself going to cuss out this sucker, I said to myself to just calm down. I sat down with him and told him what happened. He said, I'm going to send a sergeant out, you tell him what happened and you get this kid to the hospital. The sergeant came out; I told him what happened. He said send a note to the doctor but don't fill out the report. We went to the hospital. The minute you tell them the cops did it, everybody gets afraid.

**I called the news and told a young newscaster what happened. We called all the TV stations, who said, Your 11-year-old granddaughter got beaten up by a cop? So what? They wouldn't say anything. The news guy did put us on the news about 5:00 a.m. They don't record what you say; they record what they want you to say. That's why Americans are so misled.**

I tried to get hold of Johnnie Cochran. These lawyers said, We work with Johnnie Cochran. Being all upset and frustrated, I went with them. They said, You can't say anything to the newscasters. I said, What? Then I told all the newscasters who came that I wasn't giving interviews, so all the newscasters left.

### NOTES INTIMIDATE POLICE

The hardest thing is to identify the cops who committed the crime. But we were able to identify them. My granddaughter said the one guy that got her had spiked hair. My neighbors took the risk and were able to identify them. At the deposition, they allowed the cops to bring loaded weapons, .357 magnums. In the middle of the interview, their lawyers said, Mister, you have to stop intimidating my officers. The only thing I was doing, I wrote down every word the cops said—that was scary to them!

As the case went on, I was going to the Police Board and took my whole family. About two years went by, I called the lawyer asking, How is the case going? He said it's going OK and I'll have to treat it like a car accident. I said, I don't want you treating it like a car accident; I'll take the case to somebody else. In about a couple of months he went before the judge and had me and my wife's names removed from the claim and settled the case. **I had told him at least I want my granddaughter to have enough money for college. Now my granddaughter is grown, out of school, and with no money for college.**

At the Police Board meetings I found two great friends, George, who never stops fighting, and then, three months later, Gerry. I found out you can have a better thing with a small organization than you can with a large. At the Board they showed me the papers that said the case has been settled. But it hasn't been settled with me. George has agreed to be with me and he has been there. When you have a friend on your side like that, the world can't really do you harm.

### FRIENDS FIGHT FOR JUSTICE

It's been a hard fight. I'm smiling more tonight than I usually do. I don't have anything to smile about; I could cry for two or three hours. But that won't do any good. Do people really realize this is going on? I know being a Black person of 60 some odd years, it's the worst life a person could ever live, being Black. But, I give George a lot of credit, he doesn't look at it like that. He thinks it shouldn't be about Black or white; this should be a gentler world, but the world is not like that.

I want justice. Seems like we won't get justice. George is showing no signs of quitting. When I thought I wouldn't fight much longer, I know he'll be there. At 7:30 a.m., I know he's there. Regardless of what he has to do in life. This changed my whole life to another direction—just trying to get some kind of justice. When you can't get justice and you got God on your side, you still got justice. That's how I look at it.

## Climate outcry rebuffed

The closer the world got to the UN negotiations in Copenhagen Dec. 7-18 for a treaty succeeding the Kyoto Protocol, the more it looked like a train wreck. What it showed most of all was the capitalist system and the countries most responsible for emissions of greenhouse gases stuck on a collision course with the reality of climate change. It was as if the rulers thought that talking to the engine could stop the train.

In truth, a flurry of conflicting activities set the ground for Copenhagen, especially the movements to limit global warming. On Oct. 24 over 5,200 events in 181 countries called attention to the need to reduce the amount of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere to the equivalent of 350 parts per million of carbon dioxide.

At the same time reports continued to pour out. The International Energy Agency—far from radical, it answers to the U.S. and allied governments—released its World Energy Outlook 2009, warning starkly: "Continuing on today's energy path...would mean rapidly increasing dependence on fossil fuels, with alarming consequences for climate change and energy security."

Meanwhile, scientists working with the Global Carbon Project released a study showing that carbon dioxide emissions from fossil fuel burning rose by 41% from 1990 to 2008, and accelerated in the 2000s. "Developing countries" now emit more than developed countries, partly due to the moving of industrial production to exploit low wages and lax environmental controls, shipping the product back to the rich countries.

On another front, a number of intergovernmental meetings took place. At the UN climate talks in Barcelona in November, African nations walked out for a day, demanding deeper emissions cuts by 2020 from rich nations. Kemal Djemouai, chair of the African group, said, "People are dying now, when the developed countries are not willing to express...ambitious reductions."

The pre-summit talks made clear that the leading carbon emitters—the U.S., Europe, China, Russia, India—were not going to commit to cuts of the magnitude needed to avoid catastrophe in coming decades, nor were rich countries going to commit the money needed to finance a low-carbon development path for poorer countries. Billed just months ago as "make or break," Copenhagen was demoted in advance to a "political agreement" rather than a binding treaty, which the Obama administration suddenly termed "unrealistic."

Led by the Maldives, 11 nations most vulnerable to climate change drafted a declaration calling for more ambitious, legally binding targets without delay. They pointed to the "existential threat" posed to nations like the Maldives and Kiribati, which would be submerged even under the two-degree temperature rise limit invoked by most countries; and to Bhutan and Nepal, whose glacier-fed water supply is endangered. "The fate of the most vulnerable will be the fate of the world," they warned. The vulnerable will just experience it sooner.

At press time the Copenhagen conference has not begun, but it will face multiple sizable protests, direct action, and an alternative "people's summit" called Climate Forum 09.

—Franklin Dmitryev

## Celebrate the 150th anniversary of John Brown's raid on Harpers Ferry with *American Civilization on Trial: Black Masses as Vanguard*



by Raya Dunayevskaya

This book gives the revolutionary history of America.

"Marx kept his eyes glued on the movement of the Negro slaves. When the Civil War broke out, and 'the Great Emancipator' did all in his power to limit it to a white man's war for Union, Marx began to popularize the speeches and analyses of the Abolitionists, especially those Wendell Phillips wrote against the Northern conduct of the war..."

SEE AD PAGE 7

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GRAPHIC COMMUNICATIONS  
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# EDITORIAL Pakistan needs a revolution

As President Obama weighs sending yet more U.S. troops to Afghanistan, the situation in neighboring Pakistan continues to deteriorate. The Pakistani government has been waging campaigns against local Taliban in the country's western regions, creating a massive flow of refugees from these areas: an estimated three million in Swat, and two million in South Waziristan. Hundreds of people have been killed, including many civilians.

## ALL PARTIES MURDER CIVILIANS

At the same time U.S. drone attacks in these areas increased in recent months. Of the hundreds killed, an estimated 98% were civilians. As one woman asked visiting U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, "How do you define terrorism? Is it the killing of people in drone attacks?" The Taliban in Pakistan have also stepped up their suicide bombings, including a recent attack on a market in Peshawar that killed 112 people, most of them women and children. This horror indicates that they have drawn closer to Al Qaeda, which specializes in such mass slaughter.

The civilian population in much of Pakistan today is under attack by all parties to this conflict: the Taliban, the Pakistani government and the U.S.

Tragically, too much opinion in the U.S. today echoes the lies of previous Pakistani governments. Far from being dominated by fundamentalism, as it is often portrayed, Islam in Pakistan has historically been much more tolerant and influenced by Sufism, a religion of mystics, poets and syncretists seen in large religious festivals or shrines. The "maulvis"—a pejorative term for religious fundamentalists—have never received majority support in fair elections.

Furthermore, there is a strong tradition of Leftist politics among many Pakistanis, and a vital women's movement has existed there. What has in part led to the present crisis is the support fundamentalists received from such anti-popular, U.S.-friendly dictators as General Zia ul-Haq who, from 1977 to 1988, seized power and used religious laws to prop it up. This is also the period when the Pakistan Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) formed ties with Afghan fundamentalists, including the precursors to the Taliban and Al Qaeda.

## FUNDAMENTALISM SERVES POLITICS

Zia's promotion of fundamentalism was to crush his political opposition, especially that of women and the Left. As one Pakistani activist said recently, "It was meant to wipe out political life in Pakistan." The changed religious laws were accompanied by outright killing of Leftists and the criminalization of dissent.

The recent ousting of General Pervez Mousharraf's government was an opening. But it will take a true social revolution to overcome the state of powerlessness forced upon the people of Pakistan. The current government tries to satisfy U.S. demands for attacks on the Taliban, and at the same time distinguish between "good" and "bad" Taliban in order to make deals. It seeks to repair the image of the Pakistani military in the eyes of those who are genuinely threatened by the Taliban.

Only a small but entrenched elite in Pakistan can imagine that they can profit from this untenable situation. Because some have been maneuvering in this way since the days of the British occupation, they imagine it can go on forever. But in both Pakistan and Afghanistan, it is clear that a revolutionary perspective is also the only really practical one available for the majority of people.

The arming of yet more tribal factions, under the advisement of the U.S. today, is not the answer. What is needed is a demobilization of all the armed factions including both the army and the various fundamentalist groups. The U.S. must also cease assaults and threats. Deserving greater support are movements like

the peasants of Hari who occupied the Karachi Press Club this year protesting land seizures. They represent a true mass movement for freedom and justice rooted in Pakistan's real history, as do the peasant women who confronted and blocked police attacks. In places like Hashtnagar in North-West Frontier Province, these movements are attacked by both government and Taliban forces.

Only when the truth about these genuine freedom movements becomes known, when their voices are heard and understood as part of the needed world revolution, can we say that revolutionary internationalism is being reborn. It requires the perspective of the philosophy of revolution, which is our ultimate responsibility to history.

## Movement for LGBTQ equality reinvigorated

The National Equality March on Oct. 11 brought together reinvigorated and newly-activated activists



to push for full legal equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) citizens. The event, drawing an estimated 150,000 to 200,000 marchers, was a bigger success than its organizers, a loose nationwide steering committee calling themselves Equality Across America, could have imagined. It owed part of its success to a darker moment—the

passage of Proposition 8 in California in 2008.

In May 2008, California's Supreme Court ruled that denying marriage to same sex couples was unconstitutional. Opponents called for a ballot initiative to amend the constitution to take away the LGBTQ right to marry. When it passed, many young LGBTQ people and their straight friends, who had grown up with Ellen, Will and Grace, and Gay-Straight Alliances in their high schools, were shocked by the visceral lesson of hate and inequality from California's voters.

**In just a few days a coordinated nationwide protest called Join The Impact was planned for Nov. 15, 2008. While established groups helped in some cases, many of these rallies were organized by people who had never before picked up a bullhorn. In Chicago, 1,500 people packed Daley Plaza on a frigid Saturday afternoon for a rally, then took to the streets in an impromptu march up Michigan Avenue.**

These new activists formed new groups. Obama made clear he wouldn't prioritize his campaign promises to the LGBTQ community. As more states passed pro-equality laws and more reactionary organizations vowed to repeal them, activists realized that the state-by-state strategy had to make way for a national one.

Citing the 14th amendment to the Constitution, which says no state may deny equal protection under the law to any citizen, Equality Across America demands full equality in all matters governed by law and called for the National Equality March. Workshops and networking to build connections between folks from every congressional district preceded the march.

The march, winding past the White House and ending in a rally at the Capitol, included participants of all ages, races, genders and creeds, and from all corners of the country. Homemade signs and rally speakers also called for equality in employment, immigration, and protection from violence, as well as marriage.

Returning home enriched by the experience of organizing for the march, the Chicago group behind the Nov. 15 protest, Join The Impact Chicago, held a community strategy meeting, worked to lobby for the national hate crimes law, and mobilized to help protect marriage equality in Maine.

But on Nov. 5, around 200 Chicago activists again found themselves standing outside in the cold. The Maine effort to defeat Question 1 had failed, and voters again gave in to fear and hate. It was a brutal blow, as the Maine campaign had learned from the mistakes in California and so much momentum in the past year had made many hope history would not repeat itself. Marching through the dark to Federal Plaza, chanting "We demand equality," the people made it clear that they would not accept defeat.

—Amy Waters

## Voicing the silent 'T'

This speech was given Nov. 5 in Chicago at the "Question 1" Rally, a protest of the vote in Maine that overturned legislation allowing same-sex marriage.

Today, I want to talk about the "T" in LGBTQ. You see, in the transgender community, people say that in LGBTQ, the "T" is always silent. But I don't want to believe that.

Because the battle is not just at the altar. It's on blue and pink baby blankets, in gendered public restrooms, and at Hunters Nightclub right here in Illinois.

My intention today is to ask you a simple question: why do we all share the same acronym? I mean, how are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning struggles all connected? It's not about how we view our bodies, whom we love, or where we party. It's that as kids, we were bullied for the same reason. We grew up feeling "wrong" for the same reason. We internalized hate for the same reason.

It's the reason why, in the early hours of June 28 40 years ago, trans women of color rose up at Stonewall and issued the "NOT ANYMORE" that echoes through rallies today.

That reason is called gendered oppression. Transphobia and homophobia are one and the same.

According to the Gay and Lesbian Task Force, people perceived to be trans are 17 times more likely to experience violence than people perceived to be gay in this country. Transgender people cannot stand up for marriage rights if we are not allowed to stand at all.

I'll be honest with you: I personally don't want marriage. I want our youth off the streets and out of prison. I want our elders to have the healthcare they deserve. And I don't want these things to depend on partnership status. But you're my family, so I stand with you today.

I am moved to ask you, will you also stand for trans struggles? Hunters Night Club in Elk Grove Village has instituted a door policy that bans patrons whose IDs do not match their gender presentations. This policy is unlawful, and unless you stand up with me and condemn it, the virus will spread.

So today I ask why you march under a rainbow banner? Is it because our dream is an impossibly tall mirage, with false promise of golden fortune from start to finish? Or is it because you live in the spectrum?

Thank you for committing to justice. I am proud to share your acronym.

—Kate Sosin

Co-Founder, Genderqueer Chicago

## QUEERNOTES

by Elise

Bisexual Queer activist Chloe Michelle Noble and Queer activist Jill Hardman are walking, hoping to raise awareness of nationwide LGBTQI (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Questioning and Intersex) youth homelessness. Living in homeless youth communities as they cross the contiguous U.S., Operation Shine documents the widespread lack of resources for homeless Queer youth, advocating more guidance and support for them.

After Italian legislators rejected hate crimes protections for Gays and Lesbians and after several homophobic attacks, protesters held rallies in Rome calling for full equality and protection for all citizens.

Breaking its promises to abide by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Iran imposed the death penalty on Mehdi P., Mohsen G. and Nemat Safavi for committing homosexual acts as youth. Human Rights Watch and Iran's own Stop Child Executions are demanding that Iran revoke the sentences.

The American Psychological Association recently adopted a "Resolution on Appropriate Affirmative Responses to Sexual Orientation Distress and Change Efforts," admonishing young people, their parents, guardians, families, and mental healthcare providers to avoid treatments to make them "ex-gays." Research proved that such treatments don't work. Instead, the resolution encourages services "that provide accurate information on sexual orientation and sexuality, increase family and school support and reduce rejection of sexual minority youth."

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# Unemployment, hallmark of capitalism

continued from p. 1

capital—a thieves' den that splits up the spoils extracted from workers in production, where their alienated labor creates all value. The overlords of social production tip the system into recurring crises precisely because their separation from production fosters the illusion that value can be generated from speculation. The \$700 billion TARP bailout was only the beginning as the Federal Reserve Bank just kept issuing trillions of dollars to buy and guarantee the value of banks' hidden bad assets. No wonder that, when the stolid American Bankers Association met in Chicago on Oct. 27, thousands marched proclaiming "the bankers got bailed out, we got sold out." By then U.S. workers had suffered through 22 straight months of job losses, a 70-year record, that now totals over 7.3 million U.S. jobs gone.

In another world from the protracted decline in the conditions of life and labor for ordinary workers, an even smaller

group of investment bankers, who regularly switch roles and become government policymakers, are now patting themselves on the back for having avoided a total meltdown and the abyss of another Great Depression one year ago. Then came November's dismal employment report, which engendered a resolute-sounding response from President Obama: "I will not rest until all Americans who want work can." However, this belied his pragmatic approach, which kowtows to those same Wall Street financiers who precipitated this crisis.

## THEN AND NOW: THE 1930s AND TODAY

In the wake of a deepening disaffection among those who made possible his historic victory a year ago, President Obama scheduled a jobs summit in December to seek out ideas. At the same time the real direction of his thinking came to light when White House budget director Peter Orszag alerted domestic government agencies to plan for budget cuts because the President's January State of the Union address will focus on cutting the deficit in 2010.

This is totally at odds with Orszag's Nov. 3 comment to Charlie Rose that what is "crucially important to avoid...is...to repeat the mistake of 1937." Orszag was referring to President Roosevelt's attempt to reduce the deficit in 1937, which brought back the Depression with a fury. While government officials take a 1930s timeline as their perspective on current history and now celebrate having dodged a 1930s-style financial meltdown, the depression is being played out in the real economy. The real crisis now, as then, is not its appearance in the financial sector but in production, where capitalists are wary of any new real investment because the financial crisis and the immense vanishing of paper profits revealed a much diminished rate of profit.

Many economists, drawing on the experience of the 1930s, did warn Obama that the current crisis demanded a lot more deficit spending than the woefully inadequate \$787 billion stimulus package. What 1937 taught today's Keynesian economists is that massive deficit spending cannot stop anytime soon. What they forget to add is that it cannot stop at all without massive destruction of capital, which then was accomplished through total war and unspeakable barbarism.

## BREWING INTER-CAPITALIST TENSION

In spite of the name of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum, it was not "cooperation" but inter-capitalist tension over economic policy that prevailed there and throughout President Obama's East Asia trip beginning on Nov. 13. No sooner did the trade spat over U.S.-imposed tariffs on Chinese tires blow over than a new one erupted when the U.S. imposed anti-dumping duties on Chinese steel pipe a week before President Obama's first visit to Beijing.

In spite of the now universally recognized imminent danger to the life-sustaining capacity of the planet, APEC squabbling produced a pre-emptive announcement that there will be no new accord on global warming at the December Copenhagen climate summit. Deep trade disagreements disrupting APEC emerged because of diminished opportunities for capital accumulation in the post-crisis global economy. APEC nations, especially China, are frantically working out their own separate trade agreements, like a new one between Japan, South Korea and China.

Trade imbalances are driving a search for an alternative to the way social production in the global economy is managed, which is primarily through U.S.-China inter-state finance. Chinese state-disciplined cheap labor provides manufactured goods to U.S. and other Western consumers. When, due to the imbalance, a lot of extra dollars end up in Chinese banks, the Chinese

state uses those dollars to buy U.S. debt. Chinese state-capitalist financiers now hold over \$2 trillion in U.S. debt.

Chinese state financiers are now in the role of being the U.S.'s banker. They not only didn't bend to U.S. pressure over trade, but criticized the U.S. Federal Reserve Bank for continuing to fuel speculative investments and lectured Obama about U.S. deficits endangering the value of the dollar. They could stop buying U.S. debt, but then the whole finance system would collapse, including the value of their growing hoard of U.S.-denominated debt. They are searching for new relations with other centers of capital, dealing in other currencies than the dollar as a way out of this "mutually assured financial destruction." When centers of capital are confronting global capital's internal barrier to accumulation, lurking in the background of warring over trade and relative economic power is military power and real war.

## THE SEARCH FOR NEW BEGINNINGS

New beginnings are emerging not only in opposition to finance capital in the political sphere but among workers—alienated from control of their own social production—fighting back in production. Auto workers at SsangYong in South Korea, partly inspired by the sit-down strike at Republic Windows and Doors in Chicago, occupied their factory and constantly battled police for several months when threatened with a shutdown by banks and a Shanghai auto company.<sup>2</sup>

Even some Wall Street commentators, seeing how capital has totally usurped political power in the U.S., now simply accept that we are living through capitalism's death agony.<sup>3</sup> The real question for the future is: what will replace it? Will capital's inherent despotism in everyday life result in a new form of totalitarianism? After all, Keynes said that his remedy of regulating economic activity through state spending works better in a controlled, totalitarian economy. The alternative is a new freedom emerging out of freely associated human activity in production that fully recognizes the social character of production.

As we put it in our editorial in the last issue: "The barriers to productive investment, and therefore to accumulation in the real economy, portend an even more total day of reckoning. For capital that can only mean a deeper collapse, wherein finance capitalists, whom Marx called the mere 'trustees' for capital's social ownership of production, will continue to transparently loot the public treasury to preserve the irrational capital relation at all cost. But this is also transparent for ordinary working people who are outraged and looking for a way to free themselves of being socialized according to the needs for capital accumulation. Never before has there been a greater need to return to Marx, not only for his prediction of total crises, multitudes of unemployed and a falling rate of profit, but his concept of liberation and human solidarity beyond capitalism."

1. For an excellent view of the depth of the crisis in California, which has the three U.S. cities with the most foreclosures, see *Crisis in California: Everything Touched by Capital Turns Toxic* (Insane Dialectical Editions, 2009) as well as their account of a visit to Sacramento's tent city at: <http://flyingpicket.org/node/46>.
2. For an inspiring video of these workers, who persisted through attacks by riot police, helicopters dropping tear gas, company-hired thugs, and shutoff of electricity and water, see: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PLXCRzIDq> and <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xzIOmK2WvHI>
3. "Death of 'Soul of Capitalism': Bogle, Faber, Moore: 20 reasons America has lost its soul and collapse is inevitable," by Paul B. Farrell, *MarketWatch* (<http://www.marketwatch.com/story/americas-soul-is-lost-and-collapse-is-inevitable-2009-10-20>).

# Marchers outraged at bankers and capitalism

**Chicago**—Outrage filled the air at the "Showdown in Chicago," three days of protests coinciding with the American Bankers Association meeting. It was capped by the Oct. 27 march and rally of 5,000 people from around the country. Many speakers and more signs spoke of the real crises affecting working-class people's lives: evictions, layoffs, long lines of applicants for a few jobs. A day care operator told of having to accept food instead of money from some unemployed parents. A young worker and father told of the difficulty of paying back student loans while trying to keep his family fed and housed. A roll was called of several Chicago neighborhoods, calling out how many foreclosures have displaced families in each since 2007, with the numbers climbing and climbing up to 2,215 in Austin. Every 13 seconds there is another foreclosure filing in the country, said Denise Dixon of National People's Action.

Equal to the outrage was the determination to fight, not only against the injustices that were so clearly seen by the 5,000 present, but also to create a society where working people are not exploited by a class of bloodsuckers, of which bankers have become a symbol. Armando Robles received hearty cheers when he told of the occupation of the Republic Windows and Doors

# NYC housing crisis

**New York**—During World War II, the Federal government put a freeze on wages, prices and rents. After the war there was a severe housing shortage as millions of GIs came home, and several states such as New York responded with rent controls. Since then real estate interests have bought off local governments to eliminate or weaken these controls. Because of the very low vacancy rate and the number of rent regulated apartments, New York City has retained much of its rent regulated housing stock. By 2003, only about 3% of New York City's rental stock was vacant. Affordable housing for the working class exists mostly in rent regulated or subsidized private housing or in public housing. According to the NYC Housing and Vacancy Survey, by 2002 NYC had over 3,208,000 housing units and 1,265,000 were unregulated.

By 1970 most of the rent regulated private housing was under a rent control law when Governor Rockefeller had the Legislature pass total vacancy decontrol. Landlords began to harass rent controlled tenants out of their apartments and then charge rents beyond the reach of much of the working class. This caused such public opposition that deregulation was repealed and those apartments already deregulated were put under a new system called "Rent Stabilization." Most apartments in NYC were under the old Rent Control Law but as those apartments were vacated, they were moved to Rent Stabilization.

In the ensuing 39 years, "Rent Controlled" apartments shrunk from over 1,000,000 units to about 40,000 while "Rent Stabilized" units rose to around 1,000,000. The remaining 40,000 rent controlled units have tenants who are mostly elderly. Both groups of regulated tenants have their rent increased differently; the rent stabilized by a NYC "Rent Guidelines Board" (RGB) and the rent controlled by the NY State Division of Housing and Community Renewal (DHCR). The RGB is controlled by the Mayor of NYC and the DHCR by the Governor who are, in turn, greatly influenced by the real estate industry. Both groups of tenants have been subjected to rent increases far exceeding inflation or increased income. Rent Stabilized rents have gone up 374% and Rent Controlled by 631% in the past 38 years. In recent years, the real estate industry-controlled city and state governments have reintroduced vacancy decontrol. Hundreds of thousands of regulated apartments have been lost. The unavailability of affordable working class housing has reached crisis proportions.

Despite increases in landlord costs, their rate of profit has remained incredibly high. By 2001, landlords were realizing a 44% profit on regulated buildings excluding debt service, while one-fourth of all renters were paying more than 50% of their incomes in rent. Although seniors and the disabled are eligible for a rent freeze, their incomes have to be very low and their rents have to exceed one-third of their incomes. Rent controlled tenants have the lowest average income of all renters yet have been subjected to the highest increases.

The DHCR has just promulgated a rent increase of 12.9% over the next two years despite the economic crisis! Because rent controlled tenants are relatively few, they do not have the influence of other tenant groups. The prospect of many lower middle class seniors, who are not eligible for a rent freeze, having to uproot their lives and move out of their apartments, is very real. State and local government, under the control of the corporatist Democratic and Republican parties, will put the burden of the economic crisis on the backs of the working class. As everything else in capitalism, profit takes precedence over people's needs, whether in health care, social services or housing.

—Tom Siracuse

Chair of the Committee To Protect Rent Controlled Tenants

factory, where Robles had worked and led the union local, and even louder cheers when he encouraged other workers to do the same.

It was like being in a totally different world from the talking heads on TV announcing the end of the recession. Oh, sure, they'll acknowledge that unemployment is higher than it should be. But in that fantasy world you don't get a sense of how hard people have been hit, how many are living on the edge now, the depth of the outrage and the stirrings of revolt.

At the same time you could see top union bureaucrats like Rich Trumka, new president of the AFL-CIO, and Anna Burger, chair of Change to Win, try to contain that passion and limit workers to reforms within the capitalist system. Trumka talked about how the bankers have a job to do, and didn't do it correctly. He and other speakers painted a picture of society thrown into crisis by the bad actions of some greedy financial corporations, with not a word about capitalism itself, even though capitalism is the word on everyone's lips from many of the protesters to some economists and pundits who had always been its prizefighters. Capitalism has failed! You hear it everywhere. Now listen to the voices from below calling for a new society. —F.D.

## Graduate student workers win strike

**Champaign-Urbana, Ill.**—My partner is a member of the G.E.O. (Graduate Employees' Organization, IFT-AFT Local 6300, AFL-CIO) and we walked the picket line today (Monday, Nov. 16) on the first day of their unprecedented strike. Graduate student Teaching Assistants (TAs) and Graduate Assistants (GAs) went on strike after months of dead-end shady bargaining by the university administration.

Over half a year of attempts at negotiation and more than three months of grad students working without a contract came to a head last weekend when the university failed to include tuition waiver protection language in the contract-to-be. The G.E.O. had already conceded a lot of ground by agreeing to far less than a living wage for all TAs and GAs, which was their original demand. The university in turn would not even include vague language that protects tuition waivers, which are the lifeline of most TAs and GAs.

Tuition waivers are seen by a large majority of the membership to be the most important issue facing graduate student workers. It is common practice at public universities in the U.S. to waive tuition in return for teaching undergraduates or other essential labor while a student is in a graduate program. But with lowered state funding and the corporatization of higher education, administrators are always looking for new streams of revenue. Charging grad students with tuition would cannibalize whole departments, and would result in higher education being available only to the privileged. The university bargaining team knows that if the G.E.O. wins explicit language defending tuition waivers in their contract, it would be harder to take their rights away piecemeal.

During this strike, the university should see very clearly that graduate students are essential to running the campus. Withholding labor will hopefully be disruptive enough and threatening enough to make the university realize that they can't pick on any graduate students without a response from all.

**UPDATE: The G.E.O. won!** On the second day of the strike, the university conceded to our last demand: tuition waiver protection. This strike and the gains from it set a precedent in labor struggles in higher education. It lets administrations know that if they try to erode access to higher education, there will be a fight.

In addition the G.E.O. secured protection from furloughs and six weeks parental leave. Both wins have implications for other unions on campus that will be fighting for the same rights in their upcoming negotiations. But perhaps the most important lesson for grad students, administrators, and undergraduates is that organized labor works. After a day and a half of 1,000 TAs and GAs picketing in the rain, grad students saw their hard work pay off in the form of real benefits in their contract that could only have been won through the efforts of determined, united workers!

—Graduate student and supporter

## Cal. students' strike



Over 1,500 University of California at Berkeley students, teachers and employees gathered on Sproul Plaza Nov. 19 to kick off a three-day strike in response to lay-offs, furloughs and a 32% tuition fee hike. Many workers are former U.C. students who fear their children will be priced out of a U.C. education. The following day demonstrators brought bags filled with campus trash to dump at the main entrance of California Hall where Chancellor Robert Birgeneau's office is located. Between chants of "Trash outside, trash inside," protesters asked who would pick up the trash when all the custodians are laid off. On Nov. 20 students occupied Wheeler Hall as part of the ongoing actions.

—David M'oto

## Total challenge to the regime persists in Iran

On Nov. 4 hundreds of thousands of people staged a nationwide protest on the 30th anniversary of the seizure of the U.S. Embassy in Iran. This year, however, the tables were turned, as the mass opposition took aim not so much against the U.S. as against the ruling power at home. Chanting "Khamenei is a murderer, his rule is null and void," and "Down with tyranny, whether that of Shah or the Leader," the marchers throughout Iran made it clear that despite unprecedented security measures and all the threats against them, they will continue to press their demands. Ironically, the marchers did voice judgment against the U.S., challenging Obama to take sides: "Obama, Obama, either you're with them or with us." They also chanted, "A Free Green Iran doesn't need Nuclear Bombs."

Because Nov. 3 is also the 31st anniversary of the day that the Shah's security forces attacked and killed student demonstrators at Tehran University, students at both high school and university campuses have been mobilizing for weeks for today's events. Truly the youth, especially the girls and women students who bravely created a human shield between the security forces and the male students, were the vanguard of today's activities. The anti-riot guards and the Basijis were particularly brutal against women as they abducted hundreds and beat them viciously.

Yet despite all security measures to keep students inside campuses, they chanted "no fear, no fear, we are all together," and they were able to break through security forces and join the masses in the streets tearing down billboard-size pictures of Khamenei and shouting "Free all Political Prisoners" and "Students will die but won't accept degradation."

Just as during the Carter administration, when the CIA analysts kept dismissing the coming of the revolution, today analysts concluded that months of repression have gutted the movement of its organizational capacity and leadership. As reported by the Nov. 3 *Los Angeles Times*, one such analyst, Mark Fowler, stated that "Our view is that the regime has largely neutralized the opposition...It seems to us that they have pretty much decapitated the opposition in terms of leadership. I don't think the government is particularly worried about it." Nothing could be further from the truth, as the masses boldly displayed.

A *Times Online* reporter on Nov. 5 quoted some activists saying, "This is a people's movement that the system can't destroy. We have again sent a message to Ahmadinejad and the Leader that society has not forgotten what they've done. They have beaten, raped, tortured and threatened the people, but we still showed up." Perhaps it was in reference to the arrests and torture of thousands of opposition leaders and student activists that Mousavi felt compelled to issue a statement for the occasion, saying, "People should find such wisdom that they can lead themselves at any time and under any circumstances. Our people, today, are leaders."

**Yet acknowledging the wisdom of the people does not absolve the leaders of responsibility for the direction of the movement, or for what happened to the 1979 Revolution. It is true that most who seized the U.S. Embassy are either in jail or out of power now. But it is not true that they are listening fully to the voices from below. Instead, they, along with Mousavi himself, have not distanced themselves from equating the taking of low-level U.S. personnel hostage with a "second revolution."**

At the time, Raya Dunayevskaya, the founder of Marxist-Humanism in the U.S., was deeply involved in the Iranian Revolution and issued a challenge to all the Left not to tail-end that kind of pseudo anti-imperialism. Such action, she argued, may give Khomeini a "red" coloring, but it is a retreat from the original revolutionary perspective. In a Political-Philosophic Letter, "What is Philosophy? What is Revolution?" she warned all revolutionaries against the new grave contradictions within the revolution. "Concrete, in the Hegelian sense of the synthesis of diverse elements into a concrete **totality**, would show that, by no means coincidentally, the occupation of the Embassy paralleled the completion of the **counter-revolutionary** Constitution." (Available in the *Raya Dunayevskaya Collection*, #7219, along with the Farsi edition, #7266.)

Today the masses have clearly expressed judgment against that Constitution, which established the office of the Supreme Leader with veto power, as nothing but the restoration of dictatorship. It is high time for the leaders of the movement not to be self-limiting solely along constitutional lines.

—Raha

## 'Non-lethal' weapons lethal to civil liberties

When the Pittsburgh police decided to use the "sound cannon" against peaceful protestors at the G20 summit in August, they may have signaled the end of peaceful protest in the United States. If torture be described as "organ failure," the Long-Range Acoustic Device (LRAD) has to be classified among the instruments that employ torture. The human body's smallest bones, along with some truly awesome delicate organs, transmit and interpret sound waves and establish our relationship to gravity (balance). LRAD is designed to temporarily disrupt hearing and disorient people's relationship to the ground under their feet.

A second kind of acoustic weapon generates a high-intensity sound that saturates the inner ear where the sense of balance is located. Some people's eardrums break; others never regain hearing in the wavelengths propagated; some become nauseous, puking uncontrollably. But these can be foiled with ordinary earplugs or a board that reflects the sound back to the "friendly personnel."

A third acoustic weapon, the Very Low Frequency modulator, finds larger organs to disrupt. From low to high power, the target will experience progressively: physical discomfort, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pains and resonating bones, "which can be quite painful" (see <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/systems/munitions/acoustic.htm>).

Sound-wave generation is only one technique for crowd control that the U.S. military has developed to "minimize" wartime "collateral damage" and control civil disobedience and peaceful protest at home. "Maintaining and establishing law and order, reducing civil disturbances and responding to varied levels of threats have become mission assignments" (see <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/systems/munitions/non-lethal.htm>).

Ever wonder how it would feel to be microwaved from a distance? The Vehicle-Mounted Active Denial System is your answer. The ray travels at the speed of light, penetrates 1/64 inch into the skin and produces an intense burning sensation that makes people pull away in less than one second. The ray can be deflected by a garbage can lid, or in wet weather it can be absorbed by water droplets.

However, wet weather can be foiled by the High-Power Microwave (HPM)/E-Bomb which can be modified to produce a variety of Electro-Magnetic Pulses (EMP). Whatever it may do to the target, the EMP also disrupts any electronic device around.

I have not covered all the non-lethal weapons pos-

sible, but an ending with Pulsed-Energy Projectile (PEP).

PEP is a vile device that uses laser technology to produce a flash, a bang and a shock wave. It is a plasma pulse that explodes the air where it strikes and vaporizes the first thing it hits. The U.S. Government spent \$3,173,000 to fund research for this non-lethal weapon. In 2006 the plan was "... to mount the laser on a truck, plane or helicopter, fire it from a safe distance, and stop rioters, snipers or soldiers without risking harm to military personnel. The good news is that it works." (see <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/systems/ground/pep.htm>)

"Non-lethal" weapons may ease the conscience of oligarchs, but their open use of torture in the streets aims to end peaceful protest.

—January

## Immigrants protest

**Los Angeles**—On Oct. 10, 1,000 Latina/o workers and supporters marched and rallied in downtown Los Angeles to protest exploitation, unemployment and the growing racist anti-immigrant policies such as ICE raids. A recent *L.A. Times* article stated that the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department will be given powers of Federal Immigration police, which would result in increased racial profiling and human rights violations, especially against Latinas/os—documented and undocumented or U.S. citizens. People migrate to the U.S. from the south to escape unemployment and poverty largely created by privatization and foreign capital as well as trade agreements such as NAFTA and CAFTA.

There were many signs that read "Boycott The Census." A marcher explained that the census would be used to further repress immigrant workers and communities. Other signs said "Obama—fulfill your promise" and "Full rights for all immigrants."

The Council of Overhill Farms Workers brought attention to the struggle of workers at Overhill Farms in Vernon, Cal. They are fighting abusive and racist treatment against Latinas/os, including unfair termination of 300 workers. Overhill Farms have been exploiting them for 30 years by cheating workers out of wages, and firing workers in a campaign of intimidation and fear. They called for all workers in Vernon (a small industrial city in Los Angeles County) and surrounding cities to unite with the Overhill Farms workers.

—Basho

## WORLD IN VIEW

By Gerry Emmett

The prominence of Maoist groups in recent events in Nepal and India show that the historic problems of Maoism have not been overcome by its current representatives. In Nepal, the massive popular demonstrations that closed down the capital, Kathmandu, in early November have been followed by talks between United Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) leader Prachanda and the Nepali Congress president, Girija Prasad Koirala.

They will try to work out a compromise "third path" to settle the current upheavals which began when Prachanda, who had been elected to the presidency with 38% of the votes, tried to dismiss the head of the armed forces and institute a previous agreement that the Maoist guerrilla fighters would be integrated into a new military.

Prachanda was overruled by opposition from Congress and stepped down from the presidency, citing the need for civilian control of the military.

It is the real struggle of millions for greater freedom and economic justice that seeks expression through current events. Any government in Nepal will have to deal with the reality of being a small and impoverished country caught between the two massive state-capitalist powers, India and China.

India probably has a hand in current events through the Nepalese Congress. It was India that helped bring Prachanda into the electoral arena. Above all, the Maoists know that neither India nor China wishes to see a real social revolution on their borders. That is a dilemma for the Maoists.

The revolutionary peasantry and workers, women, youth, and LGBTIQI people of Nepal will be the real measure of social progress. LGBTIQI people have recently made some important advances, despite the negative position on gays that the Maoists have held.

In eastern India, the government is using an over-

## Honduras betrayal

The coup government in Honduras, working together with Obama's U.S. State Department (further enabled by right-wing U.S. Congressional members), has maneuvered to betray any possibility of a near-term return to democracy in Honduras. In fostering a false agreement with ousted President Zelaya, holed up in the Brazilian Embassy, the U.S. has once again shown its true colors in relation to Latin America: do it our way or we will take you down, coups included. The agreement signed was supposed to return Zelaya to the presidency (though with no real power), in a "unity" government, together with the holding of presidential elections at the end of November, which the U.S. would recognize as valid (something which previously they said they would not do without the return of Zelaya).

The kicker was the need for the Honduran Congress to approve Zelaya's return to power, but with no time limit to do so, even though the clock was running toward the presidential elections. The Congress has refused to do so. However, the U.S. now says it will recognize the new presidential elections regardless. The U.S. is now intent on fully legitimizing the coup.

The real betrayal, of course, is to the massive protest movement that developed inside Honduras since the June ouster of the president. (See October-November issue of *N&L* for an in-person report of that movement.) The coming period will show how the movement intends to respond to this latest outrage.

—E.W.

## Nepal, India unrest

blown threat from the naxalites, of the recently formed Communist Party of India (Maoist), to launch an invasion of remote tribal areas. "Operation Greenhunt" targets Maoists in areas that have long been coveted for capitalist development. Many Indian leftists have pointed out that it will put tribal peoples in the middle of a struggle they haven't started.

These Maoists (a minority even among India's Maoists) have been small, isolated groups in the jungles for decades, and much of their fighting has been intramural and factional. Unlike the Nepalese Maoists, they have no relation to mass struggles. They don't pose any threat to the Indian state and are being used as an excuse for military action to claim tribal lands.

As Indian leftist Nirmalangshu Mukherji pointed out, "the poorest of the poor and the historically marginalized will suffer the most in terms of loss of lives, livelihood and habitat."

## Puerto Rican strike



A one-day general strike gripped Puerto Rico on Oct. 14. Tens of thousands of workers rallied in San Juan protesting proposed layoffs of public sector workers in an economy that already sees 15.8% unemployment. (About a quarter of workers are in the public sector.) The governor has proposed laying off another 20,000 public workers.

The proposed new round of layoffs could raise unemployment to 17%. Protesters also pointed out that the cuts would fall heavily on the lowest paid workers, such as janitors and school counselors. One of the strike rally organizers, Bishop Juan Vera, declared: "Today we are declaring the state of peaceful insurrection of the Puerto Rican people."

The strike was organized and endorsed by the *Frente Amplio de Solidaridad y Lucha* (Broad Front for Solidarity and Struggle), a broad range of organizations. It had three major demands: 1) repeal of fiscal emergency laws and the restitution of all laid-off workers; 2) establishing taxes on multinational corporations, and eliminating benefits enjoyed by them under the U.S. Federal Internal Revenue Act; 3) halting evictions of working-class and immigrant squatter communities, halting expropriation of poor communities for development projects, ending political and military abuses to all, and recognition of the right to equal housing for all human beings.

—Eugene Walker

## Middle East cauldron

Efforts of the Obama administration to move the Israeli-Palestinian morass off of dead center have so far been for naught. While the U.S. signaled its intent to pressure the government to stop Israeli settlement construction on the West Bank, the "new" administration of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, quickly signaled that he had no intention of doing so.

At the same time, on the Palestinian side the confrontation between Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas's Palestinian Authority and Hamas' control of the Gaza continues, leaving a completely fragmented Palestinian movement. Gaza continues in extreme misery with Israel allowing the barest minimum of goods to arrive. Between Israeli intransigence and the Palestinian internal conflict, Abbas has now indicated he will not run again to be head of the Palestinian Authority, thereby threatening the continuing existence of the Palestinian Authority. Any serious negotiations for a two-state solution seems far off.

—E.W.

## 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.