

NEWS & LETTERS

"Human power is its own end"—Karl Marx

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WORKSHOP TALKS

Planned deaths from medical cutbacks

by Htun Lin

There is an ongoing war which has claimed the lives of nearly 200,000 Americans every year. All those who have died in this war died unnecessarily on our own soil. These Americans died in hospital beds from medical error.

That incredible death toll, according to the American Medical Association, is the result of medical errors committed by overworked healthcare workers in a cut-throat HMO industry constantly cutting funds and resources to deny care to those who need it.

Self-righteous religious fundamentalists, right-wing politicians and opportunists of all sorts tripped all over themselves in a rush to "save" one patient, Terri Schiavo, who had been brain dead for 15 years. That same week, while participating in the morality charade, Congress shamefully passed without fanfare legislation to reduce the benefits of tens of thousands of permanently disabled Medicaid recipients. What about the deaths that will result from these cuts?

State legislatures are also on the attack. For example, California is seizing the homes of Medi-Cal recipients. Employers are demanding cost shifting through huge deductibles and co-pays from workers to pay for their own healthcare. But the most deadly "cost shift" to workers is simply denying services and nursing staff.

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BLACK/RED VIEW

The 'color-line'

by John Alan

"The problem of the 20th century is the problem of the color-line," wrote W.E.B. Du Bois at the start of the century.

More than a century later, most African Americans are living in the cities, the schools are racially integrated by a decision of the Supreme Court and the Civil Rights Movement brought an end to race segregation on Southern public transportation. Yet this nation still has an unquestionable "color-line."

According to the National Urban League's April 6, 2005 report on the social status of African Americans: "gaps [remain] between blacks and whites in economics, housing, education, health, social justice and civic engagement...despite societal progress, the overall status of black Americans is just 73%, compared to the conditions of their white counterparts, marginally unchanged from 2004 index results."

The National Urban League used their percentage numbers as an analysis of the "color-line" and offered a political solution to wipe it out. This sociological thinking leaves out of the struggle the great masses of African Americans who suffer directly from the many forms of racism.

Until the organization of the CIO in the 1930s, there was only a minimal social and political relationship between African-American masses and the white American working class. Before the birth of the CIO, in many areas of this nation the two races were legally separated by enforceable segregation laws and lynching of African Americans happened often.

To escape from this dreadful social situation of seg-

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LEAD EDITORIAL

New Pope Benedict anoints religious fundamentalism

by Kevin Anderson

With the death of Pope John Paul II, a major pillar of the retrogressive politics of the past 25 years has left the scene. Unfortunately, his replacement, Benedict XVI (Joseph Ratzinger), is the one that progressives within the Roman Catholic Church had feared the most. While no one can predict all of the specific policies that Benedict XVI will put forth, it seems clear that the leadership of the world's wealthiest and most powerful religious institution will continue along the general pathway laid out by John Paul II.

Because he was John Paul II's top advisor for 25 years, Benedict XVI is intimately connected to the policies of his predecessor. He is also familiar with the Left. After espousing more progressive politics during the era of Vatican II in the early 1960s, Benedict moved sharply to the Right after witnessing the student protests of 1968 at the University of Tübingen.

LINK TO REAGAN, THATCHER

The selection of the anti-Marxist, anti-feminist John Paul II in 1978 took place only a year before the election of Margaret Thatcher as Prime Minister of Britain, and two years before that of Ronald Reagan to the U.S. presidency. Together, these three turned the clock back on the progressive and revolutionary heritage of the 1960s.

Together, they worked to roll back the revolutionary movements of Latin America, to crush organized labor in the name of the "free market," to undermine racial minority and civil rights movements, to attack the feminist and gay/lesbian movements, and to put a right-wing stamp on the movements for freedom in Eastern Europe.

Together, they created a whole new ideology of conservatism that attacked the failures of welfare state capitalism in the West and of totalitarian state-capitalism calling itself Communism in the East. They used the most modern means of communication to promote a return to a harsher sexual "morality" of the past, a more militaristic international politics, and a domestic politics of fear and repression.

They particularly targeted Latin America. Reagan



Youth's idealism, feminism, and the movement for reproductive freedom at the March for Women's Lives last year—everything the new Pope is against.

launched the brutal Contra War against Nicaragua's Sandinista Revolution, while Thatcher sent warships to the South Atlantic to prevent Argentina from claiming the Malvinas (Falklands) Islands. John Paul II also attacked the Sandinistas, all the while conducting a determined struggle to drive theology of liberation out of the Church.

UNDERMINING LIBERATION THEOLOGY

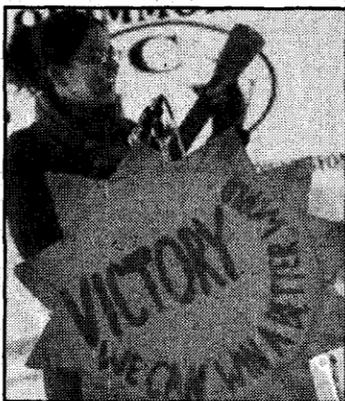
This school of thought, which had arisen in the 1960s, sought to align the Church with those fighting for fundamental change and to distance it from the military-oligarchical power of U.S.-backed capitalism. It also carried out a dialogue with Marxists. Its rise represented a major split within the dominant classes, of which the Roman Catholic Church had long been a part, especially in Latin America.

One of the theology of liberation's representatives, Ernesto Cardenal, became an important figure in revolutionary Nicaragua. Another, the El Salvadoran Arch-

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Student-farmworker alliance beats Taco Bell

HATTIESBURG, MISS.—We are writing to you about the recent victory of Florida farmworkers and my group, the Student/Farmworker Alliance. Together, through our three-year boycott campaign, we forced Taco Bell to accede to all our demands concerning the pay and treatment of tomato pickers.



The Student/Farmworker Alliance is a network of student groups across the country organizing with the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW) in the fight for fair wages and safe working conditions for Florida tomato pickers.

While the status quo in U.S. agriculture is sweatshop conditions and sub-poverty wages, since 1997 the CIW has also uncovered five separate slavery rings operating in the fields. The CIW's work has resulted in the liberation of over 1,100 captive workers.

News & Letters clearly is an excellent source for documenting modern struggles for social justice. This story is an inspiring example of what workers, toge-

ther with students, are accomplishing today.

Students have been at the forefront of the fight against Taco Bell, a major industry tomato purchaser whose parent company is the largest restaurant corporation on the planet, by severing contracts with Taco Bell at UCLA, Duke, Notre Dame and 19 other campuses nationwide and organizing the boycott in their communities. Taco Bell identified 18-24 year olds as their target market (whom they deem the "New Hedonism Generation" on their website), but we in that age group have instead put the target on Taco Bell.

The victory over Taco Bell is only the beginning of our struggle, as the Student/Farmworker Alliance is prepared to tackle the entire agricultural industry. We will not stop fighting until slavery is no more and farmworkers receive the basic rights they deserve, fair wages and work in a safe environment.

There are many good stories in all this: SFA member Melody Gonzales, for example, who after organizing to cut Taco Bell's contract at Notre Dame has since translated for the CIW on national speaking tours. Melody, whose father was a farmworker, plans to move to Immokalee, Fla. after graduating this semester to work with the Student/Farmworker Alliance in transforming the industry. Aside from her fluency in English and Spanish, she is also studying Haitian Creole, the primary language of roughly 10% of Immokalee's residents.

We would like to make news of our victory public so that students and workers can recognize our collective strength as we work together for a better world.

—Michael C. Ide, Student/Farmworker Alliance, and Jordan Buckley, Student/Farmworker Alliance Immokalee, Fla.

WOMAN AS REASON

by Susan Van Gelder and Anne Jaclard

Never has women's right to abortion been in such danger since the 1973 Supreme Court decision in *Roe v. Wade* found abortion to be part of the constitutional right to privacy. On April 27, the House passed a bill to limit access to safe abortion for young women; it is likely to pass the Senate and become law. *Roe* may soon be reversed by new appointees to the Court. The option of a legal abortion was long ago lost to many women due to cost, terror tactics of anti-woman fanatics, and myriad state and federal laws. So it is no surprise that Bush is appeasing his Right-wing Christian base by pushing to end it altogether.

What concerns us here is the almost fatalistic capitulation of the leaders of the "pro-choice" movement, who no longer even dare use the word "abortion." Their narrow concept of women's rights has led them to play into the hands of the radical Right. This is the moment when reproductive rights organizations should be calling women into the streets. We won the right to abortion by mass demonstrations, and we need ever more massive ones to keep it.

MARCH FOR WOMEN'S LIVES

Last April, a million women demonstrated in Washington for reproductive rights, surprising the organizers and the nation by their diversity and by the breadth and depth of their demands. Instead of building on that march, however, a major national pro-choice organization, NARAL, recently announced a "new" approach: rather than battling the Right, NARAL proposes to work with it to increase women's access to safe birth control and thereby reduce the need for abortions. This sounds feasible only if the last 30 years of attacks on reproductive rights are ignored and the women's movement's own history is forgotten.

How far we have traveled since the late 1960s, when the Women's Liberation Movement burst onto the national and global scenes! Then women sought an end to sexism in all aspects of our lives; safe, legal and free abortion and birth control were among a constellation of issues for which women wanted to make our own decisions. Health care was to be centered on the quality of human life, not the drive for profits by the medical and drug industries. The overriding goal was a woman's right to control her own body and mind.

Philosophical battles raged as the women's movement grew and gained support from all segments of society. At first, not only mainstream America and the Right but also the Left ignored and denigrated the Women's Liberation Movement. They tried to represent it as the demands of middle class white women, even as the most profoundly revolutionary ideas were brought forth by African-American and working-class women. We are hobbled by losing this history, especially how Women's Liberation arose from within and in

Academic feminism fails to develop theory

I attended two academic feminist conferences in April—the Mid-Atlantic Women's Studies Association (WSA) conference at Montgomery College in Maryland, and the Scholar and the Feminist conference at Barnard College in New York City. They evinced some disarray in both the academy and in the women's movement—and a disjuncture between both and the development of ideas about social transformation.

NEED TO REINVENT FEMINISM?

The WSA conference appeared ahistorical, as if young teachers and students have to reinvent feminism, only this time without any mass movement as ballast for generating and testing ideas. The other was, on one level, entirely historical: it was the 30th anniversary of annual Scholar and Feminist conferences, and its sessions repeated themes from earlier conferences. But whereas many of the earlier conferences had been in the forefront of debates within the women's movement, this time the papers largely repeated themes without attempting to investigate theory which can advance feminist thought.

Papers at WSA ranged from career concerns to bourgeois politics to spiritualism to social activism in the U.S. and around the world, often with unrelated papers on the same plenary or panel. One panel combined a paper on the brutal subjugation of Dalit women in India with one on abortion rights in South Dakota. This disparate aspect of the conference made discussion in the sessions difficult.

A panel of five students from William Paterson University in New Jersey on "feminist student activism" was heartbreaking, because all but one were engaged in purely individual activity. One worked in a residence hall; she duplicated information on famous feminists and distributed it on International Women's Day. Another did volunteer work teaching girls about their personhood and bodies. Why aren't these things being taught in the public schools?

I spoke on "Marx's Humanism and Raya Dunayevskaya's Marxist-Humanism: Developing a Liberatory Philosophy." It appeared to be the only paper on revolutionary theory. The panel, "women building peace," included a paper on women in the Bosnian war and one on women's image in Chinese society today. I related the former to Dunayevskaya's analysis of the international women's movement as part of our age's new movements from practice to theory, and the latter to her analysis of China as being state-capitalist rather

than socialist.

opposition to Left organizations, redefining and deepening the concept of liberation. That feminist critique came equally from whites and from African Americans in the Civil Rights Movement is a phenomenon greatly under-recognized in today's retrospectives of that period. Then, like now, those opposed to the movements for freedom of African Americans and women found ways to "divide and mislead" later generations.

By the early 1970s, Trotskyist organizations managed to take leadership of the mass movement and narrowed the wealth of ideas and demands to the lowest common denominator—the right to abortion. Women's demand for free quality health care for all was given a back seat, along with the many other aspects of the movement. No sooner was abortion legalized than the Right's successful assaults on it began.

The NARAL initiative reveals how the Right now sets the agenda for the pro-choice movement. Although legal abortion was and still is absolutely necessary, abortion has never been anyone's birth control method of choice. One reason we still have to fight for abortion and birth control is that capitalism has not produced easy, cheap, safe birth control that is also profitable.

The Right is well aware that each "tactic" it espouses is just one puzzle piece in its overall reactionary agenda, while most left and women's groups have not re-thought their agendas. The recent religious-political circus over Terri Schiavo's right to have her wishes carried out after 15 years, parallels the Right's play on people's emotions, so that microscopic embryos are deemed human and people with dead brains must be

Protest Afghan government



Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan rally in Pakistan against the Afghan government on Afghan Victory Day, April 28.

The Barnard conference was a more sophisticated one, but it, too, de-emphasized the need for theory, as if it were sufficient that the 29 previous conferences "produced new knowledge and fought for diversity and difference," as the film that opened the conference asserted. A session on "race, class and sex" took its title from a conference 20 years ago and discussed those issues, including lesbian and transgender aspects. Siobhan Brooks, an African American, discussed her unionization campaign for exotic dancers. Surina Khan advocated looking for feminist leadership among the women most affected by right-wing attacks. Amber Hollibaugh had some good advice about how to proceed: "Equality should be the floor, but liberation should be the ceiling." Regarding theory, she said, "When we don't know the answer before we know the question, then our work will go further."

Leslie Feinberg, a transgendered lesbian author and editor of the Workers World Party newspaper, made some good points, but ended by calling for the women's movement to go into anti-war work, specifically, to attend upcoming Workers World front group events. Workers World's Stalinist politics would mean that serious investigation of women's liberation has to wait until after a revolution led by that party. This is exactly the kind of thinking that the modern Women's Liberation Movement arose to oppose.

SPLIT BETWEEN THEORY AND PRACTICE

I took the floor to criticize the split between theory and practice even at the conference. Everyone was discussing coalition building as if the only question were the best strategy to increase the size of the women's movement, without regard to the basis on which it should grow. What visions of the future can animate people? That is the most important question for academics to work on, I suggested.

An afternoon session on "women and resistance" included Indian and Korean feminists, a woman working on rights of the disabled internationally, a young African-American activist, an African-American academic who chronicled high points of Black feminism, and another Workers World advocate! Apparently, Barnard thinks that diversity requires one leftist on each panel, but that one always speaks for Workers World. I tremble for the future of feminism if Stalinism is substituted for working out revolutionary theory.

—Anne Jaclard

kept alive. The whole Schiavo affair was a stand-in for women's right to abortion.

Only by misunderstanding this moment in history and capitalist society could NARAL operate as if a rapprochement with the Right were possible. The Right's ascendancy is the triumph of counter-revolution against the gains made by women, African-American, and other liberation movements. Its agenda is the very opposite of promoting women's freedom and autonomy. The fight for reproductive rights is one aspect of class struggle against an anti-human society, and NARAL's ploy disorients people from the tasks we face.

MOVEMENT BASED IN HUMAN FREEDOM

Our movement would do well to recognize that the right to abortion, or any single issue, is only a transitory aspect of the movement for a human-based society, for the freedom of all people to control our own bodies and lives. We want to create a women's movement on the ground of human freedom, not from the standpoint of this society, but of a future society based on human needs and development. With that perspective, we can work out a context and meaning for the fight for reproductive rights for all women. We invite others to join in this task.

Gutting of Title IX

This year saw one of the greatest achievements for women's sports. Pat Summit—who became head coach of the University of Tennessee women's basketball team three years after Title IX was passed, and nurtured her fledgling team for years by tacking recruitment posters on trees, playing before a handful of people, and washing the team uniforms herself—became the winningest coach among women and men in Division I college history with her 880th victory.

In the same month, Bush's Department of Education issued a so-called "policy clarification" explaining how universities can comply with Title IX, the civil rights law passed in 1972 barring sex discrimination (including in sports) at institutions receiving federal funds. *The Chronicle of Higher Education* maintained this "clarification" "redraws Title IX policy," and the National Women's Law Center called it "a substantial rollback of the department's policy" and "a further attempt to weaken Title IX."

Two years ago, Bush set up a commission to "study" Title IX with the aim of gutting it to appease his right-wing misogynist base. But overwhelming opposition and vocal support for Title IX by women's organizations and women's athletic departments, forced him to back off.

Now, instead of universities and others having to show that they are treating women equally, the new policy puts the burden of proof on students and government investigators to show that a college is not in compliance with Title IX. Universities can show compliance simply by sending out an email survey to existing women students—not even including potential students at other colleges or graduating high school seniors.

The Law Center called the survey "inherently flawed because it presumes a survey alone can measure student interest." Of course male students never have to prove interest in sports—much less by responding to an email. Non-response to the email will be interpreted as lack of interest! Edward Leland, athletics director at Stanford University, said it's like having a budget referendum and counting non-voters as a "no" vote.

Myles Brand, president of the National Collegiate Athletic Association, was "disappointed" the Education Department put forth these "clarifications" "without public discussion." He said this new interpretation of Title IX compliance "will likely stymie the growth of women's athletics and could reverse the progress made over the last three decades."

—M.J.

WOMEN WORLDWIDE

by Mary Jo Grey

Women packed the sidewalk surrounding an Osco pharmacy in downtown Chicago in April to protest a pharmacist's refusal to dispense a doctor-prescribed morning-after emergency contraceptive to two women because she believed it was immoral. Illinois law allows health care providers to refuse to perform a medical service that conflicts with their beliefs. Pharmacists for Life (PFL) claims that a "huge number" are now refusing to dispense birth control pills and morning-after pills. PFL president Karen Brauer, who was fired from her K-Mart job in Ohio for refusing to dispense contraceptives, said she would happily dispense Viagra to help "a whole lot of old married men get lucky." She maintained she would never dispense emergency contraceptives even to reduce the possibility of pregnancy for rape victims.

Amnesty International renewed its call for the Slovakian government to end the illegal sterilization of Romani women without their consent. Authorities maintain that they were doing nothing wrong.

—Information from Women's Human Rights Online Bulletin

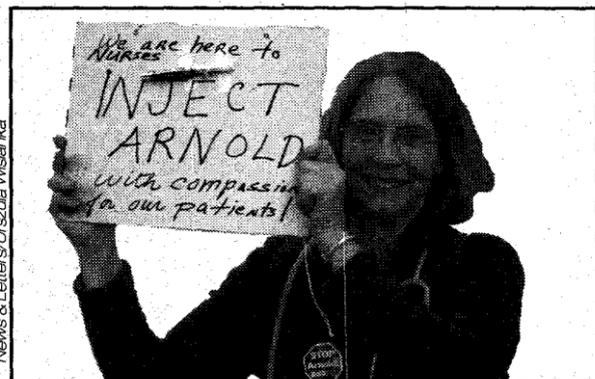
Strikers making women's history

CHICAGO—The Working Women's History Project (WWHP) celebrated our Eighth Annual Gala in Chicago. We gave our Mother Jones award to Sharon Williams, a 10-year member of the union UNITE HERE, which represents the Congress Hotel workers, on strike for nearly two years.

We also presented an original play by WWHP member Joan McGann Morris, "We Unite Here: Stories of the Congress Hotel Strike." One of the introductory speakers was Linda Sabo, secretary of UNITE HERE

WORKSHOP TALKS

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To add insult to injury, just days before Congress cut Medicaid funding, it also passed new legislation to restrict a person's access to bankruptcy protections, a law to help the loan shark industry. The number one cause of personal bankruptcies in the U.S. is exploding healthcare expenses.

HMO-BACKED SMEARS

Arnold Schwarzenegger, actor-turned-governor, is now one of big Hollywood's generals in this war. He rode to power on his Hollywood image as a lone action hero out to clean out the "special interests" in Sacramento. With money donated by industry special interests from real estate developers to HMOs, the governor has been flooding the state's airwaves with slick ads to smear the state's nurses and teachers as "special interests."

The "Terminator" seemed unstoppable, until now. The California Nurses' Association (CNA) has been winning their fight for quality care. They gained pivotal legislation for patient safety mandating a minimum nurse-to-patient ratio which then-governor Davis signed into law.

After the recall vote, as one of his first executive acts, Schwarzenegger suspended that law. He was repaying his special interest sponsors in the HMO industry. The court of appeals has since rescinded Schwarzenegger's order.

Schwarzenegger has finally met his match—the nurses of California, whose ranks are joined by teachers and firefighters in this battle as they show up at his fundraising events. As one sign held up by an RN at an anti-Schwarzenegger rally put it: "Nurses: 2, Arnold: 0." Others read: "Nurses are our special-interest" and "Dedicated to patient health, not corporate wealth."

The governor's approval ratings have plummeted in the polls. But he is still hell-bent on attacking unionized nurses and teachers fighting to maintain adequate staffing ratios as special interests.

For a misogynist governor, his most formidable adversary in real life has turned out to be workers whose vocation is still considered "women's work." It is a profession still largely staffed by women who understand concretely what it means to give and restore life.

EXPENSIVELY NOT TREATING PATIENTS

Our HMOs continue to spend more money than ever, more than any other nation on earth. The difference is, those extra billions are not spent on caring for the sick. While they have spent the last decade cutting back health services and frontline workers dedicated to patient care, they have nevertheless increased spending on personnel dedicated to denying patient care.

As Paul Krugman put it in *The New York Times* on April 22, "At a rough guess, between two million and three million Americans are employed by insurers and health care providers not to deliver health care, but to pass the buck for that care to someone else. And the result of all their exertions is to make the nation poorer and sicker." In my own shop, management has recently been on a hiring binge of business office employees, for "revenue enhancement." We employees have joked that half of us were hired to improve the revenue collection rate, and the other half to monitor the first half.

The measure of our humanity is how we treat fellow human beings at their greatest point of weakness and need—when they are felled by sickness and disease. In this era of healthcare as commodity, barbarism has an accountant's face. Our current healthcare crisis in the U.S. is in essence a battle between the concrete labor of workers versus the insurance industry's focus on their financial interests.

The needless 200,000 deaths a year in health care are the toll of an unprovoked war on workers. That is why the current battle shaping up in California will be pivotal. It's a battle between Schwarzenegger's forces in the corporate world versus the nurses and teachers who want to reclaim their own activity and its importance as a fundamental human value.

Local 1 and a coordinator of the strike. She said, "This has been tough for our families, but we are determined to win this strike as we strive for respect for workers."

Sharon spoke on how her faith, husband, children, and friends have given her the courage to continue to strike in spite of people who do not understand and tell the strikers to "go get a job." She spoke of how the hotel sent out people to discourage the strikers, threaten them with arrest, and the discouragement of being out on strike for such a long time with no end in sight. "But," she said, "we look at the time on the picket line as being just one more day, just one more day."

In the play the strikers say, "We are doing this for our families, so they will have decent pay, decent benefits, and respect for the job they do. We will not allow them to cut our pay and make it a road for other businesses to bust the unions...[Strikebreakers] work for little money and move on to better paying jobs, so there is high turnover and the quality of the hotel is going downhill—it is dirty." Members of UNITE HERE passed out postcards for us to sign in support of a proposed ordinance in Chicago to mandate that people coming here and to the Congress Hotel know of the strike.

The gala was held at Roosevelt University and our partner is the New Deal Studies there. Margaret Rung, director of New Deal Studies, called our attention to the "Our Deal" series of fireside chats to be held throughout the year at Roosevelt reflecting on the conservative turn the U.S. has taken in its attacks on progressive programs.

Leaving the gala we looked across the street and saw a dozen or so people walking the picket line, still striking the Congress Hotel.

—Sue Straus, President, WWHP

Hardships from Longbridge closing

BIRMINGHAM, ENGLAND—The closure of the Rover plant at Longbridge was announced today. It is suggested that the average worker will receive close to \$10,000. However, the scale of the payouts will be much smaller. Anyone who has a car purchased from the company will be \$6,000 in debt, as the company car buying scheme has collapsed.

But the situation is worse than this, sending some families into greater personal debt and some relationships and marriages into divorce. Even when the individual finds a job, it can take up to two years to recover—in some instances, never.

It also comes at a time when benefits and pensions are under attack. People may or may not be able to claim benefits or sick leave. To some extent it's a home goal for the government, which has decided to place the economy on center stage for the May 5 election.

It has already received a warning from the IMF over public spending. Within days of this censure it has been forced to offer \$300 million in some kind of rescue bid for the components industry and retraining.

The British car industry had been in trouble for some time. The Phoenix group took over Longbridge for just £10 and a long-term loan of a billion dollars. The published accounts show a \$400 million discrepancy. The directors are believed to have acquired at least \$90 million.

The Shanghai Automobile Company acquired Rover for around \$130 million, including all cars presently held. The \$2 billion company is said to have no assets of worth—their management center is reputed to be ring fenced by the Phoenix holding company. If there is fraud, there is a poor record of the courts establishing it.

In the late 1960s there was a series of government initiatives by Labour to restrain the unions. They included Industrial Labour Courts or Tribunals, codification of relationship and duties, and redundancy packages.

The legal attacks accompanied direct attacks by the employers. These ideological offensives included sweetheart agreements and going over the heads of stewards and decapitating rank-and-file trade unionists.

The defeat of the miners strike of 1984-85 helped lead to the industrial malaise of today. No lessons appear to have been learned.

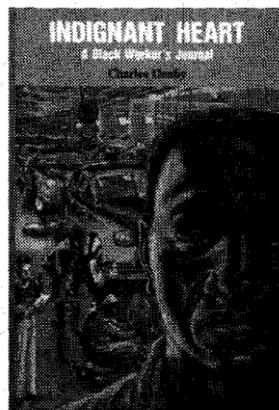
—Patrick

The story of freedom struggles in factories and fields, North and South, by the founding editor of *News & Letters*

Indignant Heart: A Black Worker's Journal

by Charles Denby

\$14.95
To order, see page 7.



25 years as editor of News & Letters

On the 50th anniversary of the first issue of *News & Letters*, we reprint excerpts from the December 1980 "Worker's Journal," the column by founding editor Charles Denby.

by Charles Denby

One of the reviews of my [book] *Indignant Heart: A Black Worker's Journal* by a history professor at the University of Indiana stated that the difference between Parts I [published in 1952] and II [published in 1978] is understandable if readers keep in mind the terrific changes that came about in race relations and at the work benches in the U.S. between the appearances of the two parts...

There have been terrific changes in the past 25 years and that has made me a different person. But to me the chief reason I am a different person is my 25 years as editor of *News & Letters*. My experience throughout those years has taught me more about what journalism really is than any journalism school could teach. It is a question of learning, not just editing. Let me go back to how it all began.

What I had been learning then in the movement was that it wasn't left all to intellectuals to do all the thinking and writing, but that workers could do it too. There didn't need to be this separation that I had been taught all my life between mental and manual labor, where the educated do all the thinking and the workers do all the legwork.

When there had been the Marxist-Humanist newspaper *News & Letters* was formed, I was asked to become the editor. At first I was reluctant. The thought kept turning over in my mind that it was all right to have a worker-editor as a practice, but it was something else to put it into policy, especially starting with me. But after I kept hearing the words coming from everyone about myself becoming the editor, I decided to try it out.

One of the first crucial events that happened during the first year I was editor was the Montgomery Bus Boycott. I went down to Montgomery with some ideas of my own. In particular, one old story I'd heard said no sailor, no matter how long he has been sailing the high seas, can look out one morning across a calm sea and predict when a storm will arise, when the waves and current will come in with such force that it will sweep everything ashore.

I know that many Blacks had been put in jail and some had been shot and even killed for doing exactly what Mrs. Rosa Parks had done by not moving to give up her seat to a white person. So I understood about not being able to predict the time and place people will rise up and revolt against their oppressors.

You saw it so clearly in Montgomery. Rev. King had recognized it also, saying that he did not organize the boycotters, he joined their movement.

Montgomery was only the beginning of the way *N&L* followed all the forces of revolution and reported on all the freedom struggles, North and South. We did it in a different way than any other paper, even the Left papers...

N&L is still a paper where everyone involved is learning and thinking, from the editor to the worker who writes about his or her shop...

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FROM THE WRITINGS OF RAYA DUNAYEVSKAYA

EDITOR'S NOTE

In observance of the 50th year of News and Letters Committees and its publication, *News & Letters*, we reprint a part of the 1986 pamphlet *The Myriad Global Crises of the 1980s and the Nuclear World Since World War II*, in particular the section "From the Birth of *News & Letters*, 1955, to *Marxism and Freedom*, 1957."

"The myriad global crises," wrote Raya Dunayevskaya at the time, "have been the spur to a re-examination of the whole nuclear world since World War II. That is the reason for the title of this pamphlet." In it, she discussed the half-century of development of her Marxist-Humanism, represented in *The Raya Dunayevskaya Collection*, and in 30 years, to then, of *News & Letters*.

Accompanying the excerpt are two articles, "A day to remember" and "Njeri", a Kenyan woman freedom fighter. A third, by Charles Denby about his 25 years as editor of *News & Letters*, is on page 3. The pamphlet is available from *N&L*.

With the eyes of 1985, the idea of a Marxist-Humanist paper beginning publication June 1955, when McCarthyism was still raging, seems, strangely enough, very todayish. The idea of a struggle for freedom that would make inseparable theory and practice, and have that relation as the determinant, does indeed remain an imperative...

The three post-World War II decades, 1955-1985, not only tested Marx's philosophy of liberation when one must fight under the whip of counter-revolution, but also saw the emergence of new passions and forces opposing capitalist-imperialism. Thus was signified the dawning of a new epoch.

To examine the first year of our existence, especially the first issue of *News & Letters*, will reveal, first, what we heard, and second, the meaning we gave to what we heard by declaring it to be "a movement from practice that is itself a form of theory." It is this we held to be the challenge which theoreticians must face in working out the dialectic philosophy of the age.

The uniqueness of the simultaneity of act and of thought in the 1950s—in such events as the 1949-50 Miners' General Strike and the 1953 East German Revolt—was a spur to the publication of *News & Letters*. Thus we set aside a specific section entitled "Coal and Its People," which we explained in an article in the first issue, "A Coal Section because..." That section had been born from the kind of questions posed by that 1949-50 Miners' General Strike against Automation, which was then merely known as the struggle against the introduction of a new kind of machine, "the continuous miner," into the coalfields. In battling what the miners called a "man-killer," the miners insisted they were not interested mainly in the question of wages. Rather, they asked what kind of labor man should do. Why was there such a big division between thinking and doing?

In 1953, in a very different country, East Germany, there was a rebellion against "work norms" (speed-up). Here the workers coupled their economic demands at the point of production with the political demand for freedom. It was the first-ever general strike from under Communist totalitarianism. Their slogan was "Bread and Freedom." This new battle spread through East Europe. It came to a climax in the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, which brought onto the present historic stage philosophic questions that had been raised in Marx's *Humanist Essays* of 1844.

Issue number one of *News & Letters* demonstrated our international dimension in its very appearance in

From the first issue of *News & Letters*, June 1955

'Njeri...'

Njeri is an African woman. Her home is in Kenya, a country in East Africa which has been in the grip of civil war for almost three years. The civil war was started by the British authorities when they declared an Emergency in October 1952 because the people of Kenya were trying to help themselves. They want their rights as human beings which the minority of white settlers had taken from them.

Njeri is a woman of about 53... Like Harriet Tubman during our own Civil War, she cannot read or write legibly. She is in a prison camp with about 9,000 other African women. She has been very badly treated and everybody thought she was going to die.

This remarkable woman founded the first independent women's movement in East Africa. She started her work in 1940 when, independently of any man, she organized African women to establish, at the Kenya Teachers College, facilities for girls to equal those enjoyed by the boys. But there is more behind the African women's movement... It is not simply for equality with African men. It is for equality of Africans in relation to anyone else in the world.

Njeri's story, and the story of the people of Kenya, is told by Mbiyu Koinange in *The People of Kenya Speak for Themselves*, which is dedicated to her.

When *News & Letters* was born

June 1955, to commemorate the second anniversary of the June 17 East German Revolt. This was discussed in our "World Comment" section of this first issue. Our editorial, "Why We Appear," expressed our relation to our readers as writers here in America. The uniqueness of our paper was manifested in the following:

1. The editors were two workers, Johnny Zupan and Charles Denby. Charles Denby, a Black production worker, was soon to become the sole editor. This was the first time ever that a U.S. Black production worker became the editor of a Marxist paper.

2. Nor was the Black dimension limited to editorship. The very first issue of *News & Letters* reproduced a picture of Njeri, a Kenyan woman who was a central figure in the Mau Mau struggle for freedom from British imperialism. (Both Njeri's piece and "World Comment" are excerpted below.—Ed.) It was to her that the booklet, *People of Kenya Speak for Themselves*, was dedicated.(1)

The year 1955 was filled not only with McCarthyism, but with racism of the most barbaric kind—as witness the murder of Emmett Till. Always seeing the new opposition, the absolute opposite of the barbarism, is the only way to know how to fight in a positive way. Thus, our front page article on Oct. 5, 1955, was not just a report of the horrors of Till's murder, but of the Black mass reaction to it. When the Montgomery Bus Boycott broke out later that same year, our editor, Charles Denby, went to Alabama to meet with the participants in that bus boycott. What we presented in the pages of *News & Letters* was a report of the beginnings of the Black Revolution. It became crystal clear that this movement wasn't the act of any single individual but was masses in motion—what we would later call Black masses as vanguard.

3. The category of Women's Liberation as Reason as well as revolutionary force was seen in *News & Letters* from the start. It was not alone that a Black woman, Ethel Dunbar, authored a column she called "We Are Somebody"(2), but that *News & Letters* had no less than two other women columnists—Jerry Kegg on the Labor page and Angela Terrano, who was also a worker, writing a column called

Theoreticians cannot be bystanders to a paper that mirrors the workers' thoughts and activities as they happen.

"Working for Independence," first on the Youth page and later on the Labor page.

4. The Youth column was then written by Robert Ellery, who edited the page and called his column "Thinking It Out." He later wrote the front page article which clearly showed that, far from the youth being a "Beat Generation," they were in fact a new force of revolution—"Rebels With A Cause" (Feb. 5, 1957).

5. To be noted as pivotal as well was the section devoted to "Readers' Views" which was created to give priority not merely to letters to the editor, but also to unwritten letters, i.e., to views of non-members, often only spoken. The purpose of this section was to reveal what people thought and said of the world, and of their own lives, which would not depend on whether or not they were writers. Rather, it was a question of our members needing to be alert to what the masses said to each other, what they thought, how they felt, whether at work or just on public transportation. Involved here is the whole concept of oral history...

6. An "MD" column was written by a doctor. It did not limit itself to medical problems, though central to the column would be specific questions about industrial illnesses and about the social nature of illness. Thus, the MD column dealt with such other topics as a review of Herbert Marcuse's *Eros and Civilization* (Feb. 5, 1957); and a series of four articles developed a view of "The Biological Basis of Marxist-Humanism" (April to October, 1960).

7. Finally, there was my column, "Two Worlds," which had an overline, "Notes from a Diary," and was, at first, unsigned. My first column dealt with "Letter Writing and the New Passions" that signaled the birth of a new epoch.

In 1955 our very first conference, which had decided to publish this paper, *News & Letters*, edited by workers, had at the same time assigned me to complete the study of Marxism that I had been working on for a decade. It would be called *Marxism and Freedom* and would articulate both the American roots of Marxism and Marx's world Humanist concepts. It would not be completed until 1957. Before its appearance, however, we did issue our very first pamphlet, which reproduced

in mimeographed form my translation of Lenin's *Philosophic Notebooks*, which had never been available in English before. That same pamphlet contained, as well, my May 1953 Letters on Hegel's Absolute Idea. It is in these letters that I held that inherent in Hegel's Absolute Idea as a unity of theory and practice was the presence of a **movement from practice**.

I felt that in our age, when the workers' movement from practice had manifested itself as a form of theory, it was the task of Marxists to face this new reality in such a way that all relations between workers and intellectuals change. One manifestation of that was that workers became editors. But that did not mean that there would be no work for the intellectuals who were revolutionary and who participated with the workers in all their actions. Here is what I wrote in my "Two Worlds" column of Aug. 5, 1955, about the unique

combination of worker and intellectual that *News & Letters* was establishing. We insisted that this was "the practice of the breakdown of the most monstrous division of all—the division between mental and manual labor... The intellectual must be attuned to hear that movement from practice to theory. This is the nub... Theoreticians cannot be

bystanders to a paper that mirrors the workers' thoughts and activities as they happen."

This conception became historically as well as currently alive as the East European revolts reached their first climax in the Hungarian Revolution of 1956. Along with establishing Workers' Councils at the point of production, instead of the state-controlled unions, that revolution, as well, saw the appearance of innumerable newspapers and, as I mentioned above, the 1844 *Humanist Essays* of Marx were brought onto the historic stage as a cogent point of discussion. It was precisely those *Essays* which we had translated in the 1940s, had been unable to find a publisher for, and which we had decided to include as an appendix to *Marxism and Freedom*, which was just then being completed.

Just as my breakthrough on the Absolute Idea, where I had singled out the movement from practice, set the structure for *Marxism and Freedom*, from 1776 *Until Today*, so the Hungarian Revolution gave a todayness to Marx's *Humanist Essays*, while the Montgomery Bus Boycott made inseparable the Black Revolution and its international dimension. In the Intro-

Continued on page 11

From the first issue of *News & Letters*, June 1955

'A day to remember'

...Two years ago, on June 17, 1953, East German workers struck against the brutal production schedules ordered by the Communist government. All over East Germany, strikes and demonstrations broke out. Men, women and youth came together shouting, "We will not be slaves." Russian troops and tanks were called out. A number of Germans were killed by rifle and machine-gun fire. Others were crushed to death beneath the tracks of Russian tanks.

In spite of this, the demonstrations spread up one street and down another. In East Berlin, a young man, under fire, climbed the famous Brandenburg Gate and tore down the Communist flag. Elsewhere, demonstrators broke into police stations, disarmed the "People's Police" and freed political prisoners. In the end, the government gave way and withdrew the production schedules.5

How did the politicians and leaders of the West, who claim to be opposed to Communist tyranny, respond to the German workers on June 17? They urged them to keep order. To win a few propaganda points, Eisenhower offered food to the East German authorities to ease the tension. Of course it was refused as he knew it would be...

The German workers, on the other hand, men, women and youth, showed the world the only way to fight Communism. They did not choose between the Communism of the East or the anti-Communism of the West. They said, "We will not be slaves." And they struck.

Their action has changed the face of Europe. It toppled Beria in Russia and exposed the West in its sabotage of this popular uprising. Everywhere working people caught a glimpse of a new society struggling to be born. This June 17, the second anniversary of the German events, *News & Letters* goes to press for the first time.



Raya Dunayevskaya (from left), Charles Denby, Ethel Dunbar, circa 1976.

ESSAY Marx's Humanism and the fight for a new ecology

by Peter Hudis

The future of an ecological critique of existing society, if not the existence of society itself, depends upon halting capital's relentless drive for self-expansion. That the global self-expansion of capital is producing rampant destruction of natural habitats, innumerable species and social cohesion has become so evident as to hardly invite serious challenge. Far more challenging, however, is the question of whether capital's destructive course of self-expansion can be stopped before it consumes the lifeblood of the planet itself.

What can be done to stop capital's drive for self-expansion? Clearly, state-directed economic development is no solution, as shown by the horrid environmental record of the former "Communist" regimes as well as the failures of Western Social-Democracy to halt environmental destruction. In response to this, some argue today that capital's destructive logic of self-expansion is inherently rooted in economic development and even in civilization itself. Ridding the world of environmental destruction, according to this view, requires surrendering the notion that economic development, industrialization, and modernization can in any way be considered "progressive."

A Marxist-Humanist approach to the ecological crisis rejects the view that capital can be controlled by the state and the view that civilization and/or economic development must be jettisoned in the name of ecological diversity. Those who favor the "collective" ownership of capital make the same mistake as those who disparage economic development and civilization—they both view capital as a **thing** instead of as a specific social relation of production.

Capital, however, is not a thing; it is a social relation mediated by the instrumentality of things. As Marx wrote in his *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, capital is "the expression of a special sort of work which is indifferent to its content, of complete being-for-self, of abstraction from all other being."⁽¹⁾ Just as the labor that creates capital is indifferent to its content, capital as self-expanding value is indifferent to any material or natural property confronting it, even though capital must assume a concrete, material form.

Capital is congealed labor. But capital is not the congealment of just any kind of labor. In *Capital* Marx wrote of the **kind** of labor that does not produce capital: "Labor is the universal condition for the metabolic interaction between man and nature, the ever-lasting nature-imposed condition of human existence, and it is therefore independent of every form of that existence, or rather is common to all forms of society in which human beings live."⁽²⁾ Labor in this generic sense does not exist apart from or outside of nature.

As Marx wrote in his *Critique of the Gotha Program* in 1875, "labor is only the manifestation of one natural force, human labor power." Marx therefore opposed those socialists who (in his words) "attribute a supernatural creative power to labor."⁽³⁾ The labor that "is common to all form of society in which human beings live" is dependent on nature, bound by its limits, and defined by its ability to interact with nature.

In capitalism, however, the nature of "labor" is radically transformed. Labor in capitalism takes on the two-fold form of concrete labor (the specific exercise of human muscle and mind) and abstract labor (labor in general, which is indifferent to any natural or human content). **Abstract labor** is an abstract "being-for-self" that disregards the externalities of nature. When labor assumes a dual character society inevitably becomes governed by the drive to produce for the sake of producing an ever-greater abstraction, value.

For this reason efforts to control capital or to "reject" it without uprooting value production is self-defeating. Capital devastates natural habitats, eliminates species, and shows disregard for nature because it is the expression of abstract, alienated labor. So long as labor assumes a value form of mediation, capital will find a way to persevere regardless of the acts of the state, the community, or the most well-intentioned individuals.

Likewise, any effort to turn the clock back by rejecting economic development, let alone "civilization," is quixotic—not to mention that it ignores the urgent need for economic development and modernization in a world where a third of the global labor force is unemployed or underemployed, where two billion people live on less than a dollar a day, and where the most basic amenities of housing, sanitation, and transportation technology is out of reach for hundreds of millions. Like so many heads springing from the head of hydra, capital will find a way to persevere in its destructive path as long as we do not break free of value production by creating a totally new kind of labor.

TIME AND SOCIAL LABOR

What does it mean to create a new kind of labor that breaks from the logic of value production? It cannot be achieved simply by changing property forms. It can only be ended by transforming **conditions** of labor in which work becomes "thing-like," abstract, and hence a source of capitalist value and surplus value.

It is crucial to note that value is not determined by the actual amount of time it takes to produce a commodity. Value is instead determined by the **average** amount of time that it takes to produce a commodity. If it takes 36 hours to assemble a car in China, but 24 hours to assemble one in the U.S., the 12 hours of additional labor in China create no value. Value is deter-

mined by the amount of **socially necessary** labor time required to create a commodity. Because of this there is a constant pressure to produce faster and faster. "Man becomes time's carcass."⁽⁴⁾ This is why the rape of the environment is endemic to capitalism. Time becomes an abstract, external measure that must be obeyed regardless of any limits.

The only way to change this is by uprooting the two-fold **character** of labor, in which labor time takes on the **dual** form of individual working time vs. the amount of social labor that it represents.

Labor is either forcefully associated or freely associated; there is no in-between. In capitalism all labor is forced labor, even when it is formally "free," because labor is employed for the sole purpose of augmenting value. One has no choice in the matter; if you wish to work regardless of the amount of value created you will be shown the door. Alienated labor cannot be ended simply by achieving "free association" in the **political** sphere (a view shared by many social ecologists); it can be ended only by creating new relations at work and in society as a whole that abolishes the split in the category of labor.

What happens to **time** in a freely associated society? Time no longer is what rules us; we instead rule time. There is of course still a need to economize on time in a non-capitalist society. The difference is that, unlike in capitalism, where the economization of time is imposed forcefully from without through an abstract standard, in a freely associated society the laborers consciously and deliberately decide what to produce and how to produce based on the amount of time at their disposal. Instead of us being a slave to time, time becomes the space for our human development.

While Marx knew that uprooting capitalism would entail a long and bloody process, he held that freely associated labor must emerge in the immediate aftermath of a revolution for it to have any chance of success. As Raya Dunayevskaya put it, "Marx saw the free time liberated from capitalist exploitation as time for the free development of the individual's power, of his natural and acquired talents. He did not consider that Utopia. It was not the hereafter. It was the road to be taken, on the morrow of capitalism's fall, if the nationalized means of production were to serve any better end than the privately owned means of production."⁽⁵⁾

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER?

Alienated labor, which is the basis of value production and capital's werewolf hunger for self-expansion, cannot be abolished by dictates or programs; nor can it be ended by the actions of some enlightened "leadership," no matter how well intentioned. It can be ended only by an all-sided "revolution in permanence." For this reason we must seriously explore the question of what happens after the revolution **before** it occurs.

If we wait for the moment of revolution to figure out how to transcend alienation, as if liberation depends on spontaneity and experimentation, we will find ourselves ill prepared to deal with the question of how to fundamentally transform production relations. It is not possible to impede the destructive path of capital without a revolution. But it is also not possible to make a successful revolution without a concept of "what happens after" that can spell out how the seizure of power can lead to the effective breaking down of the law of value and the dual character of labor. For this reason Marxist-Humanists stress organizational responsibility for working out Marx's philosophy of "revolution in per-

manence" in light of today's realities.⁽⁶⁾

Many conceptual roadblocks remain in the way of achieving this. Take István Mészáros' *Beyond Capital*—a serious, 1,000-page study that contains an important ecological perspective. In the course of this study Mészáros takes issue with Marx's declaration that the workers "ought to inscribe on their banner the revolutionary watchword, Abolition of the Wages System!" Mészáros writes, "there is a great deal in the 'wages system' that...must be tran-

sceded on the long-term time-scale of the new historic form."⁽⁷⁾

Mészáros admits he is critical of Marx for saying wage labor can be abolished shortly after a revolution. He of course has the right to criticize Marx, but the question is what is lost in doing so. Mészáros's critique has him conclude: "Immediately after the expropriation of the expropriators' not only the inherited means, materials and technology of

production remain the same...but the very organization of the labor process itself stays deeply embedded in that hierarchical social division of labor which happens to be the heaviest burden of the inherited past."

The problem with this is that if the hierarchical division of labor and the wages system persist for a prolonged period after a revolution, capital as the medium of social interaction must persist for a long period as well. After all, wage labor implies capital, and capital implies wage labor; each stands or falls on the basis of the other. If capital remains the prevailing medium of social interaction even after a revolution, how is the destructive impact of capital to be halted? The logical conclusion (which Mészáros himself refrains from providing) is that capital must be controlled by the state, the community, or the "revolutionary" leadership.

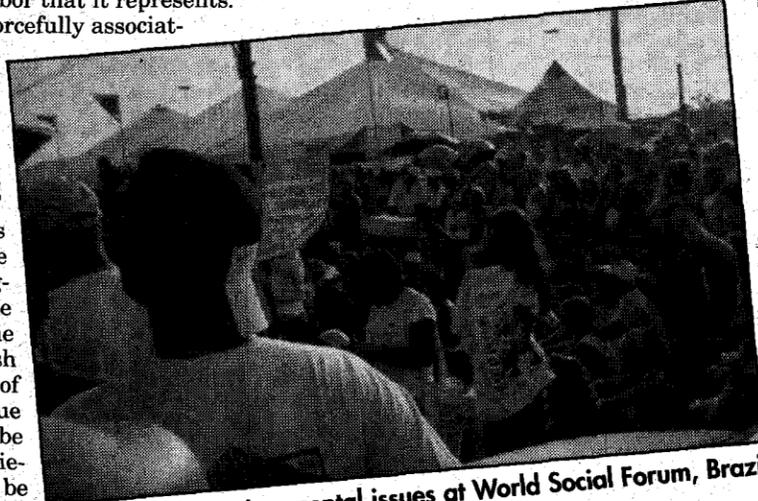
If such a conclusion is unacceptable, we must reject the premise upon which it is based. Attempts to avoid the conclusion by reverting to primitivist or anti-developmental perspectives do no good at all, not least because they fail to address the burning question of how to achieve industrialization and economic development in a non-capitalist manner.

Humanity remains very much in need of economic and social development; the crushing poverty that afflicts over half the planet is living proof of it. We cannot count on the self-expansion of capital to achieve this: one, because capital's very existence places the life of our planet in jeopardy; and two, because contemporary capitalism is structurally incapable of generating development and opportunity for the mass of humanity. This is evident from the way capitalism is increasingly abandoning the field of production by investing vast amounts of social wealth and energy in **unproductive** sectors, where (for now at least) the system is able to obtain a greater mass of profits.

The question isn't to have or not have development but what **kind** of development can meet human needs without relying on value production. Dunayevskaya grappled with this question half a century ago; it is high time that we do so as well.⁽⁸⁾ Though we face many difficult theoretical and practical problems in working through these unresolved questions, Marxist-Humanism contains a rich conceptual foundation for dealing with them that can be developed anew for our times.

NOTES

1. See *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, in *Marx-Engels Collected Works*, Vol. 3 (New York: International Publishers, 1975), p. 286.
2. Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol. 1 (New York: Vintage, 1977), p. 290.
3. Karl Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Program* (New York: International Publishers, 1933), p. 21.
4. Marx, *Poverty of Philosophy, Collected Works*, Vol. 6 (New York: International Publishers, 1976), p. 127.
5. *Marxism and Freedom*, by Raya Dunayevskaya (Amherst, New York: Humanity Books, 2000) p. 64.
6. See Dunayevskaya's *The Power of Negativity* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2002) for a discussion of this issue.
7. Istvan Mészáros, *Beyond Capital: Towards a Theory of Transition* (New York: Monthly Review Books, 1995), p. 489. Mészáros quotes Marx's statement on abolishing the wages system from *Wages, Price and Profit*. In his *Critique of the Gotha Program* Marx likewise says that wage labor is abolished not only in the "higher" phase of communism but in the **lower** stage, "as it emerges from capitalist society": "The producers do not exchange their products; just as little does the labor embodied in the products appear here as the **value** of the products...The same amount of work which he has given to society in one form, he receives back in another...that is, equal quantities of labor in one form are exchanged for equal quantities of labor in another form" (p. 29).
8. See Dunayevskaya's *Nationalism, Communism, Marxist Humanism, and the Afro-Asian Revolutions* [original 1958] (Chicago: News and Letters, 1984).



Discussion on environmental issues at World Social Forum, Brazil

News & Letters/Peter Hudis

Learn more about
Marx's value theory of labor

**Marx's Capital and
Today's Global Crises**
by Raya Dunayevskaya

"Labor is not the source of all wealth. Nature is just as much the source of use values as labor, which itself is only the manifestation of a force of nature, human labor power."
—Karl Marx (1875)



Available from News & Letters for \$2 (plus postage)
(See literature ad on page 7)

DOES MARX'S VALUE THEORY MATTER?

A lot of Marxists say that you can be a Marxist and drop Marx's value theory, since no reputable economist believes in it. Left economists, like Okishio, say they are "correcting" Marx. But it is important not to drop value theory because it goes into what happens to the humanity of workers. Everyone sees that capitalism has reduced workers to counting the time they put in at work. But that doesn't make visible how labor is separated from the laborer. In his review of *The New Value Controversy and the Foundations of Economics* (March-April N&L), Tom More says that to develop an alternative we have to know what capitalism is. It is not "money making money." It is how you become bifurcated as a person. Marx is the only one who explains why that is and how that happens.

David Mizuno'Oto
Oakland, Cal.

I enjoyed the article on "Why Marx's theory of value matters" in the last issue. It is great to read that the claims of internal inconsistency in Marx's value theory have been refuted and it has been found sound. I never thought it could be anything but sound. What are all those "Marxologists" talking about? Does anyone really have to read thick books with miles of complex figures to understand surplus value? Can anyone say workers do not produce values that are greater than their wages? If most of the world's proletariat can't read these complex books does it mean they will never be able to understand the "transformation problem"? Marxism is the poor man's philosophy, right? In your paper it says that N&L stands for the abolition of capitalism. I agree with your goals. But do the Marxologists agree and should we care what they think?

Sid Rasmussen
Iowa

The common opinion I run into is that we need only a little bit of Marx sprinkled in along with a pinch from Frankfurt School as well as Habermas. But Marx's value theory is needed to get to universality and necessity. I had a professor who would point out that Marx had not predicted such-and-such a phenomenon. It is a category error because Marx was working out a critique of political economy, not predicting the future.

Still studying
New York

Ideas matter because we are engaged in a battle of ideas. A lot of thought has gone into the suppression of Marxism. Tom More stated why this is so: "But in their totality (the papers in this collection under review) they make it plain

that the return to the text of Marx is charged with explosive potential in the academy and beyond it."

Teacher
New York

It's not a matter of whether Marx is always right, but of getting right what Marx had to say.

Student
New York

CELEBRATING MAY DAY IN 2005

We of Lalit—in collaboration with members of the national women's liberation movement and the organized workers of many different trade unions—will be holding a celebration on Labour Day, which falls on May 1 here in Mauritius.

The date for general elections here are announced that same day. The election comes at the time Free Zone workers are being retrenched continuously, as factories close in Mauritius and re-open in China, Madagascar, and India. Thousands of sugar industry workers are being pensioned off and their very jobs destroyed, as the sugar estates with the backing of the government plan to build luxury villas for millionaires, destroying the little fertile land that remains and "creating" a handful of jobs in colonial-type domestic work.

The theme of our Labour Day celebration this year will be "Labour against Capital in 2005." We would welcome having a message from you to translate into Kreol and read out to the meeting.

Ragini Kistnasamy
Mauritius

PAPACY REGIME CHANGE

The regime change in the papacy came a month after the city Catholic school where I teach was shut down by Cardinal Adam Maida, along with 15 other city and inner-ring suburban schools. The Archdiocese claims to have tried to work with those schools to get them "financially correct." The school was founded in 1967 in the wake of the Detroit Rebellion explicitly to realize the "urban mission" of the Detroit Archdiocese. It has used sit-ins and picket lines in the past in order to remain open in times of financial crisis. Now it is rumored that the Archdiocese is negotiating a business proposition to reopen the closed schools as charter schools. But they won't talk to a group of alumni, the campus priest and parents who are trying to open the school under its own charter. The campus priest summed it up when he said, "Never let your Catholicism interfere with your spirituality."

Teacher
Detroit

50 YEARS OF NEWS & LETTERS

As News and Letters Committees celebrates its first 50 years of existence we have to look back to see all that has happened in those 50 years: the Civil Rights Movement, the continuing struggle for the rights of women, and a newfound understanding for all relating issues of sexual preference. We have witnessed the fall of Communism and the reaffirmation of the philosophy of Marxist-Humanism. We have seen the tragedies of Kosova, Rwanda, and September 11, 2001. And we have seen youth rise up and be heard.

Throughout those 50 years N&L has reported the stories of the masses, often the only forum where those voices were shared with the rest of the world. When genocide reared its ugly head, N&L voices were often the first or only voices to speak out. In Memphis, California, Chicago, New York, Detroit, and around the world, for the last 50 years N&L has been at the forefront of every historical (people-oriented) event of history and has reported it diligently.

I was surprised at the decision in this landmark year to change the publishing run of the publication. At a time when people are finding themselves in the midst of unparalleled change even greater than the fall of the Soviet Union and its distorted views of Marxism, we

should be moving forward, providing more fuel for the revolutionary fires.

One of the first things I do after reading each issue of the paper is to read the section called "Who we are and what we stand for" or the Constitution of



N&L which 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, it states. It is necessary to be careful, then, to have a balance of theory and philosophy, and to define how that relates to practice as N&L reaches out to the men and women of the Mississippi Delta and the Appalachians, to the scholar at Columbia as well as to the worker in Detroit or Gary, as well as to the young Asians or Hispanics working in sweatshops or in the fields.

"The whole movement of history," wrote Marx in 1844, "is, on the one hand, the actual act of creation—the act by which its empirical being was born; on the other hand, for its thinking consciousness, it is the realized and recognized process of development." Let N&L grow and develop so that 50 years from now we can see true and permanent revolutionary change.

Robert Tallaferra
Wisconsin

READERS' VIEWS

The day before the male leaders of the Catholic Church reaffirmed their determination to keep women in their place by selecting one of the most reactionary of their own as the new Pope, a group of Catholic women demonstrated at Chicago's Holy Name Cathedral for more decision-making power in the church. Citing an estimated 500 million Catholic women worldwide, the demonstrators set off pink smoke (as a male passerby shouted "heresy") to symbolize the absence of women in this important selection process. "Every country, every race, every ethnic origin is welcome and represented in the Sistine Chapel—provided you are male," said the executive director of the national Coalition of American Nuns. As the pink smoke billowed skyward, a 90-year-old grandmother cheered.

Mary Jo Grey
Chicago

The new Pope Benedict XVI is credited as being opposed to the death penalty and to war. But in 2004, in a memorandum he sent to U.S. Catholic bishops he made it clear that "not all moral issues have the same moral weight as abortion and euthanasia....While the Church exhorts civil authorities to seek peace, not war, and to exercise discretion and mercy in imposing punishment on criminals...there may be a legitimate diversity of opinion even among Catholics about waging war and applying the death penalty, but not, however, with regard to abortion and euthanasia." Isn't that what they call "religious grocery shopping" when they criticize Catholic women for practicing birth control?

Just wondering
Illinois

HUMAN NEEDS

In "A look at the young Marx's humanism" on the Youth Page of the March-April issue, Carlos Saracino says that "Marx does not merely confine his view of human need to scientific and economic development, but also to all sorts of creative activity, from art to poetry." I really liked where he was going with that. But in his conclusion, where he is looking at the real value of exploring those non-material dimensions of being human he says theory acquires its merit "insofar as it is practical theory, that is insofar as it has the power to influence and direct action." But do poetry and art need to lead to directing action if "human power is its own end"?

David
Oakland, Cal.

TORTURE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

The ACLU and Human Rights First have sued Defense Secretary Rumsfeld for having responsibility for U.S. torture policies. The lead counsel in the lawsuit said he bears direct and ultimate responsibility "by personally authorizing unlawful interrogation techniques and abdicating his legal duty to stop torture." Rumsfeld is charged with violating the U.S. Constitution and international law in the lawsuit. Earlier he was named in an indictment in Germany alleging war crimes. Things are looking up for those who believe in the rule of law. Eventually perhaps Bush can be prosecuted, along with his stooges for invading Iraq under false pretenses and causing the deaths of 1,500 U.S. service persons as well as over 100,000 Iraqis.

Anti-war activist
Louisiana

For the first time in Chicago history, a Cook County Court Judge has granted a hearing on the issue of police torture. A packed court room of students and family members was on hand to hear Judge Nicholas Ford dismiss Attorney General Lisa Madigan's petition to deny a new hearing for police torture victim Robert Omelas. It opens the door for his attorney to argue for a new trial because his

confession was extracted through torture. The next court date for Omelas is June 21. The Attorney General's office has been trying to shut down each torture case as it comes up and this decision opens the door for potential new hearings for all the torture victims.

Human Rights activist
Chicago

HELEN MACFARLANE AND ROSA LUXEMBURG

David Black is to be thanked greatly for letting us hear the thoughts of Helen Macfarlane in his book on this "feminist, revolutionary journalist, and philosopher in mid-19th century England." That history really seemed very "todayish" to me, especially when I read how she had responded to being asked to venerate the "wisdom of our ancestors." After asking "which ones?" and going through a long list, she described how she shuddered to think of the "wisdom of Dutch William, and the treacherous, mean, sneaking, rascally aristocrats who placed him on the throne." Reading that, don't names like Karl Rove, Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, Paul Wolfowitz and George Bush come to your mind?



Educator
Illinois

There are two seemingly opposite ways to eviscerate a revolutionary legacy. One is to make the revolutionary an icon, as is done with M.L. King and Che Guevara, among others. The other is to forget about them altogether. The latter seemed to be the fate of Rosa Luxemburg. But as recent issues of N&L have been proving, Luxemburg is being rescued from history's dustbin. Terry Moon's column in the March-April N&L helps ensure that her legacy does not go from one form of forgetting into the other form of seeing her only as a martyr and a symbol, rather than the real life and ideas that need an active engagement.

Feminist lecturer
California

In Black's book one gets a sense of Macfarlane as a theorist and activist. Just as Dunayevskaya showed with her study of Luxemburg, it is a story that is a challenge to the Women's Liberation Movement not to leave theory to others.

Male women's liberationist
New York

DIALECTICS OF BLACK FREEDOM STRUGGLES

What was so important to me in the article by Khalfani Malik Khaldun published as a "philosophic dialog" in the January-February N&L, was the way he saw *American Civilization on Trial*, a document written in the early 1960s, as what actually points the way to the future in that it "arms the new activist with the tools of empowerment, especially for anyone who seems to be feeling that the struggle is dead."

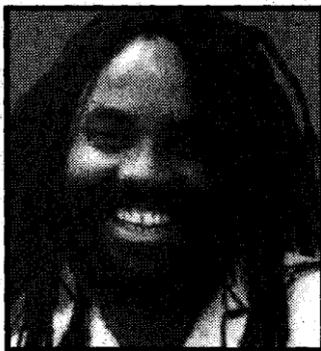
I found his comments on the way our "much praised institutions of representative government, voting and constitutional laws have never proved adequate for providing universal human rights" especially relevant to the recent class series N&L have been holding on "Beyond Capitalism" where we are examining what "democracy" means concretely. Anyone trying to analyze the recent elections in Iraq would benefit greatly from reading this essay.

Committee member
Chicago

MUMIA ABU-JAMAL

Several hundred people turned out to demand freedom for Mumia Abu-Jamal on April 23, the day before his 51st birthday. He has been on Pennsylvania's death row for the past 22 years, following an unfair trial for murder by a racist judge. With widespread U.S. and international support, he has galvanized opposition to the death penalty and the criminal injustice system, but the movement to win a new trial and to actually free Mumia has dwindled over the past several years.

He still faces the possibility of execution and remains in jail for a crime he denies committing. This "birthday celebration" was the first major rally on his behalf in New York for some time. It was sponsored by an unlikely coalition of formerly competing Mumia support organizations, including the ubiquitous Workers World Party front groups, anti-prison groups, Maoist



groups, and such "respectable" people as former Mayor David Dinkins and the head of the Westchester County NAACP.

At the rally, Mumia called for a demonstration in Philadelphia May 14 to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the massacre there of 11 men, women and children from the MOVE organization. That African-American organization had been protesting the unfair incarceration of its members when the government bombed and destroyed two Philadelphia city blocks in order to dislodge MOVE members from their homes. Nine members remain in jail today, and Mumia has repeatedly called for their release and for justice for the survivors of the massacre.

**Mumia defense activist
Harlem, New York**

SOCIAL SECURITY & RACE

Julian Bond and other NAACP leaders hit it on the head when they accused Bush of "playing the race card" in his attempt to sell his Social Security proposals. What is needed is looking at why Black people have a shorter life span—instead of just citing it or saying that relatives of people who die before retiring sometimes don't receive benefits under the present system. The average span for a newborn Black male is 69, compared with 75 for a newborn white male. I haven't seen any response from Bush to this sharp critique.

**Octogenarian
Chicago**

The Black/Red column on "What is freedom?" (March-April N&L) was an educational in seeing the origins of the 14th amendment. Bourgeois truth always hides the truth of history in mercenary, cold, hard, anti-human language about settling debts. Reading this column made me want to hear more about Social Security because so much of our

discussion of civil society issues have been oriented around balance sheet, fiduciary language instead of what is freedom. In the Civil Rights Movement we could see the descendants of free slaves still demanding to be recognized as human and they are still doing so.

**Asian American
California**

I thought of John Alan's column on "What is freedom?" where he took up the beginning of public debt, when the news showed Bush going to West Virginia, holding up the U.S. securities that comprise the Social Security fund and saying "These are just IOUs" as though that meant they are worthless. Those securities belong to workers. If he did that to securities held by Chinese or Japanese capitalists the world economy would collapse in a flash. The debt owed to capitalists is "sacrosanct." Bush is all for "using up" workers, whether on the battlefield, at work or in retirement.

**Retiree
California**

CAPITALIST HEALTH CARE

It is hard to stay well under capitalism. Because ill health is a reflection of the living conditions and the environment, it is those issues that need attention. Looking at the richest countries in the world we find extremes in the delivery of care. For America, popular culture would have it that the main cause of death would be gunshot wounds. But the greatest cause of death among young Black Americans is asthma. A section of the population are dying because they cannot breathe.

For the rest of the population the greatest killers are obesity, smoking and heart disease. The other great killer is auto accidents. But the sad part is depression and self-inflicted deaths. Anyone who has tried to swat a fly knows the organism will struggle to survive. If the human will to live can become self-destructive shouldn't we question not the victims but the society?

**Nurse
Britain**

**FUTURE OF MOVEMENTS
AGAINST CAPITAL**

In his report on the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre (March-April N&L), Peter Hudis writes that many speakers "virtually equated 'neo-liberalism' and even capitalist globalization with the U.S." and that "the Iraqi resistance" was uncritically heralded...on the grounds that opposing the U.S. as the enemy of humanity trumps all other concerns." Do I sense a note of offended patriotism in his text? When Bush talks about democracy he means capitalism and markets at any cost. "Neo-liberalism" is a perfectly good characterization of the "laissez-faire" that assures the subordination of the Third World to the interests of U.S. business and their minor partners in Europe and Japan. If we shouldn't be uncritical about the war in Iraq we should have the same care about "democracy" at home.

**Carlos Silva
Internet Inhabitant**

Hudis' report on Porto Alegre was fascinating in bringing out the breadth of discussions that took place in Porto Ale-

gre. His critique of those who uncritically hail the armed resistance in Iraq pinpoints the main problem facing the anti-war movement in the U.S. It has failed to understand that most Iraqis hate the fundamentalist militias as much as they hate the U.S. It has a lot to do with why so many Iraqis came out to vote in January—much to the surprise of many anti-war activists in the U.S.

**Iranian exile
Los Angeles**

The World Social Forum was by no means a socialist grouping. It is a big tent. It represents a critique of domination. They believe that the most important thing is the WSF itself.

**Sociology Professor
New York**

CHINA'S WORRIES

It is curious that the Chinese government permitted rallies to protest Japan's atrocities against China in WW II, only to soon demand that they cease. Since the Chinese Communists murdered far more Chinese since 1949 than the Japanese did during WWII, I wonder if the regime is worried that the Chinese people are not so selective in their memories as the regime may wish.

**Observer
Chicago**

SLAVE LABOR IN 2005

I share every issue of N&L with others on my tier. Many of us consider ourselves Marxist. It is important to see the truth of everyday life in our right-wing country, to show the world how the blue collar laborer is exploited so the wealthy can continue to grow in this country. As I live in the concentration camp called prison and have to deal with the storm troopers here I am learning the meaning of slave labor. We work to make money for the prison and we see none of it. Even the few rights we have are being taken away. It's not just the political prisoners who are harassed. It is all of us. Please continue to make public the abuses unleashed behind these walls.

**Prisoner
California**

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by Robert Taliaferro

"No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment" (Article 5, United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted 1948).

Perhaps it was because the world was so horrified by the ultimate examples of the human propensity and ability to propagate unspeakable cruelty on other human beings. Perhaps, with the development of ul-

BLACK/REDAVIEW

Continued from page 1

regation and lynching in the South, many African Americans migrated to the North during World War I. Jobs were plentiful there, because the war had stopped the influx of European workers. Ford Motor Co. has an ad in the current *The Crisis*, intimating that they created the Black middle class with their 1913 offer of \$5 a day wages aimed at those African-American workers escaping the South.

In just three years, 1914-17, at least 400,000 African Americans quickly organized themselves and went North. Their departure depopulated entire communities in the South. In its extent this movement was without a parallel in American history for it drew African-American inhabitants from places in the South from Florida to Texas.

This migration created new elements in the American culture and also gave a new meaning to the concept of freedom. At the same time, the migration inflamed many white people living outside of the South.

During this Great Migration many areas in the country experienced the "Red Summer of 1919," so called because of the blood in the streets after race riots in 20 cities. African Americans were killed and beaten by white mobs who saw Blacks as a threat to the self perceived white superior social status and economic security.

RACE WAR

The race conflict that exploded in Tulsa, Okla., on the evening of May 31, 1921 was not a race riot but a part of this race war. According to Andrew Meier: "The 1921 Tulsa race riot owes its name to an older American tradition, to the days when white mobs, with the consent of local authorities, dared to rid themselves of their black neighbors. The endeavor was an opportunity to run the Negro out of Tulsa" ("Time is Running Out on Reparations for the Tulsa Race Riot," *Financial Times*, Feb. 19, 2005).

The usual way to start race wars in the U.S. is to circulate an allegation that a Negro has sexually assaulted a white woman.

Walter White, the NAACP official who arrived in Tulsa at the height of riot told what he thought happened in an article he wrote for *The Nation*. According to White: "A young Black messenger named Dick Rowland called for an elevator in a downtown Tulsa building. The operator, a young white woman named Sarah Page, on finding she had been summoned by a Black man, started the car on its descent when Rowland was only half in. To save himself from injury, Rowland threw himself into the car, stepping on the girl's foot in doing so. Page screamed and, when a crowd gathered outside the elevator, claimed she had been attacked. The police arrested Rowland the following day but with little enthusiasm, perhaps because they knew the reputation of his accuser."

Nevertheless, Rowland was charged with rape and the lynching call was sent out. This lynching didn't happen because armed Black men, veterans of the First World War, came out in the streets and cancelled the lynching idea. Those veterans lived in the prosperous African-American Greenwood district of Tulsa.

Tulsa's African-American community would pay a severe price for saving Rowland's life. That great humanitarian deed activated the murderous racists. They thought, if we can't lynch Rowland, we will burn down the prosperous "n---r town" Greenwood.

BURNING OF GREENWOOD

Two weeks after Greenwood was plundered and set on fire by a white mob, the attorney general of the state, during an address to the Tulsa City Club declared: "The cause of this riot was not Tulsa. It might happen anywhere for the Negro is not the same man he was 30 years ago when he was content to plod along his own road and accept the white man as his benefactor."

Tulsa riot survivors are still seeking reparations for the wrongs done them as well as fighting to fully uncover the evidence of the mayhem that befell their community 84 years ago. The continuing race divide reported by the Urban League and the resistance to fully facing up to this country's racist history are part of the same story. The thoroughly racist character of U.S. capitalism is shown in their eagerness to hire African-American labor when they are desperate as well as the continued suppression of the aspirations for full freedom of those same African-American masses. Those aspirations keep resurfacing to push the idea of freedom forward in American history.

What is gained by the use of torture?

mate weapons of war, it was felt that such high moral values could be enacted on a worldwide stage.

Whatever the reasons for their construction, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was the first attempt at globalizing and standardizing the rights of humans everywhere, regardless of race, color, creed, or nation. The UN General Assembly requested the member countries "to cause it to be disseminated, displayed, read and expounded principally in schools and other educational institutions, without distinction based on the political status of countries or territories" (United Nations Department of Public Information).

The world had such high hopes then, short-lived, as many human endeavors tend to be when politics becomes the governor of moral attitudes.

The effects of torture in its various forms have been discussed and studied extensively since 1948. It was not long before these studies redefined the use of torture as a viable weapon of war. History teaches us that the use of torture is not new, of course, but in a more enlightened mindset following World War II, it was often defined as unacceptable for a "civilized culture" to embark upon the use of torture for any reasons—at least openly.

EXTENSIVE TORTURE TECHNIQUES

Great Britain has used torture techniques extensively during its occupation of what was to become Israel, and during its war with the IRA. Israel in turn used similar techniques on Palestinian prisoners; and we are familiar with stories from around the world of how torture has been used to elicit information, or for the purposes of intimidation.

We have all heard of, or read, the reports from such groups as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and the Red Cross, and it was with some surprise that several of those organizations finally cited the U.S.—especially relating to the treatment of U.S. prisoners—as violating the international human rights conventions relating to torture and cruel and

'From Attica to Abu Ghraib'



Berkeley, Calif.—Several hundred people attended "From Attica to Abu Ghraib: An Organizing Conference on Human Rights, Torture, and Resistance" on April 22 and 23. Workshops focused on the criminalization of resistance, the repression of dissent and U.S. sponsored terrorism.

Community opposes nuclear waste incinerator

MEMPHIS, TENN.—The community is very upset about a low-level nuclear waste incinerator under construction on Presidents Island. RACE (Radiological Assistance, Consulting and Engineering, LLC) is a company that decontaminates equipment and other items used in nuclear reactors and other radiological services.

They've been in operation on Presidents Island since 1999. Now they want to start a radioactive waste incinerator. The Presidents Island area is an industrial corridor that is separated somewhat from southwest Memphis by McKellar Lake. Yet it is still close to two communities, French Fort and the Riverview-Kansas neighborhood.

ZONING USED AGAINST POOR PEOPLE

Presidents Island was zoned for industrial purposes and it was there before some of the residents. But now they want to have a say in what impacts their community. Zoning doesn't seem to work for poor people or people of color communities. We—the Sierra Club Environmental Justice Program in Memphis—are trying to work with communities that want to speak up and have a say in what happens in their neighborhoods.

These two communities came together about two years ago because of frustration with the oil refinery, and formed The Riverview Collaborative. It was revealed in the paper that the refinery had underreported emissions of benzene, a known carcinogen, for four years. They chose the name Riverview Collaborative to be broad enough to embrace any issue that came up—be it housing, zoning or jobs, to give voice to the community.

RACE received a construction permit to build the incinerator in February 2003. The question the community has is how did they get the permit in the first place?

We've had about three well-attended community meetings, about 80 people at each. There were so many comments, from long-time residents, people who've worked and lived in the area, schoolteachers, govern-

unusual punishment.

The definition of torture is not well understood, but a report in 1999 helped highlight things that were considered abusive, including the use of supermax prisons; chain gangs; punitive cell extractions; indefinite solitary confinement; even the use of stun belts, pepper spray, tasers and other "non-lethal" devices.

It should be understood that this report was not a result of allegations of torture at Guantanamo Bay or Abu Ghraib, but rather in American prisons, perpetrated against American citizens and INS detainees.

In 1995 the U.S. took the position that the Constitution adequately protected citizens against torture by prohibiting it, or any form of cruel and unusual punishment, when it submitted a report to the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, attempting to take the moral high road regarding the torture issue and supporting its stance to not ratify International Covenants. Congress set about abrogating the laws giving victims of abuse the ability to obtain effective judicial review.

In the 1990s under the Republican Bill Clinton, the war on crime was the defining factor of why such tactics had to be available to law enforcement; in the new century, the war on terror has become the supporting factor. And yet, one must ask: what is really gained by the use of torture? A recent program on Fox showed government agents using torture not only against imagined terrorists, but against their own people who allegedly were affiliated with terrorists.

One has to wonder why the moral Right did not complain about such actions as vehemently as they complained about the mini-second clothing malfunction of Janet Jackson that was showed more on the primetime news than appeared during the event.

ACCEPTABLE IN THE U.S.

Perhaps it is because torture has become an acceptable practice in the U.S. After all, only criminals and terrorists are tortured. Perhaps because there is no accountability on the part of government since torture has to be prosecuted by an assistant government attorney who would ultimately have to answer to the U.S. Attorney General who feels that torture is a justifiable action, especially in war. And perhaps the much-lauded American morality in such things has been eroded by government-instigated fear, instilled to cover up its shortcomings in trying to find a solution to an unsolvable dilemma.

Whatever the case or reason, if we are to subscribe to the concept of instilling democracy, justice, and equality around the world, then the examples of such processes cannot appear on the nightly news as unlabeled government jets whisking people off to undisclosed countries to be tortured secretly; and people cannot be disappeared in this country.

And equality and justice must appear—and be—just, for all the world to see, for moral imperatives are not electable concepts that are defined by politicians, regardless of who they are or what they purport to represent.

Torture, in any form and for any reason, is immoral.

ment people, a former worker at RACE. People wanted to know how RACE could get a permit and why they were being allowed to operate, especially after we discovered that they had been cited for 13 violations at the end of 2004 by TDEC (Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation). The violations had to do with radioactive material storage and handling, and monitoring the safety equipment for their workers.

A couple of community members at the first meeting got confrontational with a TDEC staff member. They wanted to know how much RACE would have to do before they would be shut down instead of just slapping them on the wrist.

The TDEC official was emphatic, saying that there wasn't any threat to human health. That really angered people. I said, that's unknown. They were taking a chance and treating the community and workers like guinea pigs. They made that statement without doing any testing.

Citizens are scared and concerned when they hear about radioactivity near their homes. They have two schools near RACE and thousands of people live in the area. We're not thinking that people will fall dead as soon as the incinerator starts up, but we are concerned about the cumulative effects along with other polluting companies in the area.

NO LEVEL OF RADIATION SAFE

Enough is enough. But even if we didn't have other pollution sources and RACE was sitting there by itself, there still would be the outrage and concern because of what RACE wants to do. Some research shows that no level of radiation exposure is safe.

It's important that people who live in low-income and people of color neighborhoods understand the power that they have and speak out and don't just give up and say those in power are gonna do what they're gonna do. Whether we win or lose this battle, people have grown, they will have learned things. But we definitely mean to stop this incinerator some kind of way.

—Rita Harris

Japanese-American fought government repression

The passing of Fred Korematsu on March 30, 2005 gives us pause for examining the struggle for freedom in this nation. Korematsu was one of three Nisei (second generation Japanese-American) men who gained notoriety through the "coram nobis" trials of the 1980s. A petition for *error coram nobis* (error before us), filed with the court that permitted the alleged error, is the only avenue of recourse open to those who have been convicted as charged, exhausted all appeals, and served their sentences. A granted petition means the court in question acknowledges a grave error was committed under its jurisprudence, and that a rationale for redress and reparations is hence plausible.

Fred Korematsu, Minoru Yasui and Gordon Hirabayashi filed the *coram nobis* petitions in hopes of overturning their convictions for violating exclusion zone restrictions and the curfew imposed by the War Relocation Authority (WRA) in 1942.

Just after the attack on Pearl Harbor all persons of Japanese descent on the West Coast were subject to an overnight curfew and confined to an area that included their residences. After the internment plan had been hatched, they were excluded by military order from the same areas and instructed to report to designated assembly centers.

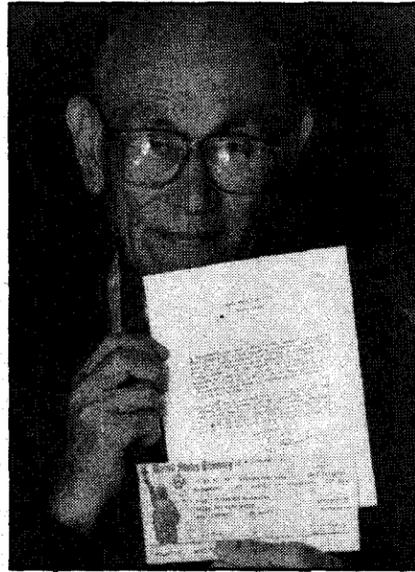
The *coram nobis* actions were prompted by the 1981 discovery of documents supporting the suspicion that racism lay behind the 1943 (Hirabayashi, Yasui) and 1944 (Korematsu) U.S. Supreme Court decisions upholding the respective lower court convictions. Peter Irons, a UC San Diego law professor who was researching the WWII internment of Japanese-Americans, found two crucial memoranda through the Freedom of Information Act. Both were from Edward Ennis, director of the Justice Department's Alien Enemy Control Unit (AECU), to Solicitor General Charles Fahy.

In the first memorandum, sent in time for the Hirabayashi and Yasui Supreme Court hearings, Ennis advised Fahy that the AECU had not yet found any evidence that Japanese-Americans had ever engaged in acts of disloyalty. Fahy was no more impressed than WRA commander Lt. General John DeWitt who said, "The very fact that no sabotage has taken place to date is a disturbing and confirming indication that such actions will be taken." Could this be

where Donald Rumsfeld got the inspiration for his WMD claim that "absence of evidence is not evidence of absence"? Fahy did not inform the Court. The Hirabayashi and Yasui convictions were upheld.

The second memorandum advised Fahy that the AECU had found Gen. DeWitt's "report" on espionage, sabotage and overt acts of treason committed by Japanese Americans to be a complete fabrication. Fahy submitted the report as evidence for the Korematsu Supreme Court hearing. The Court sustained Korematsu's conviction.

In November 1983, a month after the first *coram nobis* trial, San Francisco U.S. Judge Marilyn Patel ruled in favor of Korematsu, vacating his conviction and granting his petition. The "error" established that day was that the government withheld exculpatory evidence and provided misleading information to the Supreme Court. Patel expressed strong disfavor with Solicitor Gen. Fahy's malfeasance but duly noted that she had no authority to overturn the Dec. 18, 1944 decision on *Korematsu vs. U.S.* Later, in Portland, Min Yasui's conviction was also vacated but his petition for *error coram nobis* was not granted. He appealed to the Supreme Court but died two years later after hearing nothing from the Court. Hirabayashi's case, which



Fred Korematsu with reparations check in 1990.

Shirley Nakao/PBS/FOV

dragged on in Seattle for three years, eventually ended with his complete exoneration.

The *coram nobis* cases are widely considered a major civil rights triumph. Indeed they breathed new life into the campaign for Redress and Reparations, which culminated in the 1988 Civil Liberties Act.

The Act provided for a formal apology from the U.S. government to former internees along with \$20,000 cash, and the Civil Liberties Public Education Fund (CLPEF). The CLPEF gave financial impetus to the formation of many new Japanese-American organizations dedicated to encouraging former internees to share their stories with the public and with each other. Most of them had never even talked about the internment at home. For the first time, their children were learning through firsthand accounts what they may have heard about fleetingly, if at all, in a history class.

The "opening up" movement sweeping the traditionally reticent Nikkei (Japanese-American) community gave rise to a vibrant new voice of freedom that took its cue from Korematsu, Hirabayashi and Yasui. Within days of the September 11 horrors, Nikkei organizations in the San Francisco Bay Area such as Sansei Legacy Project, Nosei Network, and Tule Lake Committee issued public statements of solidarity with Arab, Middle Eastern, South Asian, and Muslim peoples. At rallies and in periodicals, on TV and over the radio, one heard Nikkeis denouncing racist scapegoating and the attack on Afghanistan.

Before the *coram nobis* trials, it is difficult to imagine Japanese-Americans stepping up so quickly and resolutely. At his memorial service in Oakland family members and friends described Korematsu as a quiet person with no great love of public speaking. Yet he pushed himself to speak out despite the worsening illnesses that finally took his life. In 2003, in the midst of a speaking tour to high schools, universities, law schools, and numerous venues where racial profiling, human rights and civil liberties were discussed, he reflected on his WWII experiences and remarked, "It's been 60 years since this happened, and it's happening again, and that's why I continue to talk about what happened to me."

—David Mizuno'Oto

Acheh still suffers from tsunami impact

Over three months after the tsunami devastated Aceh on Dec. 26, survivors are still suffering from inadequate food, medical care, and shelter. On top of that, people are suffering anew from repeated earthquakes. An early warning system was announced after the tsunami but was not put into effect. With each new earthquake, the people run in chaotic terror toward higher ground, without any plan, announcement or direction from officials. This must be causing great damage to already traumatized people.

There has been no rebuilding, and no building at all except for military barracks. Indonesia intends to force the refugees to occupy the barracks, under the watchful eye of the same military that has been oppressing them for years. All of Indonesia's plans for reconstruction are without consideration for what the Achenees want—which is especially to rebuild their homes.

The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) was going to spend \$60 million and take the lead in providing shelter to 100,000 victims of the disaster because of its expertise in dealing with emergency situations, but in March, Indonesia expelled the UNHCR, claiming that the victims of the tsunami are not "refugees" because they have not been forced to cross national borders. This is part of Indonesia's punishment of Aceh for demanding self-determination.

The Indonesian government had announced that all foreign aid workers should leave after three months, because so much would be accomplished that it could handle any remaining needs. Instead of accomplishing anything with the billions pledged from abroad, it has done nothing except issue blueprints. It is not even properly coordinating the emergency work; dead bodies are still being picked up without any system or attempt at identification, and the survivors are still suffering deprivations. Some foreign aid workers have been allowed to remain past the three-month deadline, but only for short periods.

Indonesia so dislikes having foreigners in Aceh because it wants to return to its war against the Achenees people, without scrutiny and with impunity for its past human rights abuses. It is against building homes for the people of Aceh because it wants to put

the homeless into military-controlled barracks, in the hopes of eradicating the movements that have been demanding independence or a referendum on Aceh's status.

Indonesia and the military arm of Aceh's independence movement, the Free Aceh Movement (known as GAM) held peace talks three times since the tsunami, but have not even accomplished a cease-fire. The military continues to wage war in the midst of the catastrophe, and is sending new troops to Aceh. Eight hundred new troops were sent April 18, with plans announced to send three more battalions, up to 3,000 men, to fight GAM.

Meanwhile, the main blueprint for Aceh, devised in Jakarta without consultation and rejected by Achenees students, NGOs, and ulama (Islamic scholars), does not even properly identify the areas that were hardest hit by the tsunami. According to Aceh Recovery Forum, a group led by an Indonesian member of parliament, the blueprint provides for 60% of reconstruction money to go for "security," and 70% of that to go for building military installations. Another report, from Transparency International, also says that the critical point of the blueprint is the construction of barracks to force the refugees to live in—and provides for a cost of 200,000,000 rupiah (\$18,000) for one set of barracks that in fact costs far less than that to build. The extra money is clearly meant for graft, which the Indonesian government and military are notorious for. When a local contractor who built one complex of barracks in Pidie was not paid by Indonesia, he refused to allow it to be occupied, leaving the refugees homeless.

The first thing Indonesia did after the tsunami was to strengthen its two military commands in Aceh, one for the west where most Achenees used to live, and the other for the east, where the multinational corporations are located. The reason given for dividing up the province is that GAM is hiding in the villages. One region was put under the command of Gen. Geerhan Lentara, who was responsible for the Santa Cruz massacre in East Timor, while the liaison officer for all of Aceh is Gen. Adam Damiri, who was actually convicted by an Indonesian court (later overturned) of conducting war crimes in East Timor.

Military commander Chairawan is now in charge of one of the two commands. He is the former commander of a group of Kopassus (Indonesian special forces) that was responsible for killing, kidnapping and torturing pro-reform activists in Jakarta in 1998, just before the fall of the Suharto dictatorship. The commander of Aceh during the martial law period (2003 until shortly after the tsunami), Endang Suwarya, has been promoted to vice-commander in chief of the whole Indonesian army.

—Acheh Center

Caterpillar's machines of death protested

MEMPHIS, TENN.—Two dozen activists from SUS-TAIN-Memphis (Stop U.S. Tax-funded Aid to Israel Now), the Mid-South Peace & Justice Center and other local organizations in the Memphis area staged a protest in April outside of a Thompson Machinery dealership, one of the largest distributors of Caterpillar equipment in the Mid-South.

The demonstrators were opposing Caterpillar's continued business relationship with the Israeli military, two years after American student and peace activist, Rachel Corrie, was murdered by the Israeli army using a D-9 Caterpillar bulldozer. Over the past 37 years, Caterpillar bulldozers have been used by the Israeli military to commit atrocities against the Palestinian people, ranging from the construction of illegal settlements and barriers to collective punishment—destruction of farmlands and homes, often while people were still in them.

The international human rights community is unanimous in its condemnation of Caterpillar's continued sales of bulldozers to the Israeli Military. Sarah Leah Whitson of Human Rights Watch said, "Caterpillar betrays its stated values when it sells bulldozers to Israel knowing that they are being used to illegally destroy Palestinian homes. Until Israel stops these practices, Caterpillar's continued sales will make the company complicit in human rights abuses."

For more on the campaign against Caterpillar's human rights violations, visit: www.stopcat.org or www.catdestroyshomes.org.

—Omar

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Student-activist alliance built into fall

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New Pope Benedict anoints religious fundamentalism

Continued from page 1

bishop Oscar Romero, was cruelly murdered by a military death squad in 1980, after calling upon rank-and-file soldiers to refuse to participate in the Army's violent repression of that country's Marxist-led revolutionary movement.

Everywhere, the proponents of liberation theology created "base communities," where laymen and women organized for social justice around the notion that Christian doctrine required standing beside the poor and oppressed. A major part of the origin of the Zapatista Movement in Chiapas lies within such communities.

Theology of liberation also found substantial support in Brazil, where it exercised an important influence within the Workers Party of Luis Ignacio "Lula" da Silva. Theology of liberation activists worked alongside Marxists in establishing Brazil's grassroots Landless Workers Movement (MST), which continues the anti-capitalist agenda that has been forsaken by Lula's Workers Party now that it is in power.

BOFF TOOK MEASURE OF JOHN PAUL II

Upon John Paul II's death, Leonardo Boff, one of the most important thinkers of the liberation theology movement, took the measure of his papacy. Boff, who was driven out of the clergy by the Vatican, wrote that John Paul II saw liberation theology as a "Trojan horse" for Communism:

"He convinced himself that in Latin America, Communism was the danger, whereas the true danger was savage and colonialist capitalism, with its anti-people and retrograde elites." To Boff, the root of Pope John Paul II's problem lay in his authoritarianism and elitism: "He took away the decision-making power from the synods of the bishops in subjecting them totally to papal authority, while at the same time limiting the power of the continental conferences of bishops, and of national ones. He marginalized the decision-making power of the laity, and denied the full citizenship of women in the Church community, relegating them to secondary positions, far from the altar and the pulpit."

"Like his principal counselor, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger [now Pope Benedict XVI], the Pope put forward an Augustinian vision of history, where what counts is only that which passes through the mediation of the Church, which carries with it the supernatural concept of salvation... This position led him to a total incomprehension of Latin American theology of liberation, which affirmed that their liberation should be the work of the poor themselves."

Boff concluded: "To the outside, he presented himself as a champion of dialogue, of liberty, tolerance, peace, and ecumenism, but within the Church he shuttered the right of expression, banned dialogue, and created a theology with powerful fundamentalist overtones" (*Le Monde*, April 7, 2005).

RELIGIOUS FUNDAMENTALISM

Boff is absolutely correct to link Pope John Paul II to religious fundamentalism. His accession in 1978 occurred during a period characterized by the rise of fundamentalism and intolerance in many societies. That year, Ayatollah Khomeini came to dominate the Iranian Revolution, before coming to power in 1979 and setting up a type of repressive theocracy that would have been unimaginable only a few years earlier.

During the same period, Protestant fundamentalists gained tremendous power in American politics, virulently anti-Muslim Hindu revivalists came to power in India, equally intolerant Jewish zealots became a decisive force in Israeli politics, and in the broader Muslim world, both Sunni and Shiite, a whole series of Islamic fundamentalist movements worked to supplant Marxism as ground for resistance to Western imperialism.

While John Paul II was not as openly reactionary as some of these currents, he and they could certainly unite around one point, hostility to the feminist movements of the 1960s and 1970s. According to Hans Küng, a liberal theologian at the University of Tübingen who was also driven out by the Vatican, "This Pope has waged an almost spooky battle against modern women who seek a contemporary form of life." As to Ratzinger, now Benedict XVI, his selection "will be considered by many Catholics to mean that the Church is absolutely unable to reform." (*New York Times*, April 20, 2005).

GENDER AND SEXUALITY

To become a bishop under John Paul II and Ratzinger, one had to have a history of uncompromising opposition to abortion, birth control, masturbation, premarital sex, divorce, homosexuality, married priests, female priests, euthanasia, and Marxism. Some progressives, for example in parts of the peace movement, have sought to play down these aspects and to stress John Paul II's opposition to war and capital punishment.

However, these stances did not prevent the Vatican from indirectly supporting George Bush's re-election campaign. It encouraged U.S. Church leaders to attack the mild liberalism of his opponent John Kerry, himself a Catholic, just as it had given tacit support to Reagan's wars in Latin America. As the man who is now Pope Benedict XVI put it last year, in a letter released during the U.S. election campaign: "Not all moral issues have the same moral weight as abortion and

euthanasia. For example, if a Catholic were to be at odds with the Holy Father on the application of capital punishment or on the decision to wage war, he would not for that reason be considered unworthy to receive Holy Communion."

Others have emphasized the Vatican's move away from its thousand-year-old ideology of anti-Semitism under John Paul II's papacy. But this is in keeping with a modern form of radical conservatism (as in the Reagan and Bush administrations) that has jettisoned the open anti-Semitism of the past and has allied itself firmly with the Israeli Right.

The spheres of gender and sexuality illustrate most clearly the retrogressive character of Pope John Paul II's theology, and that of his successor, Benedict XVI. It is here, above all, that the Vatican has lost support in the industrially developed West, and among youth. As the Chilean writer Ariel Dorfman recounted shortly after John Paul II's death, the pope addressed a stadium full of 100,000 youth in Chile in 1987, who joined him in renouncing the "demons" of avarice, greed, and war: "And then, the supreme pontiff got carried away, may have forgotten himself or who he was dealing with, how those youngsters had survived the years of tyranny. He asked that gathering of adolescents if they were ready to renounce the demons of sex—and there was no hesitation inside the genitals and heartbeat of those 100,000 bodies under the Andes, there was no hesitation in the 100,000 throats that shouted back: no!" (openDemocracy.net, April 8, 2005).

While religion expresses "the sigh of the oppressed," it does so in an alienated form, however, for religion is also "alienated self-consciousness," as Marx wrote in 1844. Often, it offers otherworldly solutions, for example, putting off the reckoning with oppression indefinitely.

These policies have had real effects, as *Guardian* columnist Polly Toynbee noted in 2003: "No one can compute how many people have died of AIDS as a result of [the pope's] power, how many women have died in childbirth needlessly, how many children starved in families too large and poor to feed them. But it is reasonable to suppose these silent, unseen, uncounted deaths at his hand would match that of any self-respecting tyrant or dictator... It makes the sickly homilies about his simple piety impossible to let pass unchallenged."

While they worked to hem in the freely expressed sexuality of youth and women, John Paul II and Benedict XVI have also sought to cover up decades of coerced sexuality within the Church, especially the sexual abuse of the young. Benedict XVI has even tried to blame these outrages on the sexual revolution of the 1960s! After Cardinal Bernard Law of Boston, whose diocese had the most flagrant and widespread sexual abuse of any in the U.S., was forced by public pressure to resign, he was kicked upstairs. As Law helped preside over John Paul II's funeral, anti-Law fliers were handed out by critics, who were quickly taken away by Vatican police.

John Paul II has also been praised for his stance against totalitarian Communism, especially in his native Poland. But even here, where it involved physical bravery and adherence to principle in the face of Stalinist repression, there was something more at stake than the fight for freedom with which he draped himself. From the beginning, Pope John Paul II sought to channel the oppositional movements under Communism away from the type of socialist humanism that characterized the internal opposition in Poland and especially Czechoslovakia in the 1960s.

By the 1980s, Pope John Paul II—although he was not alone in this—was part of the process through which Poland's Solidarnosc movement moved away from the earlier politics of socialist humanism, toward a "self-limiting revolution" aimed at Western-style capitalist "democracy and civil society." This helped to insure that Communism was replaced, not by a "socialism with a human face," but by a harsh form of capitalism. Later, John Paul II helped to give post-Communist Polish politics a decidedly rightward slant, espe-

cially on women's rights, while also being careful to discourage a return to the Polish Church's older politics of anti-Semitism.

RELIGION AND LIBERATION

How can anti-capitalist, peace, labor, feminist, and other movements for freedom respond to the Vatican's retrogressive politics? One danger to avoid here is the type of opportunism found in some sectors of the peace movement, where gender and sexuality are placed on the back burner in order to ally with religious conservatives against war. But an equally dangerous direction

would be a return to the Enlightenment-based and often positivist stance of the anti-clerical Left a century ago, which made atheism and science the central dividing line between Left and Right. This view was often linked to a notion of the backwardness of the peasantry, and of rural people more generally.

This was never Marx's position, although it was held by other socialists, like Ferdinand Lassalle. To be sure, Marx shared the Enlightenment view that religion

served as an ideological prop for class domination. This is behind his statement, in an 1843 critique of Hegel: "It is the opium of the people." Few are aware that Marx preceded this sentence with another, very different one: "Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world and the soul of soulless conditions."

This second (really first) critique of religion emphasizes that it also expresses opposition to oppression. Here lies one of the reasons why the Catholic Church has maintained its hold on sectors of the oppressed over the ages, allowing it to survive particular political forms—like the feudal lords of medieval Europe—whose power it once sanctified.

While religion expresses "the sigh of the oppressed," it does so in an alienated form, however, for religion is also "alienated self-consciousness," as Marx wrote in 1844. Often, it offers otherworldly solutions, for example, putting off the reckoning with oppression indefinitely.

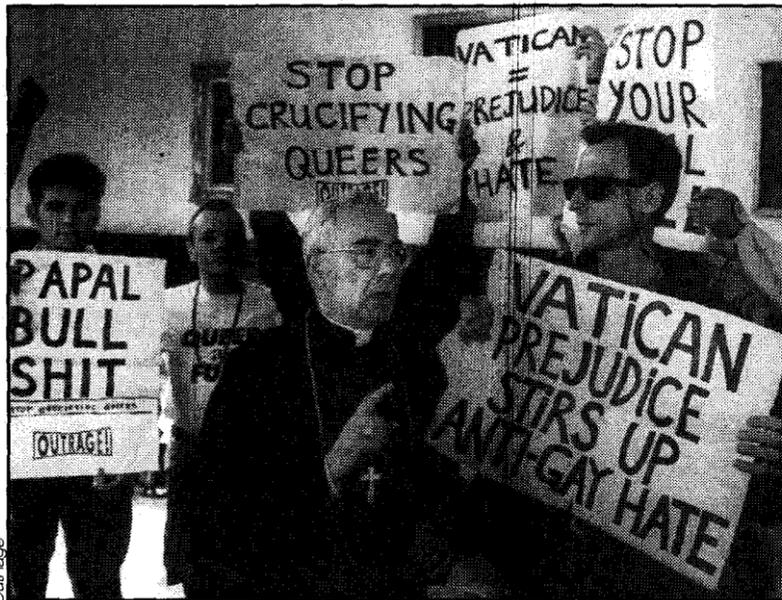
In its fundamentalist or reactionary manifestations, religion creates alienated channels for the expression of the anger of the oppressed. One example would be directing mass anger not against capitalism as such, but against "morally corrupt," or "greedy" capitalists. More ominously, it can target as ostensible oppressors the "irreligious"—or those of a different religion—as in Christian anti-Semitism. Or it can stir up murderous rage while espousing the sanctity of "life," as in the Terri Schiavo case.

However, not all expressions of religion as the "sigh of the oppressed" take such totally alienated forms. In the 1850s, Marx hailed the Taiping Rebellion a messianic peasant-based movement with some roots in Christianity—as revolutionary development that could shake up China and the world. More recently, with both Latin American theology of liberation and the U.S. Civil Rights Movement, some forms of religion have become part of the language of liberation.

Therefore, it is always important to view religion not as an undifferentiated expression of reaction, but as a multi-faceted phenomenon. Even in the Roman Catholic Church today, 27 years of Pope John Paul II, and the selection of Benedict XVI, cannot stamp out completely the fires of liberation theology, or the challenges of feminism and gay/lesbian liberation.

This is not to underestimate the danger of someone like John Paul II or Benedict XVI at the helm of the Roman Church. When such a person has had philosophical training, which is true of both men, the danger is all the greater. John Paul II tried to wrap himself in humanism in his notion of defending "life," as he likened war and capital punishment to "the legal extermination of the unborn," his abusive term for a woman's right to choose.

Moreover, he argued that the modern liberal notions of freedom and the subject were at the root of Nazism and Communism: "If man can decide himself, without God, what is good and evil, he can also conclude that a group of men should be exterminated." Here, John Paul II was able to wrap in philosophical humanist language a deep anti-humanism that denies the very basis of democracy. Instead, we need to "decide ourselves" to reject such a dehumanized worldview, in favor of one based on the "actual corporeal human being, standing on firm and well-rounded earth, inhaling and exhaling all natural forces" (Marx, 1844 *Manuscripts*).



At the Vatican Embassy in London in the 1990s, a reality check: Pope John Paul II's church was hostile to AIDS victims and aligned with violence against gays and lesbians.

YOUTH

Is Marx's view of socialism relevant?

by Josh Skolnik

Recently, while engaged with the News and Letters Committees class series, "Beyond Capitalism," I also read some of Hegel, Marx, and later dialecticians with students who, having read *Capital*, now wish to know more about "Marx's method." These two very different discussions made me realize that while attention to method is important, one must consider the motivations behind such a search and take care not to substitute some other method for Marx's own. Dialectical method is not something that can be extracted from the exposition and goals of Marx's work. It requires understanding how his works fit into a body of ideas that is inseparable from his philosophy of revolution.

People who look for Marx's "method" are usually seeking a magic formula for unlocking profound analyses of whatever strikes their fancy. What many, it seems, seek in Marx is a mere tool for understanding the immediate social world. This proves inadequate, if not diversionary, for answering the questions of the day. It causes one to skip over the work needed to grasp Marx's philosophy of revolution, which is the missing ingredient in past revolutions.

One need also be aware of a different conception of method that places less weight on the starting point of the investigation, and more on its result, the goal of transforming reality. To develop Marx's work in new directions requires, as with any scientific theory, paying utmost attention to it as a totality, which must include grasping its conception of a new society.

Yet most students I spoke with treated the need to conceive a new society with dogmatic skepticism. In the interest of discovering his "method," they wished to put to the side, at least for now, the central question of the absolute transcendence of capitalism and what that entails, in favor of a theory of contradiction and struggle.

When I pointed out that Marx's standpoint was akin to the absolute at the end of Hegel's philosophical system—the unity of theory and practice, subjectivity and objectivity, as well as a historical totality that includes past, present, and future—the idea was summarily dismissed. Few believe that something as "abstract," mystical and seemingly inconsequential as the absolute

Protests on second anniversary of Iraq war

CHICAGO—In Chicago, thousands of people demonstrated against the war and occupation of Iraq March 19. The police made everyone assemble in designated areas. While they enforced conformity at the protest, participants had diverse views with quite different demands. There were wide differences about how to end the occupation and about which parts of the resistance to support.

Unfortunately it seems that ever since the first anti-war and anti-occupation demonstrations two years ago, most organizers have not emphasized the difference between the importance of supporting the people's rightful struggle against the U.S.-led occupiers and the significance of condemning the reactionary despotic regimes, the pro-autocratic Ba'athists, fanatic Bin Ladenists and other versions of theocratic fundamentalists. Some have even honored Bin Laden and Saddam Hussein as anti-imperialist heroes. They walked side by side with the progressive and democratic-minded leftists who condemned both the imperialist war and occupation as well as the reactionary objectives of the repressive regimes and groups in the region.

It would be reasonable to believe that real aspirations for peace, independence and liberty would be based on fundamental demands in which one could tell the difference between libertarian anti-imperialism, on the one hand, and regressive anti-modernism and mere anti-Americanism on the other.

Fortunately a number of progressive Iranians, along with many others, carried banners which were responsive to larger issues: No to war, No to imperialist occupation, No to theocracy, No to tyranny and Yes to freedom and independence, Yes to democracy and civil liberties. We need to cope with politics in their international entirety.

—Iranian activists

MEMPHIS, TENN.—In concert with hundreds of other communities across the country on March 19, 300 Memphians marched through Midtown to let Bush and his right-wing administration know that we oppose his war that has killed hundreds of thousands of Iraqis and over 1,500 U.S. soldiers and wounded tens of thousands more. Organizers of the demonstration, including the Mid-South Peace and Justice Center, were surprised and thrilled with the turnout, as it showed so

would have made it into Marx's "social theory."

HOSTILITY TO HEGEL

There aren't too many Marxists who do not adhere to Engels' separation of Hegel's revolutionary method from his "conservative" system. What they fail to understand is that Hegel's method and system are one. What Marxists—of both the Soviet and Western varieties—have dogmatically done to Hegel, they have, by extension, also done to Marx, thereby failing to understand his method by pushing off into the distance the very standpoint of the future society that necessarily grounds his specific critique of the present.

Conceiving of a new society plays a key role in Marx's unique path toward closing the gap between theoretical and practical movements, resulting in socialism. Marx's work follows in the line of great philosophers who attempted to answer the question, "Can humanity be free?" It would be a shame to ignore him as many do Hegel, leaving the implications of his proposed solution undeveloped for our age.

In order to realize the goal of human emancipation and not rest content with a mere social critique of the present that can very easily fall into utopian, reformist or even reactionary positions, we must address the question of how a new mode of production is possible. While this is not sufficient for building a full society of free individuals, it must, according to Marx, be the ground of such a society. Thus Marx spent decades grasping the nature of the capitalist mode of production and offers a good idea of what it is not, thus further intimating a new society.

Marx felt it necessary to integrate this idea into a political organization. With theoretical results garnered from his decades of research, he critiqued the Gotha Program, the founding document of German Social Democracy, for falling short on this point. That this critique flows directly from his method makes it all the more striking when some people declare that his *Critique of the Gotha Program*, which lays out a conception of how relations of production and distribution must be altered, actually violates Marx's "method." The familiar reason is given that it is for workers to decide. Yet given the premise that people

clearly that time has not meant acceptance of his policies.

Demonstrators did not confine themselves to only being against the war on Iraq. People also carried signs opposing many of his policies, including on education and his attempt to destroy Social Security.

On a gorgeous spring day, we marched for two and a half miles through the town, ending up at Veterans Plaza at Overton Park where we heard music, radical poetry and speakers. The most moving was a woman from Military Families Speak Out, who brought home to us the toll the war is taking on U.S. families. There were a lot of teenagers at the march and it was clear they had made their own signs. One read: "End this bullshit war now."

—Terry Moon

DETROIT—I participated in an anti-war march and rally on March 18. The march was from the Spirit of Detroit statue at the Coleman A. Young (City Hall) on Woodward to Grand Circus Park where a roll call of 150 Michigan soldiers killed in the war was read. Speakers included Bishop Thomas

Gumbleton, Rev. Harry Cook and Rev. Ed Rowe. Maureen Taylor (a welfare rights activist and a candidate for City Council) also spoke.

Camilo Mejia, a young Hispanic sergeant and conscientious objector to the Iraq war who was just released from a year in jail spoke. Bishop Gumbleton appealed for funds to aid him. The sergeant said, "I realized that I was part of a war that I believed was immoral and criminal, a war of aggression, a war of imperial domination...I decided that I could not return to Iraq. By putting my weapon down, I chose to reassert myself as a human being...behind those bars I sat a free man because I listened to...the voice of my conscience."

Speakers also read representative names for the estimated 120,000 Iraqi victims of the war; including those murdered by Saddam Hussein and his regime. The message was anti-U.S., but stressed the need to bring the country to look out for the needs of common citizens and residents. They addressed also issues stemming from Detroit's budget deficit; proposed cutbacks in bus service, and drastic layoffs of city workers and teachers. Upwards of 600 people were in attendance at the church but there was little or no major press coverage.

—Ray B.

think, and need a general idea of where they are headed, before they act, we can no longer place on their backs the whole burden of solving such problems in the moment. There is no reason that workers cannot be involved in this thought process now.

CHALLENGES OF A NEW SOCIETY

Many still think the problems of constructing a truly new society will be solved during the ample time of a long transitional society after workers take power. But it would take a miracle for the totalizing logic of capital and its law of value to be phased out gradually or to admit of a purely political solution like taking power or building sites of counter-power. There will likely be little time to do what we must to keep capitalism from reintroducing itself. The problem is difficult enough if we lack answers, but is made impossible if we lack even the right questions. Raising the right questions and working out some probable answers now must form part of the revolutionary process. In this way ideas become a force (and impetus) for revolution.

Humanity seems unlikely to make a revolution, if people expect it will fail as massively as in the past. They seem unwilling to accept the article of faith that it will be a long process that we will make up as we go along. Everywhere today people discuss the possibility of life beyond capitalism. Concretizing Marx's concept of a new society seems to me to be the most relevant way of following his method.

Bush visit protest

MEMPHIS, TENN.—George Bush came here in March to try to sell his privatized Social Security plan. We came out about 200 strong on a chilly morning—activists, working people, Black, white, young, old, and in between—showing the diversity of people and reasons to oppose the divvying up of the diminishing social safety net that is left in this country.

We all met at a local bar near where Bush was going to be pontificating, and staged a rally sponsored by, among others, the Mid-South Peace and Justice Center, AFL-CIO, the newly formed Democracy for Memphis, and News and Letters Committees. The Shelby County Democratic Party helped "organize" the event, which really means attempted to siphon the energy of everyone there into run-of-the-mill party politics.

While yet another representative of some district or another was getting up to speak, someone yelled something like, "Hey, Bush and the cameras are out there down the street, let's quit talking to ourselves and show them what we think!" It captured the energy perfectly and we rolled out of the bar, leaving the politicians looking kind of perplexed.

We weren't sure about how close we could get to Bush's sermon, so we split up in two groups and took the long way around the block. It turns out that the police let us get pretty close, and we ended up meeting right in front of the building, turning the plaza into a singing and chanting anti-Bush parade.

Many I talked to there were above the supposed age of those who will be affected by any privatization of Social Security, in a show of inter-generational solidarity. And the many of us who would almost definitely be affected showed by our signs and chants that we weren't narrowing it down to a question of only Social Security. The awareness of some of us younger people about the system and what it wants to do with our hard-earned money and hard-spent time is just what people like Bush don't want to see, because it would mean some kind of discourse was taking place among those his policies affect.

—Brown Douglas

50 years of News & Letters

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duction to this work I made clear the indispensability of a new type of relationship of practice to theory, a new unity of theory and practice: "No theoretician, today more than ever before, can write out of his own head. Theory requires a constant shaping and reshaping of ideas on the basis of what the workers themselves are doing and thinking." It was this which led me, in dedicating the work to "the auto workers, miners, steelworkers and student youth who have participated so fully in the writing of this book," to declare them to be "its co-authors." *News & Letters* further deepened this new relationship between workers and intellectuals on the basis of what *Marxism and Freedom* had established.

Before the 1950s would end, all of us would be put to a new test, which, on the one hand, showed the emergence of a Third World in its colonial revolutions and, on the other hand, a new counter-revolution in the coming to power of DeGaulle.

NOTES

1. I have read innumerable "erudite," "scholarly" studies that speak of Koinange's book as if the date it was finally published commercially was the time when the story of the Mau Mau struggle was revealed. The truth is that we had tried very hard to get an established publisher before we undertook our own publication. Koinange thought he had Nehru's promise to do so. But indeed, other than ourselves, none were willing to undertake publication.
2. How long was it before Jesse Jackson made a category out of "We Are Somebody"? By then Dunbar had changed the title of her column to emphasize its international dimension, calling it "Way of the World."



Students against Iraq war and Bush agenda in Memphis.

OUR LIFE AND TIMES

by Kevin A. Barry

Iraq: fundamentalism, sectarian conflict

The period after Iraq's January elections has been one characterized by sectarian violence, material privation and a deep skepticism towards the country's new leaders. The unexpectedly large number of people who cast ballots in January had great expectations that the politicians they elected to the national assembly would deliver both the security and the reconstruction projects so sorely needed by Iraq's people. The prolonged deliberations over the makeup of the new government, however, along with the absence of any con-

French student revolt

French high school students have been demonstrating since February against the conservative government's education "reforms." These measures would move the curriculum further away from critical thinking and toward the requirements of capital. In addition, the new continuous assessment plan, which would go alongside the baccalaureate exam, would put more power in the hands of administrators, who could easily penalize "troublesome" or minority students.

Some 160,000 students took to the streets across France on March 8. This demonstration was preceded by two equally large ones in February. This is a new generation of student activists, who became politicized during the protests against the Iraq war and those against the neo-Nazi National Front. The High School Action Committees have been coordinating the protests, taking the leadership away from the traditional student organizations. There is a strong Marxist and anarchist presence in these Committees.

By April, the government had not budged and the movement began to wind down. Nonetheless, students began to occupy dozens of high schools. While this movement may have been defeated, it seems to have fostered the growth of a new generation of radicals.

Mass protests oust Ecuador's president

Weeks of massive demonstrations in Quito, in April, resulted in the ouster of President Lucio Gutiérrez, both hero of and subsequently traitor to the January 2000 near-revolution, where even greater popular forces had induced President Mahuad to flee the country and had gained temporary control of the Congress.

Gutiérrez' improbable election to the presidency in 2002 reflected nothing less than the hunger of the Ecuadorian masses for fundamental change. His betrayal came quickly, taking the form of playing lapdog to the U.S. and the IMF by continuing the previous government's neo-liberal crippling economic policies, working toward a free trade treaty and continuing its military alliance with the U.S.

He ensured his own downfall last December by engineering a deal with the most corrupt elements of Congress that resulted in the unconstitutional replacement of the entire Supreme Court and the return to the country from exile of Abdalá Bucaram, the despised ex-President who was deposed in 1997. Upon Bucaram's return, demonstrations began on a daily basis in Quito.

Protests throughout the capital included many youth from the high schools and universities. Largely leaderless, they clanged pots and pans and honked horns in front of Gutiérrez' home and the Supreme Court building, symbols of the government's corruption. Mobilizations were organized with cell phones and use of the Internet. The protesters were given impetus by a popular radio station, La Luna, which reported critically on events, including police use of tear gas to intimidate the marchers (two deaths were reported, including a Chilean journalist). The station

crete gains resulting from them, dissipated the feelings of enthusiasm.

The outcome of the negotiations did result in one historic achievement. Jalal Talabani, the leader of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, was designated as Iraq's new president. Iraq's large Kurdish minority voted solidly for the united list of Kurdish nationalist candidates in the elections, resulting in a showing second only to the Shi'a list endorsed by the influential Ayatollah Sistani. The election of a Kurd to the presidency brings a symbolic end to the intense strife between Iraq's central government and the Kurdish people that dates back to the aftermath of the 1958 revolution.

A prominent Islamic politician, Ibrahim Jafari, was selected by the Shi'a list as prime minister. While Jafari claims that he will not press for Islamic law to be central to the new constitution, the strength of the conservative religious forces in the new assembly ensures that the battle over the role of Islam in the public life of Iraq will be intense.

Additionally, the informal Islamicization of the country continues. The southern city of Basra, for example, has been all but turned over by the British army to Shi'a fundamentalist militias. One of these militias carried out an attack on a large university student gathering in a public park in March. The fundamentalists objected to the mixing of men and women.

Behind all the political maneuverings in the national assembly, the U.S. military presence remains as strong as ever. In addition to being unable to maintain rudimentary security on the streets of Baghdad or any other Iraqi city, the U.S. continues to cancel or scale back reconstruction plan after reconstruction plan. Energy, water, and waste projects have all been abandoned due to the enormous cost of the military aspect of the U.S. invasion.

A recent U.S. Army inquiry exonerated all officers of the torture at Abu Ghraib, effectively sweeping the

entire matter under the rug. The issue of prisons in Iraq remains alive though, as a number of riots have swept through the enormous open air prison camps maintained by the U.S. to house the men swept up in their door-to-door anti-insurgent raids.

The most serious development since the elections is the steady transformation of the anti-U.S. insurgency into an open sectarian war against the Shi'a majority. Mosque bombings, assassinations and mass killings are beginning to overtake the place of attacks on American troops and convoys in the tactics of the Sunni insurgents. The anxiety and uncertainty surrounding the stadium massacre in Haditha, in which a large number of Shi'a fishermen were murdered, and the Madaen kidnapping event and the subsequent discovery of large numbers of bodies in the Tigris, point to the real possibility of civil war breaking out, a goal perhaps not unwelcome to the insurgent forces.

— Kevin Michaels

China tensions

Chinese demonstrators staged militant protests in Shanghai and other cities, for two weeks in April, against Japan's continuing denial of its war crimes during World War II. These involved massacres, mass rape, sexual slavery, forced labor, and biological experiments on human beings. However, under Japan's conservative government, the newest school textbooks have reduced rather than increased the coverage of these war crimes, passing them off with euphemisms such as "incident" instead of "invasion." Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi has also been making an annual visit to the infamous Yakushiji shrine, where several convicted war criminals are buried.

The new Chinese protests were far from spontaneous, however. They were orchestrated by the state, and have more to do with today than the past. China is hoping to take over Japan's position as the leading economic and military power in Asia. It opposes the idea of admitting Japan to the UN Security Council and was outraged when Japan joined with the U.S. in a pro-Taiwan statement. For its part, Japan announced that it wants to change its postwar pacifist constitution, allowing it more leeway for military action abroad.

China has also shored up its ties with India, its second largest trading partner. During an April visit to India by Wen Jibao, the leaders of these two fast-growing economies pledged to increase trade and moved toward solving their longstanding border disputes. India agreed publicly that Tibet is part of China, while China hinted that it might support an Indian bid to join the UN Security Council.

Many have suggested that the Chinese government is also using the anti-Japan protests to defuse social tensions at home, of which there is no lack. Just as the anti-Japan protests started, tens of thousands of people staged a brief uprising in Huaxi, a village in Zhejiang Province. This occurred after police attacked a group of elderly villagers, who were protesting against severe pollution. "The air stinks from the factories. We cannot grow our crops," one villager told the press. Corrupt local officials refuse to do anything because they own shares in the factories. When rumors spread that police had killed two elderly women, thousands took over the village, forcing officials to hide in a school.

Also in April, some 2,000 retired soldiers demonstrated for two days in Beijing to protest their meager pensions. A few months ago in Sichuan Province, thousands of protesters burned government buildings and vehicles after a wealthy official threatened to kill a porter who had accidentally bumped the official's wife with the load he was carrying. The risk for the regime is, rather than defusing these tensions, the anti-Japan protests could turn against targets closer to home.

broadcast the government's statements and then opened its microphones to demonstrators in the streets. When Gutiérrez characterized the protesters as "forajitos" (delinquents), everyone from high school students to nuns joined the "movimiento de forajitos."



Demonstrators march on Ecuador's Presidential palace.

The two major political parties most threatened by Bucaram's return (the centrist Izquierda Democrática and the far right Social Christians), jumped on the bandwagon, sponsoring demonstrations in Quito and Guayaquil. When the military withdrew its support of Gutiérrez on April 20, he abandoned his post. In defiance of the popular demand, "que se vayan todos" ("out with them all," including Bucaram and the Congress), the Congress met and appointed Gutiérrez' vice president, Alfredo Palacio, to the presidency.

For the time being it appears that the established powers have the situation in hand, but the passion of the masses for a new society that reflects human values cannot be held in check indefinitely.

—R.H.

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.