

# NEWS & LETTERS

THEORY / PRACTICE

"Human power is its own end" —Karl Marx

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## WORKSHOPTALKS

### Profits and MRSA rise

by Htun Lin

The much-heralded healthcare reform bill that is finally coming out of Congress puts some limits on insurance companies. But those few restrictions pale in comparison to major provisions that will create a boon for the industry. The compromise legislation is mostly a product of deal making meant to placate right-wing and corporate interests. The central issue is, who will pay for reform. It is workers who got stuck with the tab, not only through their surplus labor in the form of taxes but in more concrete ways not even addressed.

While President Obama and Congress were obsessing over cost issues, real healthcare reform is an ongoing struggle among those who deliver care on the shop floor all across the country. Workers have been struggling for the right to provide quality care for the last two decades, while healthcare restructuring only focused on cutting costs. That has been a recurring story at Kaiser, the HMO where I work, which is considered one of the most efficient "low cost" providers. Under the new mandate that nearly everyone buy insurance, Kaiser is poised to gain millions of those newly insured.

The pharmaceutical industry is also anticipating a windfall from the healthcare bill, which they helped write, and which prohibits consumer co-ops from seeking cheaper prices from other than U.S. companies. It is a monopoly with deadly consequences.

Whatever bill passes, it will not change the daily battle over miserable shop floor conditions produced

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## BLACK/REVIEW

by John Alan

### The socialism of Hubert Harrison

*Editor's note: We print John Alan's column from the Jan.-Feb. 2004 News & Letters to commemorate Black History Month and to complement the review of a new work about Hubert Harrison reviewed on page 8.*

A *Hubert Harrison Reader*, edited with Introduction and Notes by Jeffrey B. Perry (Wesleyan University Press: Middletown, Conn., 2001, 505 pp.) is an extensive collection of articles from various journals and newspapers written by Hubert Harrison (1883-1927). Born in the Danish West Indies island of St. Croix, he arrived in New York City in 1900 where he continued his education, mostly on his own. He was a speaker for the Socialist Party and then for the Industrial Workers of the World in the New Jersey Silk Strike of 1913. He became a street corner orator in New York in the 1920s, usually drawing a big crowd.

#### RACE AND CLASS STRUGGLE

His pervasive presence as a soapbox speaker led him to be called "the father of Harlem radicalism." He was a major African-American intellectual and activist who combined a passionate concern over race and class issues.

As a member of the Socialist Party he challenged it to confront U.S. racism. "Socialism," he wrote, "is

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*Dialectics of freedom movements*p. 5 *Automation and Marxist-Humanism's birth*p. 12 *Haiti's unnatural disaster*ONLINE: [www.newsandletters.org](http://www.newsandletters.org)

## Copenhagen climate summit sabotages humanity's future

by Franklin Dmitryev

National Co-Organizer, News and Letters Committees

The collapse of climate change negotiations in Copenhagen proclaimed the bankruptcy, not only of the rulers of the 192 nations meeting there, but of the system they represent. Aside from deviously worded financial pledges, the Copenhagen Accord—described by President Obama as an "unprecedented breakthrough"—contains no specific commitments and no binding mechanisms, no quantitative goals or deadlines. Nations' specific pledges of action were the same the day after the summit ended as the day before it started, leaving the world, according to scientists, on track to a far greater warming than the 2 degrees Celsius that the Accord has in "view."

Even 2 degrees of warming would leave whole countries vanishing below the oceans and vast dislocation and suffering in many African and Asian countries. That is why over 100 nations called instead for a goal of no more than 350 parts per million of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent, to limit temperature rise to 1.5 degrees. This empty Accord echoes the 1992 Climate Convention, which the U.S. gutted. As against the 1992 commitment to reduce world carbon dioxide emissions back to 1990 levels by 2000, emissions in 2000 were up by 12% over 1990; 2007 emissions were up 38%.

That is why "System change, not climate change" was a pervasive slogan at the protests that occurred in Copenhagen each day of the Dec. 7-19 negotiations. They brought out youth calling for the end of a system hurtling toward climate chaos; workers demanding "green jobs"; farmers opposing corporate land grabs, industrialization of farming, and "agro-fuels"; environmentalists pointing to the rising toll of extinctions and the impact of climate change on human health; Indigenous peoples demanding recognition of their land stew-

ardship, as opposed to "protection" that earns "carbon credits" by turning forests into plantations and expelling the inhabitants; people from small island nations denouncing meager goals as a "suicide pact."

#### PROTESTS PROLIFERATE

All these forces came together for the Dec. 12 march of 100,000. That day 130 cities worldwide saw coordinated events. Many more protests preceded the negotiations. Previously, a day of action was held on the tenth anniversary of the Nov. 30, 1999, Battle of Seattle outside the World Trade Organization negotiations, connecting "climate justice" today to the emergence of anti-globalization as a mass movement then.

Actions ranged from a rally and blockade at the Chicago Climate Exchange, a center of carbon emissions trading, to a sit-in at the office of Canada's Finance Minister, a proponent of extracting oil from Alberta's tar sands.

In Copenhagen, there were protests both outside and inside the conference. On Dec. 16, 200 demonstrators inside. Police wielding pepper spray, tear gas and

clubs blocked them from joining 2,000 marching outside. The 2,000 held a "people's assembly" in the streets, deliberating on ways to "build an alternative" to the present system.

The extraordinary arrest of 1,800 protesters, the exclusion of 20,000 credentialed activists from official proceedings, the walkouts by delegates from Africa, island nations, and other vulnerable countries—all reveal the force the U.S. and other top powers exerted to control the outcome and prop up their global domination. Well before the summit began, President Obama declared that there would be no binding climate deal at Copenhagen. The U.S. has gutted any potential agreement beyond the most paltry measures to reduce emissions, ever since the first try at the 1992 Earth

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100,000 marched in Copenhagen during the climate change summit.

## EDITORIAL

### Real state of the union

One year ago saw the historic inauguration of Barack Obama as the first Black president of the U.S., with a mandate for change, against the backdrop of the most serious capitalist crisis in decades. The spirit of the massive outpouring for Obama lives on, as seen in the tremendous concern and aid pouring in for earthquake-devastated Haiti. But much of what he has done, and failed to do, has demonstrated the limitations of his "pragmatism" and of bourgeois electoral politics. Last year has been stark proof of the need to grasp Marxist-Humanism's view of the ongoing revolutionary Black Dimension.

For example, Obama's healthcare plan, while better than nothing, falls far short of what single-payer advocates had hoped to see. In one aspect, it is a concession to the insurance industry and simply kicks the can down the road without resolving the healthcare crisis. It also bows to right-wing religious fanatics, in the Stupak-Pitts Amendment and other efforts to prohibit insurance coverage for abortion (see "Obama's pragmatism betrays women," p. 2).

Obama also packed his White House team with Wall Street insiders. It underlines the way the massive bailout of those capitalist institutions, considered "too big to fail," has not extended to the public. Unemployment remains steady at an official 10% which would be much higher if discouraged workers were counted. Last month 800,000 of them dropped off the statistics.

Brutal realities lay behind those bare numbers. Homelessness and hunger are increasing. Demands on food banks are at an all-time high. Home foreclosures continue to increase.

#### THE LOGIC OF CAPITAL DOMINATES

In short, the election of President Obama hasn't repealed the logic of capitalism. It also didn't repeal the logic of imperialism, as he has continued and even intensified the wars he inherited from George W. Bush.

The U.S. occupation continues in Iraq. President Obama has also escalated the ongoing war in Afghanistan, with a new "surge" of tens of thousands of U.S. troops. He has extended the war to Pakistan, with drone strikes that killed some Taliban and al-Qaeda figures, but many more civilians. There is growing anger at these strikes within Pakistan. Most recently, this endless war has been extended to Yemen, with the introduction of U.S. air strikes along with military advisers. (See "Yemen in U.S. sights," p. 12.)

New missile sales to Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and the United Arab Emirates have continued the militarization of Middle Eastern politics and life. These arms are meant to threaten Iran—and not only the current regime. The reactionary nature of the governments involved guarantee that these missiles will target any new government that might replace the current reactionary Iranian regime, particularly if it is a

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# Obama's pragmatism betrays women

by Terry Moon

Abortion rights—women's right to control our bodies, without which women are not free—ends up being what Democrats, led by Obama, are willing to ditch to get their "historic" healthcare bill passed. Why couldn't the debate around the odious Stupak-Pitts amendment, and Senator Ben Nelson's anti-abortion demands, be seen by the Obama Administration as an opportunity to educate not only Congress but the U.S. population?

## WHEN ABORTION IS ILLEGAL, WOMEN DIE

When abortion was illegal in the U.S., over 5,000 women died from back-alley and butcher abortions each year and thousands more were mutilated. The 1976 Hyde Amendment barring the use of federal funds to pay for abortions, made it very difficult for poor women to terminate a pregnancy. The new healthcare legislation escalates this attack on a poor woman's right to control her body. Rather than fight this outrage, we're given debates about how this fundamental restriction on women's rights really won't change the status quo because it mostly affects poor women and they didn't have insurance to pay for an abortion anyway. As if that makes it OK!

One can't help but wonder: what, if anything, would Obama fight for? He doesn't seem to get it. One has to fight for principles because they have consequences. The worst consequence of this latest, successful, attack on abortion rights, is that more women, children and families will suffer—especially now when the U.S. population is experiencing almost unprecedented levels of unemployment, homelessness, hunger and impoverishment. **For example, because of the worsening economy, abortions in Illinois have reached a 10-year high. Abortions grew at the fastest rate among girls 14 years old and younger. It is these children, many of whom are poor, who will be forced to carry a pregnancy to term, forced to get a more dangerous later-term abortion as they take time to try to scrape up the necessary money, turn to a cheaper back-alley abortion, or try to abort themselves.**

Abortion is a legal and necessary part of women's

## Abortion in Mexico

**Mexico City**—Abortion is stigmatized in Mexico, opposed by the argument of "preservation of life." But there is a double standard. The PAN (Party of National Action, the current party in power) does nothing to secure a life free of violence for the children. They are everywhere living on the street, or sexually exploited.

The State believes itself the owner of Mexican women's bodies and free will; presently, women can be incarcerated for having an abortion. We view this as fascist. During the PAN's two six-year stints in power, the far Right unleashed the most serious scandals, including child pornography and molestation, and a rise in out-and-out femicide.

**Women continue to die because of botched back-alley abortions done by crooks who are sheltered by the State. When becoming a mother is obligatory, women are reduced to the role of procreators, obligated by law and custom. The media shapes public opinion by demonizing abortion. Women in Mexico live in a state of economic crisis, which compels them to make these decisions.**

Wouldn't it be better if the State took it upon itself to promote sex education and prevention? There's an embedded stubbornness around teaching sex education in schools. The State argues it would encourage kids to have sex at a younger age. Youth are denied a responsible sexual dimension to their lives and made to think of sexuality as taboo, dirty and perverse.

Having an abortion is a decision that isn't easy for anyone. We are defending the decriminalization of abortion. We aren't criminals, we are women defending our bodies and decisions.

**In Mexico they won't catch drug traffickers, rapists, or murderers, but don't hesitate to hunt down women who have just made what is probably the most difficult decision of their lives. Women are labeled "crazy" and "murderers" when they don't want to be mothers because of lack of economic resources; or when their pregnancy is the result of rape; or the baby won't survive the pregnancy. The State forces women to carry fetuses to term that are products of rape. It's a crime to be a woman, and to be a poor woman is a thousand times worse.**

The state cannot meet the basic demands of society: education, housing, food, democracy, justice, health, peace, freedom, dignity, work, autonomy. They don't have any justification to criminalize what is in the end a decision for women to make about our own bodies.

We are not political capital to be given and taken away, we are owners of our own bodies.

—Raquela Vázquez and Yosahdara Vega

Translated from Spanish by Brown Douglas

healthcare. It is incredibly demeaning to require us to make out two separate monthly payments—one for all insurance coverage except abortion and one for abortion coverage, as Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid's proposal mandates—if we're lucky enough to even find a plan that will cover abortion with these outrageous requirements. But such a requirement is a bonus for anti-abortion fanatics who see it as one more way to try to make abortion unthinkable.

From the very beginning there has been so much wrong with this healthcare bill that Obama is touting. He began by banning from the discussion advocates of single-payer healthcare, then gave up the public option insurance alternative, and then granted Big Pharma their wish to bar the importation of cheaper drugs from Canada. Big Pharma and the insurance industry spent an unprecedented hundreds of millions of dollars to get what they wanted—and they did, buying the healthcare bill that they wanted, not that we needed.

## DEMOCRATS SOLD OUT WOMEN'S LIVES

But women lost out on abortion, not only because of millions spent. The anti-abortion movement did spend millions, as did the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, which has the Catholic Church's fortunes behind them. Though that is a factor, we are saddled with a punitive healthcare bill because Democrats caved on whatever principles they had, because they played politics with women's bodies as the Democratic National Committee gave the green light to fund the campaigns of highly ideological anti-abortionists like Ben Nelson and other so-called Blue Dog Democrats.

**This has always been an ideological battle between those for women's freedom and those who do not believe women are full human beings who have a right to control our own bodies, those who think a fetus has as much or more legitimacy than a woman. That is why Obama's philosophy of pragmatism is such a fatal flaw. He is so busy being concerned with "what works," and busy deluding himself and his Democratic cronies that this kind of halfway healthcare bill is a real victory, rather than a band-aid on a hemorrhaging America, that he has not only squandered the opportunity he did have to push through a healthcare bill that might have actually meant real change, he has set back women's rights and freedom and made our struggle for a truly new human society more difficult.**

Women's groups are frantically calling their membership to flood representatives with demands to kill the Stupak-Pitts amendment and vote down Reid's so-called compromise. And whereas it is yet to be finally decided as we go to press, these same groups are already resigning themselves to failure.

As we continue this struggle for the right to control our own bodies—and it will continue—we can learn what is wrong with Obama's philosophy of pragmatism that proclaims a defeat a victory. It shows that our struggle must be grounded in concrete freedom, expressed in a total philosophy of liberation.

## Haidar returns to Western Sahara

Aminatou Haidar, the Western Saharan activist who was expelled by the Moroccan government to Spain, finally returned to her hometown El Aaiun on Dec. 18, after 32 days of a hunger strike in Lanzarote's airport in Spain. Greeted by the people of the village, she was put immediately under house arrest.

Haidar was deported to Spain for defending the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara, which has been occupied by Morocco since 1975. In returning, she gave thanks to all the NGOs, Human Rights Watch, Spanish writers and personalities who visited her at the airport, the Spanish Parliament, the city hall of Lanzarote, and specially to the people of Lanzarote who supported her struggle, even against the local government, who fined her more than one hundred euros (\$140) for squatting at the airport.

She went on a 32-day hunger strike which brought international pressure on Morocco's government to allow her to return home. She said on her return: "The battle that we started is not over. No to continuous repression of the innocents and defenders of Saharans' human rights charged by the military court for collaborating with foreign intelligentsia. No to the death of Saharans who die silently from chronic pains and chronic sickness in the prisons of Morocco. It is 30 years since a tragedy converted the aspiration of the people to a nightmare of the Diaspora and the disappeared."

The aspiration of Aminatou Haidar was invisible to U.S. foreign policy makers. Hillary Clinton avoided the issue altogether when reporters confronted her. It all started with determination of a woman activist and support of a people to reach for self-determination.

—Manel

## Mourning Mothers



Urszula Wislerka for News & Letters

A contingent supporting Mourning Mothers in Iran participates in the Dec. 28 demonstration in Berkeley, Cal., supporting the movement in Iran in the aftermath of the Ashura Day protests.

A group of mourning mothers who gather every Saturday in Laleh Park in Tehran, were arrested by the security forces on Jan. 9, when they came out two weeks after the brutal suppression of the uprising on Ashura Day in Iran (see more on p. 8). Some were released after 24 hours of detention and the rest were transferred to the notorious Evin prison, where they bravely insisted on everyone's release. Once all were released, they protested right in front of Evin with cries of "political prisoners must be freed." We in the San Francisco Bay Area are one of many communities across the world supporting the Mourning Mothers in Iran.

These women march silently in parks on Saturday evenings to commemorate their children who have been killed, detained, tortured or disappeared after the results of the controversial presidential election in June 2009. The mothers of those who were slain before these recent events, and other supporters, also join them. They want justice: identification and arrest of those responsible for the killings and the violence inflicted on their children during the peaceful marches protesting the results of the election. They want the release of all political prisoners, and freedom of expression for all.

They have consistently asked us to amplify their cry for justice and freedom. Let's bring to the public's attention the situation of these mothers and the struggle in Iran. We have been holding regular informational picket lines.

Join the volunteers of solidarity with the Mothers in Mourning in Iran. Write to [margebarmostabed@gmail.com](mailto:margebarmostabed@gmail.com) for more details.

—Nazanin Afarin

## WOMEN WORLDWIDE

by Mary Jo Grey

Twenty years ago Marc Lepine rounded up women at Ecole Polytechnique, an engineering school in Montreal, Quebec, and murdered 14, injuring 10 more, in a violent act of rage, then committed suicide, leaving a letter blaming "feminists" for ruining his life. In a Stratford, Ontario, remembrance ceremony, many gathered roses with the women's names attached and watched a film depicting the lives of people involved. Bonnie Henderson, a Stratford city councillor, said, "How do we reach these people who feel that because women want equal rights, they need to feel threatened? Here we are 20 years later, and women and children are still being killed."

Women grow more than half of the world's food and as much as 80% of the food in developing countries, especially in rural areas in sub-Saharan Africa, Asia and Latin America, according to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization. Yet they own only 2% of the world's land. Around the world, women are deprived of legal rights to the land they work. "Providing women with secure land and property rights is essential to addressing poverty, food security and violence against women," said Renee Giovarelli, founding director of the newly-created Global Center for Women's Land Rights.

Hundreds of Afghan women held a street protest in December demanding that President Karzai purge corrupt officials from the government, as well as those connected with warlords or the Taliban. Many carried pictures of murdered relatives. Five hundred men followed the women in support. Violence Afghan women face includes: failure to bring to justice murderers of prominent women; 52% of women report physical violence and 17% sexual violence, but little is done; in more than half of marriages, wives are under 16, and in 80% the marriages take place without the wife's consent; only 11% of girls are enrolled in grades 1-9, and 4% in grades 10-12.

Women from 16 Arab countries met in Tunisia Dec. 6 to discuss violence against women and ways to fight against it. They called for a wider role for women in the Arab states.

# 'Cane cutters: Slaves no more'

**Cali, Colombia**—The European invasion in 1492 brought slavery to the American continent as a mode of production while exploiting our natural resources and our indigenous and African ancestors. The modern day oligarchy that holds power in Colombia can be traced directly back to those invaders.

The oligarchy today holds all the power and property in the Cauca river valley, where the genocidal displacement of the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s took place—and where, as always, the slaves who convert cane into sugar are brutally suppressed.

Dozens of small towns were destroyed by the military and paramilitary militias, directed by then-Colonel Gustavo Rojas Pinilla under orders given by the big landowners. These barbarous acts were passed off as "partisan skirmishes," but the true purpose was to convert the Cauca river valley into a green desert of monoculture sugarcane cultivation.

We Colombians subsidize this sugar for export at the cost of up to 500% of the international value. Some of it is destined for use as biofuel, which is peaking because of the oil crisis.

## WORKING BUT NOT SURVIVING

More than 12,000 sugarcane workers live in the Cauca River valley, exploited by the monopolists of ASOCAÑA (Association of Colombian Sugarcane Cultivators). The workers lack the bare minimum that a family needs to survive: stable work, fair pay, no labor contractors, social guarantees for the workers and their families (health, housing, education), a fair price for the fair weight of cut cane, investment in social develop-



Striking Cauca Valley cane cutters and their families in 2008.

ment of the communities located close to the refineries.

These persistent conditions have driven the workers to strike on many occasions. While this constant struggle shows the strength of the agricultural-industrial proletariat, it calls into question the practices of the union bosses. They are either submissive in the face of attacks by the bosses and the State, or isolated from the struggle of other social movements. This has driven them on many occasions to side with the boss, against their class allies.

The neoliberal State has successfully carried out its mission against the workers and the Colombian people, dismantling labor laws and social security and retaliating against the social movements and popular struggles. They've institutionalized outsourcing and loose labor laws through the poorly-named "Associated Worker Cooperatives," hiring agencies, union contracts, and piecework. They have extended the working day to more than 12 hours.

## SERVING MANY MASTERS

If there is any difference from the slavery of old, it's that the modern slave doesn't rely on one master to exploit him and house him in a little hut. This can't be considered as paid or indentured slavery, because the cane cutters don't even earn the legal minimum wage; they are exploited by their many masters without adequate compensation until they die—one day they'll be hired to work a job, and the next not finding work to be able to provide for their families.

The workers' struggle for life and freedom can't stay in the dark forever, especially when its power reaches out beyond the limits of the refinery, factory, or office. The mobilizations and solidarity can be seen and heard in the streets. The workers' wives—who are as brave and dedicated to the struggle as their husbands—and families march in peaceful protest to the cheers and support of the urban populations.

This brings to mind the demonstrations of Oct. 1, 2008, when more than 8,000 people marched in Cali while the workers on strike were attacked at the refinery by tanks, the national guard and police (see "Colombia: Challenges to Uribe," Dec. 2008-Jan. 2009 *N&L*).

Through all of this, the cane workers have counted on the solidarity of the Colombian and the Venezuelan people. Venezuelans had sent a caravan of trucks full of food and supplies to the workers during the strike, only to have it detained by the military and never reach the workers. According to the President of Colombia, the striking workers were "terrorists." The only thing for them to do was to try and subdue them through isolation, brute force, and hunger.

A common mural painted in this part of Colombia reads: "Cane cutters: Slaves no more." The struggle for dignity for these agricultural laborers continues.

—Leo Alcántuz

Translated from Spanish by Brown Douglas

# Spain backs outlaws

Workers at a protest of Air Comet Airlines in Madrid on Dec. 22 displayed a sign that said, "Families in ruin, [by] Incompetent Corporations." (See *El País*, Dec. 22.) Due to nearly 20% unemployment in Spain, the 700 employees agreed to work without pay—relying on the personal guarantee of Gerardo Diaz Ferran and Gonzalo Pascual, owners of Air Comet. They also own Marsan, a large Spanish travel agency. The workers did not get seven paychecks. Unions representing the workers demanded that the government find them new positions.

On Dec. 30, Air Comet was ordered shut down. A British judge ruled in favor of a German bank, Nord-Bank, which claimed its 17 million euros (\$24 million) debt. This stranded 70,000 travelers, some of whom went on hunger strike in Barajas airport in Madrid.

The workers criticized Jose Blanco, the commerce minister, for "not doing anything to prevent the closing of Air Comet and instead protecting Diaz Ferran." The government looked the other way when the owners did not pay its 16 million euros (\$23 million) social security fees for the workers. And it did not bother at all to protect the workers.

For the workers it seemed like a conspiracy, to close an airline operation during high season activity. They had thought that the high season traffic would generate enough income so they would get paid. The workers need a new social structure where they would be in control of production for their own benefit.

—Manel

# Battling CTA layoffs

**Chicago**—Chicago Transit Authority bus drivers and maintenance workers united with CTA riders and other supporters to march against service cutbacks and layoffs on Dec. 9. Despite bitter cold and Chicago winds, spirits outside CTA headquarters were high, as a hundred or more demonstrators chanted their message to the CTA bosses and local pols: "Chop from the top!"

Teachers and other public employees supported the demo. A newly formed coalition, Public Workers United, will continue to oppose threatened cuts in public transportation, education, and the other needed services that form the minimal basis of a workable society.

Carlos Acevedo of Amalgamated Transit Union Local 241 told *News & Letters*, "The situation hasn't changed. The CTA is going full steam ahead, preparing to lay off 1,076 workers. They had threatened even more layoffs, but that was just a way to pressure the union. They are planning to cut service and close the Archer garage.

"We're going down to Springfield to speak to the Governor and State legislature to explain the impact of the service cuts and loss of jobs. There will also be a couple of demonstrations outside CTA headquarters—one on Jan. 18, Martin Luther King Day, sponsored by various unions and other organizations. Then another, on Jan. 20, will be at the CTA Board meeting."

—Gerry Emmett

# Defiance of 'ley 7'

**Aguadilla, Puerto Rico**—Puerto Rico continues to resist the latest version of neo-liberal capitalist policies implemented by the local pro-statehood government. A coalition of labor, religious, student and teacher groups called "Puerto Rico por Puerto Rico" has a continuous campaign of picketing and protesting at all the governor's activities and the legislature. The infamous "ley 7" (law 7), which has thrown thousands of civil service workers into the streets to swell the jobless ranks, has been a magnet for resistance.

Politicians (senators and representatives) who voted for the law are under continuous protest. One popular form of protest uses a traditional holiday form of caroling, only it's called "un asalto"—an assault—where a group of protestors shows up suddenly at a politician's activity or office singing a holiday song inspired and improvised on the spot by the unemployed culture of resistance.

One of the most famous acts of defiance was when a worker, who was recently laid off, threw an egg at the governor during a speech. He missed but became a working-class hero. Needless to say, he was arrested on the spot and charged with a "terrorist" act.

A Methodist bishop has proclaimed from his pulpit that Puerto Ricans are in **permanent passive resistance**.

On another note, it's great to receive *News & Letters* again. I feel that I'm in touch again with other workers worldwide. The situation in Puerto Rico is a reflection of a world struggle for freedom.

—Puerto Rican correspondent

# WORKSHOPTALKS

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at HMOs. Unending cost-cutting measures by HMOs across the country produce chronic staffing and bed shortages. In any industry, speedup causes accidents, leading to death and injury to workers. In healthcare, however, speedup causes death and injuries both to workers and to patients.

One type of "accident" is the frequent and unwitting infecting of patients with MRSA. Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus infections, which spread among people in close quarters, is a global public health crisis. There are 19,000 unnecessary deaths from MRSA in the U.S. alone each year.

The primary cause is the overuse of antibiotics promoted by the pharmaceutical industry, which gives financial incentives to doctors to prescribe them. Overuse actually promotes MRSA's spread by helping it transform itself into more resistant and virulent strains.

The key to prevention of MRSA is proper hygiene and screening, followed by isolation. This low-tech method has been proven to work. Norway, which prohibits the over-use of antibiotics and carefully follows hygiene and isolation procedures, is now nearly free of MRSA infections.

## BILLING TRUMPS SCREENING

Kaiser, for example, has an extremely large database in a billion dollar computer system, which is used very efficiently for cost recovery, often overcharging patients. We are supposed to track critical information such as MRSA. However, human beings have to be able to take time to analyze the data and take concerted action. In the case of MRSA, that means thorough screening to catch those who should not be sharing a room.

Everyone knows this, yet workers feel too rushed in day-to-day work. A lot of us on the job feel as though we are set up for failure. We all know how often MRSA patients have gotten into shared rooms when they shouldn't. Management looks for individuals to blame, but not its own systemic failure at prevention.

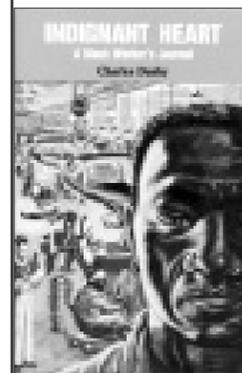
## SPEEDUP KILLS

For us workers it is clear that the main cause is cost-cutting and speedup. Also, out of fear, employees often come to work despite having some kind of illness or infection, which is precisely what the Norwegian healthcare managers discourage. Kaiser managers say "stay home if you're sick," but we all know they are not serious. Workers get pulled into the manager's office at the end of the quarter for using their sick time.

Dr. David Lawrence, our former CEO at Kaiser, once said that "if [the HMO industry] were in the airline business, we would have been shut down a long time ago." Obama has touted nationwide "electronic record-keeping" as part of his healthcare "reform." We at Kaiser have been living that digital nightmare.

Real healthcare reform involves careful attention to "mundane" details. Key to success is adequate sharing of information through cooperation. We need to ask how we can free ourselves from the fetters of capital to fully engage in healthcare as a human activity.

## For Black History Month— Two classics of labor history by workers Black and white

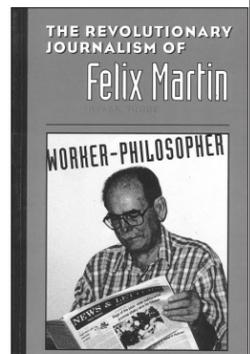


"When the Black community in Watts, California, exploded in 1965, it was clearly Blacks against 'white'...but when it hit Detroit in August 1967... the revolt was primarily against the police and shop owners—large and small—who were known or believed to be gouging Blacks and poor people."

—Charles Denby

"I had fought in two wars for the capitalist system and found when I went to GM that I had fought the wrong enemy. The first thought that hit me when I went in was that the machinery was digesting human beings and transforming them into shiny products to be sold for profit in the marketplace."

—Felix Martin



Buy both for \$15 postpaid until  
March 31—regularly \$15 and \$8

## FROM THE WRITINGS OF RAYADUNAYEVSKAYA

To mark both Black History Month and the Raya Dunayevskaya Centenary, we present excerpts of the lecture she gave on Jan. 12, 1969, at the Black-Red Conference in Detroit. As Charles Denby, author of *Indignant Heart: A Black Workers' Journal* put it in his opening remarks to the conference: "This is the first time that such a conference of Black youth, Black workers, Black women, and Black intellectuals will have a chance to discuss with each other as well as with Marxist-Humanists, who lend the red coloration not only for the sake of color, but for the sake of philosophy, a philosophy of liberation." The entire lecture is included in *The Power of Negativity*, and can be found, together with Charles Denby's Welcome, excerpts from the six-hour discussion and motions, in the *Raya Dunayevskaya Collection*, #4338-54.

Let's talk—not about the moon and the stars and the planets, and little homilies from outer space, as if we don't have enough trouble on this earth—but about what is a great deal more important: the people, especially the working people, especially the Black working people.

If the Administration thinks that because we have some astronaut heroes we will thereby forget about war, racism, poverty, and the world that needs some reshaping, we will have to tell it to him like it is. Because first and foremost is **man and labor**. It is not the moon that came down to look at us. It is we who went up to look at the moon. And the hardware that went into that is not only a problem of science. In fact, the reason you can go to the moon, but can't solve the housing problem right here in a little slum, is because you have always had, in class society, this division between science and life. And Marx saw long, long ago—some 130 years ago—that if you're going to have a different principle for life and for science, you will be living a lie. That is just what we have been living all these years. And there are reasons why there is this great division.

**ALL OF THE HISTORY** of mankind can be developed just on the history of labor. Even if we exclude science (which we can't), it would still be a fact that it is not only the hardware to go to the moon that labor has built. Labor has built the primary things on earth, which really make the world go around: food, shelter, clothing. Labor has built everything. But don't think that just because the working man has produced all of this, the only thing he can do is manual labor. That is what the capitalist wants you to think.

There is another kind of labor besides manual—mental activity. And this mental activity is not restricted to scientists or to other intellectuals. In fact, what they think generally comes from this movement from below. What is most important of all is that workers think their own thoughts. And the thoughts that workers think are the thoughts that **move** the world.

It is all summarized in one word: freedom. There is no such thing as thought that has any significance unless it is the thought of how to get freedom. All of man's history is various stages of the struggle for freedom. And though capitalism may be better than slavery, we still have a long way to go. So—first, we have labor as a manual activity; second, labor as a mental activity. What gets everything changed is thinking how and by what means you can move to freedom, and masses actively moving toward freedom.

Besides labor and thought, we have some colors that are not accidental which we should talk about today: Black and red. Black and red stand for the actual movement of society.

**LET'S START IN 1831**, Nat Turner's Revolt. That was the same year some whites in New England started a paper called *The Liberator*, stimulated by the movement of the slaves in the South. The coalescence of these two forces led finally to the Civil War. But that's not why I'm choosing 1831 for today's discussion. I'm choosing it for Nat Turner's Revolt—he tried to be free and he was hanged for it—and I'm choosing it because that was the year that a man named Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel died. He was a German philosopher who dealt only with thought in ivory towers, yet what Nat Turner did and thought is related to Hegel, though they were of course quite unknown to each other.

Last year a prize was given to a white Southerner for a book about Nat Turner—a horrible book. A lot of Black intellectuals got very angry and answered the author, [William] Styron.<sup>1</sup> Theirs is not a bad answer—but what is really great is Nat Turner's own Confessions. They were made to a white racist, and Turner stressed the fact that he had the right to fight for freedom. He had heard voices and they told him to do it. Now there was another revolt that took place at the same time, and the white rulers were sure that there had been a conspiracy. Turner denied it: "I see, sir, you doubt my word. But cannot you think the same idea which prompted me might prompt others as well

## From the Black-Red Conference

# Dialectics of the freedom movements

as myself to this undertaking?"<sup>2</sup> Here is a supposedly unintelligent man, and he recognizes that as great as is his own struggle for freedom, it is impossible that he, though he heard the voices from heaven, thought of it alone. He is absolutely sure that the Spirit, meaning the objective movement for freedom, and the people fighting for freedom are the same thing.

How these two movements—objective and subjective, idea of freedom and people fighting for freedom—function together, is what we are going to be learning today. It is called **dialectics**. We will see how they come to jam up against each other, and coalesce or not coalesce, depending on whether you win or lose. And if we can find out what dialectics was when the Greeks established it, and what it was when Hegel established it, and what it is with Marx—we will know all there is to know about philosophy.

Dialectics originally meant "dialect" or talking—and the Greeks had a very high opinion of it if it was the philosophers who were doing the talking. They had the first democracy for the citizens, but not for the slave laborers. The idea was that if you, the philosopher, talked to someone, and he had an idea that opposed yours, and you then contemplated, you would finally come up with an idea that was totally different than either one originally was. And it is true that you get some movement that way, but because the talk that went on was the talk of only intellectuals, it was contemplation alone or the viewing of things, not the doing of anything.

**WHAT WAS DIFFERENT** about it when Hegel got to reestablish it for our age? We had moved from 500 B.C., when there was a slave society, to 1789, when there was a French Revolution, the greatest revolution that had ever happened. And the people—the *sans-culottes*, the *enragés*, the indignant hearts—had something to say about things. They were saying they were glad they got rid of Louis XVI, but what did they get with the overthrow of the monarchy? Why was there still a distinction between "passive citizens" and "active citizens"—especially when the so-called "passive citizens" were the ones who were doing all the work? They wanted to know why they all shouldn't be able to discuss things.

This French Revolution was such a challenge to the people in the ivory towers, like Hegel, that he couldn't help reflecting it. So that when he began to talk about dialectic, it didn't mean only thoughts bumping up against each other, it meant action. It meant development through contradiction, the development of ideas, and of actual history, and of the class struggle. It was this **development**—not a process of adding up how many are here in this room and contrasting that with how many voted for [George] Wallace,<sup>3</sup> but of seeing what the people represent and how much motion they can get going when the idea of freedom inspires them—that is of the essence.

Nevertheless, since Hegel did restrict himself to ideas, even though his philosophy reflected actual history, something more was needed. When Nat Turner led his rebellion and Hegel died in 1831, Marx was 13 years old. He didn't know anything about either one of them. But 13 years later, in 1844, he created the greatest philosophy of freedom, Humanism. And he built it on the dialectic. But he said ideas don't float in air. There are people who have ideas. Marx included man himself, men who think, who struggle for freedom, who try to unite the idea of freedom with the actual struggle

for freedom. He refused to bow either to capitalism or to communism. He said that in place of either the profit motive of capitalism, or the collective form of property of communism, the important thing was the **self-development of man**.

**IN CREATING THIS PHILOSOPHY**, he heard about and collaborated with the Abolitionists, Black and white, in this country who were struggling against slavery. Some so-called Marxists said, well, of course, they were against slavery—but the slaves just wanted the freedom to be exploited by the capitalist. The [so-called Marxists] thought they were much wiser because they wanted freedom from the capitalists, too. Marx showed them that they were crazy because freedom and thinking are always **concrete**. And in the actual dialectic of liberation—that is, in the actual relation of thought to act, in the actual development—you have to arouse and elicit from the population many, many forces. The greatest force is labor, but there are others, such as the youth, and in America the greatest of these other forces is the Black masses. Marx told the whites who thought they were superior because they were free: Look at you, you don't even have a national labor union—and you can't organize one because labor in the white skin cannot be free while labor in the Black skin is branded. This wasn't only "dialectics" or "philosophy." This was the way it was. We finally had the Civil War in the U.S., and the first national labor union came after that.<sup>4</sup>

It was by establishing labor as the center, and the unity of thought and practice as necessary, and by jamming up all these new ideas into a new philosophy of liberation that Marx was able to establish the First Workingmen's International...

*Philosophy and Revolution* has three parts. Part I is called "Why Hegel? Why Now?" and takes up the dialectic as the algebra of revolution, the methodology of what man has done in fighting for freedom. Once you get three things, you have the essence of it: 1) the dialectic—the actual development, through actual class struggle, through actual contradictions; 2) the right Subject—who is resolving these contradictions? Marx said it was the class force, but helped by other forces such as minorities, the Black people, and the youth; 3) how does this movement from below for freedom, from practice, unite with the movement that comes from theory? In other words, the relationship of theory to practice.

...[I]n becoming theoreticians, in creating a new philosophy by speaking for yourselves, you have to recognize that you speak, not as individuals (though the individual is very great) but as the new forces that are necessary—what Marx called the new passions for reconstructing society on totally new, truly human, beginnings.

1. See William Styron, *The Confessions of Nat Turner* (New York: Random House, 1967), and John Henrik Clarke (ed.), *William Styron's Nat Turner: Ten Black Writers Respond*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968).
2. For Nat Turner's confession, see *Nat Turner*, ed. by Eric Foner (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1971), pp. 37-55.
3. George Wallace, Alabama's segregationist governor, who ran a racist presidential campaign in 1968.
4. The first national labor union, the General Congress of Labor, was formed in Baltimore in August 1866.

## Explore Marxist-Humanism on the Black dimension

### *Philosophy and Revolution*

"Whether or not consciously related to the Hegelian concept—the transcendence of the opposition between Notion and Reality, and the unity which is the truth, rests upon this subjectivity alone—it is clear that for the Black masses, Black consciousness, awareness of themselves as African Americans with a dual history and special pride, is a drive toward wholeness. ...it means an end to the separation between objective and subjective."

### *American Civilization on Trial: Black Masses as Vanguard*

"The first appearance of trade unions and workingmen's parties in the U.S. paralleled the greatest of the slave revolts and the emergence of the Abolitionist movement. This parallelism is the characteristic feature of American class struggle. Only when these two great movements coalesce do we reach decisive turning points in U.S. development."



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

"The turning point for American Black women was reached in 1867...when even the most revolutionary Abolitionists, like Frederick Douglass and Wendell Phillips, refused to collaborate with the women in their fight for suffrage... Not only did [Sojourner Truth and Harriet Tubman] separate from their Black male leaders and align with the white women, but it became clear that "short-minded" was more than an epithet. Rather, it was a new language—the language of thought—against those who would put any limitations to freedom."

To order, see literature listing, p. 7





by Andy Phillips

I first met Raya Dunayevskaya in 1948 in Scott's Run, West Virginia, a coal mining area near Morgantown, home of West Virginia University where I was a student. Raya, then known as Forest, and C.L.R. James, then known as Johnson, were the co-leaders of the Johnson-Forest Tendency (JFT), a group in the Workers Party (WP) that had developed the political-economic position that Russia, far from being a workers' state as claimed by virtually all leftist groups, had been transformed into a state-capitalist society.

Dunayevskaya and James were there because five young members of the JFT had been inspired by Raya at the 1947 WP convention to go into the coal region to work with and recruit coal miners. The miners were then in the midst of colossal battles with not only the coal operators, but also President Truman, Congress, the courts and a hostile press and radio.

**COAL MINERS HAD** well earned the designation as the shock troops of U.S. labor by their struggles in the early 1930s to organize themselves in the midst of the Depression, their leadership in establishing the CIO, their strike in 1943 at the height of World War II that broke the government-imposed wage freeze when the price freeze failed, and their battles against the anti-labor Taft-Hartley Act. All this was done under the leadership of John L. Lewis, president of the United Mine Workers of America, who was nearly idolized by all U.S. workers and especially the rank-and-file coal miners.

The five JFT members in Morgantown were a young Marxist intellectual and his wife, a precocious Chicago teenager, a Navy veteran, and an Army veteran who had lost a leg in Germany. He contrasted the attitudes of leaders of the WP, who were full of sympathy for him, to that of Raya, who challenged him to go into the coal region to be on the cusp of working class revolutionary activity. In a very real sense, the influence of all that developed concretely afterward stems from Dunayevskaya's inspiration of those five youths.

Whereas James spent his time in Morgantown at the university, Dunayevskaya wanted to go into the coal area to see how the miners lived. Affinity to workers and their families remained a characteristic throughout her entire life. I did not meet James until 1951.

At this time, coal dominated the national energy supply, providing power for locomotives, home heat, steel production, electricity and all of industry. A disruption in coal production disrupted the nation's entire economy, which is why there were huge stockpiles of coal in the U.S. and the government monitored the supply closely. **In addition, labor contracts then were negotiated each year, and the coal miners had a long principled position of "No contract, no work" that often resulted in long strikes. The post-war labor strikes that swept the nation had spawned the Taft-Hartley Act, which could impose a 90-day stay on a strike if it posed a "national emergency," as a coal strike would.**

Although I was a student at the university (under the GI Bill thanks to service in the Air Force), during the summer of 1947 I went to work in a faucet factory in my hometown near Morgantown, where I met the Chicago youth, who got a job there. He seemed quite knowledgeable and said he had some friends he would like me to meet. They turned out to be members of the JFT who were living cooperatively in a house in Morgantown.

**AFTER A YEAR** of intense discussions and activity with the miners, I became a member. I decided to go to work in the mines in the summer of 1949 and got a job on the afternoon shift. The coal contract expired on June 30, and everyone expected a coal strike, but Lewis adopted a new tactic—reducing work to three days a week and selective strikes, calling miners out in one part of the country while keeping them working in another. This prevented Truman from declaring a national emergency since coal stockpiles remained high, but Lewis had violated the time-honored principle of "No contract, no work."

During the summer the JFT gained several new members. Two were students who went to work in the mines, and one was in my mine. By the end of 1949 the in-again out-again tactic of Lewis created much poverty in the mine regions, as well as much frustration among the miners. This all changed in early January of 1950, when miners in northern West Virginia refused Lewis' order to return to work, held several mass meetings and took over control of the strike that spread nationwide.

This transformation in the rank and file was truly remarkable: here were men who six months earlier passionately defended Lewis and would have willingly died and gone to hell for him, but now booed loudly every time his name was mentioned at the mass meeting when they took over the strike.

Lewis, seeking to regain control, called a national strike. Truman threw the Taft-Hartley Act at Lewis

On the 60th anniversary of the coal miners' general strike

## Automation and Marxist-Humanism's birth

and the union in February, declaring the strike illegal, which prohibited anyone from providing any assistance to the striking miners. This completely dried up the paltry aid that some charitable organizations had provided miners and their families, and prevented all help from other sympathetic national labor unions.

**Dunayevskaya, who had moved to Pittsburgh, about 60 miles from Morgantown, worked closely with us during the entire course of the strike. Recognizing the urgent need for aid that the miners were now expressing, she suggested that those of us who were miners, and who had a very good relationship with area union leaders from our strike activity, request a meeting to set up a miners relief committee that would select rank-and-file representatives to go out and seek assistance for the miners.**

This idea was accepted, and three militant miners went east and three west to solicit aid, with special emphasis on labor unions where there were members of the JFT. The president of the largest local union in the area, where the rebellion against Lewis had first started, volunteered his union's address for the miners relief committee. Aid poured in from throughout the country, ending with a caravan of five trailer trucks full of food and clothing from Detroit that went to five mining regions, with the last van going to Scott's Run. It was clear the miners would not be starved into submission. The strike ended the next month.<sup>1</sup>

**All of this, however, would be a footnote to history except for the presence of Raya Dunayevskaya.** She not only had a profound and comprehensive grasp of Marxism, she was deeply involved in translating into English Lenin's *Philosophic Notebooks*, in which Lenin grapples with Hegelian philosophy, especially dialectics. This confluence—of Dunayevskaya, Hegel, Marx, Lenin, dialectics and the miners' thoughts and actions—became the wellspring of an entirely new era in thought and action that illuminates the problems we face today as well as the method to solve them.

A problem often encountered in discussions with workers is the language of dialectics, the abstract expressions used by Hegel (and others after him) to try to remain faithful to Hegelian philosophy. I expressed these concerns to Raya, who said it was important for philosophers to speak for themselves; however, she certainly did understand the problem and said that what was important for me was to learn the philosophical concepts and to use my own expressions in discussions with workers.

**AT THE TIME THAT** the strike began, the continuous miner was introduced by the coal operators and totally transformed the mining process as well as the relationship of the miners to production. Cutting two-thirds of the work force and imposing horrendous working conditions on the miners, the continuous miner became the precursor of what later was dubbed automation that created not only a new stage in production, but also in cognition.

As Dunayevskaya pointed out, under the impact of the continuous miner, which the miners called "a man-killer," the miners were the ones who moved the question of labor from what should be the **fruits of labor** (wages, benefits) to **what kind of labor** should humans do? In this new formulation, Dunayevskaya also saw that the whole question of the separation of mental and manual labor under capitalism was implicit.

Celebrate the Raya  
Dunayevskaya  
Centenary Year  
by reading:



**The Coal Miners' General Strike of 1949-50 and the Birth of Marxist-Humanism in the U.S.**

by Andy Phillips  
and  
Raya Dunayevskaya

"The Miners' General Strike seemed to touch, at one and the same time, a concept Marx had designated as alienated labor and the absolute opposite to it, which Marx had spelled out as the end of the division between mental and manual labor... It is long past time that the full story be told, and it must be recorded both as it happened and as the crucial relationship of theory to practice illuminates it."

See page 7 for order form.

The answer that Raya discerned revealed itself in the miners' thoughts and actions, especially as reflected in the mass meetings. These were not only demonstrations of revolutionary democracy, they revealed that the miners were putting their thoughts into action by making the decisions and carrying them out by themselves.

During this time Dunayevskaya never tired of urging the unity of theory and practice; however, she did not fully realize then that the miners were demonstrating very concretely in what they were doing that practice is a form of theory. This reached its specific philosophic articulation during the writing of the coal miners' strike pamphlet, but it reveals the revolutionary depth of what the miners were thinking and doing.

**SINCE THAT MOMENTOUS** strike, there have been many developments objectively and subjectively. Objectively, we have careened from one crisis to another as reflected in an unending series of wars, civil unrest, huge economic dislocations and continuous labor and capital confrontations, all leading to the present situation marked by an economic meltdown and escalating world crises.

Subjectively, a new body of ideas was created by Raya Dunayevskaya that resulted in the founding of News and Letters Committees in 1955 and her articulation of a philosophy called Marxist-Humanism that analyzed those objective developments in three books: *Marxism and Freedom*, *Philosophy and Revolution* and *Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution*.

Running like a red thread through all of her works is her laser focus on all revolutionary impulses that appeared and integrating them in her philosophy. This is perhaps most clearly seen in extending the revolutionary subjects in society to include youth, women and oppressed minorities as well as the working class and incorporating them in her organization's Constitution, along with her major theoretical works that not only deal with the past but also point to the future.

**Here again we can look from today and the crises wracking society back to the miners' strike. The crises have arisen from the conditions at the point of production and the dehumanization that inevitably emerges from the division of mental and manual labor that exists under capitalism. The uniting of mental and manual labor is at the core of the question the miners raised when they asked "What kind of labor should humans do?"**

It remains the crucial question today, and while the miners did not succeed in transforming their conditions at the point of production to create a new human society, their reach to the rest of U.S. labor and their own actions of taking their destiny in their own hands point to the way, the method, for all who are aspiring to achieve a human society.

**IT MUST BE NOTED** that of all the representatives sent by left organizations to the mine areas to cover the strike, one, and only one, was able to understand the historic significance of the strike, and that was Raya Dunayevskaya. As she said of her experience, "[T]he telling of it today shows that it was in our activities in that historic 1949-50 strike—where our theoretical and practical work were inseparable—that we find the roots of what became the whole body of ideas we call Marxist-Humanism which has been developed over the full 35 year period since."<sup>2</sup>

Raya Dunayevskaya left us more than a legacy—as proud and important as that is. Much more significant is the challenge she left us, the challenge of being continuators, not only followers, of Marxist-Humanist philosophy and organization. **The fact is that the problems disclosed in that strike have not only not been solved, they have become much more exacerbated and relevant for today.**

The major cause of the huge unemployment today is automation. It has not only decimated workers in industry, it has invaded every enterprise and home in the country, eliminating the jobs of millions of workers in offices, healthcare, advertising, newspapers, magazines, shipping, transportation—in short, the scourge of automation is pandemic, leaving no country or individual unscathed. In its wake are the increasingly dehumanized conditions of labor, the pauperization of millions throughout the world and the potential ecological destruction of the earth.

Capitalists and capital have no choice. They have but one goal, that of multiplying capital, regardless of the effect on human beings. All of this Dunayevskaya projected in her work, and along with the coal miners in 1949-1950, also projected the way out of these catastrophic social crises: the activity and thought of masses taking human destiny into their own hands. We have accepted Dunayevskaya's challenge to work to create a new society.

1. Full details of the strike are set forth in the News and Letters pamphlet, *A 1980's View: The Coal Miners' General Strike of 1949-50 and the Birth of Marxist-Humanism in the U.S.*, by Andy Phillips and Raya Dunayevskaya.
2. *Coal Miners' General Strike* pamphlet, p. 42.

## REAL 'STATE OF THE UNION' AND WORLD AS WE START 2010

Listening to a call-in on TV33, a low-power TV station in Highland Park, Mich., brought to my mind the importance of "Freedom" (from "want"). The caller's "want" was to get due process in recent events that involved property taken and physical assault. He sounded like a person, senior in age, African American, who is working hard for the wants in life.

He is not rich, he said, but lawyers have taken thousands of dollars in fees and none have helped him in seeking redress. His parcels of land were in the vicinity of the Ambassador Bridge, where a few years ago the late Michael Jackson, along with a prominent businessman, was interested in building an amusement park.

He wanted to know, "Why don't we hold the government accountable? Why don't we use it? We need to get our due as citizens or shut the country down!" Big business provides capital for the means of production, but the income gained by the workers is becoming less and less for more and more labor.

We see more and more union-busting all designed to make sure "labor costs" are appreciably less. No matter what end of the see-saw the worker is on, it is not a winning situation for us. The voices of the many are percolating for change.

**Ray Robeson**  
Detroit, Mich.

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Today many are invoking patriotism, God, flag, and country. Do the right-wing Republicans, Democrats, Tea Baggers, et al. really know anything about America? Do they believe in civil rights for all, not just those with money or light skin? The hatred they spit out is not about American values.

Do they care about those less fortunate, whether in this country or overseas? Do they believe that part of our greatness lies in our ethnic and religious diversity? Do they show their love for our values when they accuse our President of being a Fascist, Communist, or witch doctor? Does carrying guns to a political event make you a real American?

Did these fake patriots learn anything in our schools about U.S. history, the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, Indians, slavery, the Civil War? The real patriots need to stand up and be counted.

**Mark Blair, a Tom Paine Patriot**  
Chicago

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I have mixed feelings about the Cease Fire Committee's decision in L.A. to contract with law enforcement. The

history of the various police departments for years has been suppression by force based on racism and programs such as "gang injunction" that help to criminalize and imprison mostly Black and Brown youths in their impoverished communities, on a massive scale.

On the other hand, if the contract results in widespread intervention by community people who can convince the gang members to stop engaging in drug dealings or violence toward each other, the decision would be beneficial to the whole community. As some youth expressed it, they want a way out of their present situation.

What is necessary to understand is that unemployment, poverty and racism cannot be eradicated as long as the capitalist system of production remains.

**Basho**  
Los Angeles

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The article "NYC Housing Crisis" (December 2009 *N&L*) reveals the cause underlying the latest rent increases there. It also illuminates the housing crisis in Detroit, where individual home ownership and community pride is going the way of the family farm swallowed up by agribusiness.

In my neighborhood, until two years ago vacant houses were quickly purchased and pretty soon you would see signs that the owners were improving them. Now, the streetscape is worse than in the 1980s, the last time government was unable to repair or demolish vacant houses.

Eventually, the vacant lots were bought up cheaply by developers who then sold the flimsy new construction at ten times what they had paid for the land. While new homes looked good for a while, no one developed the surrounding communities.

Access to public transportation (Mayor Bing has cut bus service, posing huge hardships for people without cars), quality retail stores, and city services have all suffered, but developers made money. The stage is set for a repeat of this pattern in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**SVG**  
Detroit

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It's looking like the government is going to spend almost a trillion dollars over the next ten years to expand the "business" of health, but not to expand real patient coverage. It's claimed state-mandated health coverage would be tan-



## READERS' VIEWS

amount to "socialism." Only "private enterprise" supposedly knows how to do it right. But we **do** have state-mandated "cost control." The pharmaceutical industry and HMO industry execs are very satisfied, because they helped write the "Reform" bill. It's the perfect legislation to keep the same power structure intact.

**Health worker**  
San Francisco

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I nominate for the greatest irony of the century: a sitting war president awarded the "Nobel Peace Prize." It's like Orwell's 1984 prediction: "war is peace."

**Antiwar activist**  
California

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The rise of a "respectable" neo-fascism in Europe is troubling. It was seen in the recent vote in Switzerland to ban minarets on mosques. That proposal was placed on the ballot by the far Right, and passed by 57% of votes even though it was opposed by most mainstream religious and civil organizations. Ironically, most of Switzerland's Muslims are people who escaped "ethnic cleansing" in Bosnia and Kosovo.

**Bosnia freedom supporter**  
Illinois

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The Editorial on Pakistan in the December *N&L* stayed true to its focus on looking at things from the point of view of the subjectivities from below. The obsession in the media about troop levels being sent to Afghanistan is a diversion when the real question in Pakistan is the attack on the civilian population by all the parties: the Taliban, the Pakistani government and the U.S. (Doesn't terrorism there include the drone attacks?) *N&L*'s focus is on the little discussed freedom movements on the ground. The revolutionary perspective is not foreclosed. That's why *N&L*'s coverage is so crucial.

**Burmese immigrant**  
California

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## HAITI'S DISASTROUS QUAKE

The earthquake that devastated Haiti was the most powerful to hit the area in 200 years. It was long-feared, but little prepared for by either the U.S. or UN, which have taken

responsibility for "peacekeeping." What this has traditionally meant is that the U.S. government wants to think about Haiti as little as possible.

Now it is feared that over 100,000 may have perished beneath the collapsed buildings of Port-au-Prince. Up to 3 million people may have been rendered homeless or in need of immediate aid. Haitian-American activist George Wilfrid Smith said "It's good that they are sending relief. I guess it took a disaster to make them pay attention to Haiti, though. The airport there is small, so they're going to have difficulty getting supplies in. Also the roads are messed up and that will make it difficult to deliver them. They're also likely to cancel the upcoming election. It was scheduled in a couple months. But I know they don't want to see Aristide coming back now. They're afraid of a rebellion on top of all the rest of this."

**Concerned**  
Chicago

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Editor's note: See "Haiti's unnatural disaster," p. 12.

## CARING ABOUT OUR CHILDREN

I really liked the Essay on "Child-care and Marx's vision of the future" in the October-November *N&L*. It was very well written, and I liked the way it put together with Marx the questions of child care, labor and the man/woman relation. I haven't seen any other articles written about the issue this way.

**Suzanne Rose**  
Seattle

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The suggestion now being floated by more and more government bureaucrats that teacher pay and retention should be based on student test scores is laughable. The focus on standardized "test scores" ignores the **fact** that we live in a heterogeneous society—one in which a child who lives in a poor, immigrant community plagued with gangs, drug use and many dysfunctional families is "compared" via test scores with a child who lives in the financial lap of luxury at home and at school.

**Kindergarten teacher**  
Illinois

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This is a National Call for a March 4 Strike and Day of Action to defend public education. California has recently seen a massive movement erupt in defense of public education. Because the layoffs, fee hikes, cuts, and the re-segregation of public education are taking place throughout the country, a nationwide resistance movement is needed. We call on all students, workers, teachers, parents and their organizations and communities across the country.

**California Coordinating Committee**  
march4strikeanddayofaction@gmail.com

## THE GLBT MOVEMENT TODAY

From the Compton Cafeteria riots of 1966 to today, there is still discrimination within our Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender community. For years, people have gotten away with using the "B," not for equal representation but as a credit to fill a quota. There are people who degrade bisexual people as going through a phase.

Between the Dyke march, Matthew Shepard march, and Transgender Day of Remembrance, Bisexual people have been forgotten. We have lessened August Provost and Bill Clayton as we have remembered more of Matthew Shepard, Brandon Teena and others.

The Bisexual community has their own flag because their voices have finally been heard and respected. Bisexual people will humbly continue to fight any bigotry within our own Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender community.

**Br. Michael C. Oboza**  
Straight and Gay Alliance ministry

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Attorneys within the Cook County State's Attorney's office recently leaked to the Gay Liberation Network that their boss, State's Attorney Anita Alvarez, is planning on not prosecuting Chicago Police Officer Richard Florito, although videos from his own squad car show he committed perjury by falsely charging Gays and other motorists with DUI. Several victims report him yelling homophobic slurs at them during the false arrests.

Anyone upset by this latest development is asked to contact Ms. Alvarez to protest her failure to protect LGBTs and others from officers like Florito. Call the Cook County State's Attorney's Office at 312-603-5440 or email them at stateattorney@cookcountygov.com.

**Gay Liberation Network**  
Chicago

"AN INTRODUCTION" TO THE COUP RESISTERS,  
BY HONDURAN FEMINIST JESSICA ISLA

*I am this body marked by blows  
that walks day after day under the sun,  
under this uncertain sky of flying machines,  
amongst gusts of smoke and  
the sound of rifles  
I am an infinite number of faces:  
the murdered boy,  
the grandmother walking  
the Lenca people armed with infinite patience  
The woman painting banners,  
The girl on crutches  
Each facing alone or joined together  
The olive green walls weighed down with violence  
I can say that from my body many odors emanate  
The fresh-cooked montuca  
The tortilla and the beans  
The sweaty hands and tired bodies,  
but also  
the smell of shed blood  
of gas and gunpowder  
the smell of death and of fear.  
My throat  
is crowded with voices:  
I am in the passionate discussions at meetings*

*the teacher's shout  
the story of the young woman who was raped,  
In the protest of the beaten, of the tortured  
In the voice that sings in the streets  
I am thousands of hats and  
hundreds of words,  
I am embraces, tears,  
tenderness, bursts of laughter.  
I am full of smiles that illuminate the day  
colors that come from every place  
I have joy, an urge to dance,  
I have hope.  
Because without me the streets  
Would be left alone,  
Because without me the walls would say nothing  
Because I am your hands, your tired feet,  
Your voice.  
I am the resistance  
(translated by Laura Mannen)*

\*\*\*

Our thanks to the Freedom Socialist Party for sharing this poem by Honduran feminist and coup resister, Jessica Isla, in their "Revolutionary New Year's greeting for 2010."

**RELATING PHILOSOPHY AND REVOLUTION**

There is an important relationship between the Essay by Raha on "Iran: Secularism and social emancipation" and Dunayevskaya's Archives column on "Levi-Strauss and the battle of ideas," both in the December 2009 *N&L*. Reading them gives a sense of the relation of secularism and "non-meaning": the way Raya is addressing the importance of "meaning" speaks to the Iranians' struggle. Religion is supposed to provide that meaning. Levi-Strauss would laugh at that. It's like a kid who keeps asking "why?"—there's always another "why."

Secularism doesn't eliminate the need for meaning. You can get rid of religion and replace it with secularism but you still have to have some meaning for living. You can't just say it's for freedom without giving it some concrete content. Raha's essay goes beyond the usual Left view of religion because it challenges secularism itself.

**David M'oto  
California**

\*\*\*

In her Archives writing in the December issue, Dunayevskaya was challenging youth (including especially, I think, in her own organization) to become thought-divers and to themselves challenge all the alternatives to Marx's Marxism. She focused especially on the structuralist Levi-Strauss and his concept of "meaningless" as part of "meaning." What I think she was saying was that if you look at a particular labor demonstration as only about a particular issue, it is just a "thing in itself" that has no other meaning. But if you see it as part of centuries of labor protests, it becomes a universal endeavor toward a new society, and new human relations. She was trying to create a new ground for organization. In my view she was asking the youth to help develop the "Dialectics of Philosophy and Organization" she was working on.

**Labor activist  
Los Angeles**

\*\*\*

The essay by Raha, his report on the November uprisings, and news reports of continuing mass protests, provide a

beacon for all who envision a human society. Iran shows the persistence of the Idea of Freedom. Raha's exposition of the irony of the theocratic state transforming religion into a means of political control is very illuminating—the abortion foes in the U.S. have done the same thing to the proposed healthcare bill by prohibiting private insurance companies who use federal funds from selling abortion coverage. Likewise, the warning against seeking secularism as an end in itself is important—having emerged from the extreme secularism of the Christmas holiday period, I know I want a better society than the secular one we have now!

**Reader  
New York**

\*\*\*

Raha's Essay presents the problem of Iran in the opposite way from the Left. It's not "who is more anti-imperialist?" but starts with the need to confront counter-revolutionary anti-imperialism. On the basis of a previous revolution 30 years ago, he is asking what happens after?

**Writer  
California**



Your "announcement and an invitation" to help celebrate the Centenary of Raya Dunayevskaya's birth in the last *N&L* seemed a great opportunity for me to let you know how grateful I am to have met her and Marxist-Humanism. It changed the course of my life by teaching me that Marxism and feminism were not two mutually exclusive philosophies, but that Marxism enriches feminism. Lucky for me, I learned about Marxism through Marxist-Humanism, rather than through some post-Marx Marxists who would have told me how women's liberation has to wait until after the revolution

and that women's struggles are a diversion from revolution.

**Women's Liberationist  
Detroit**

\*\*\*

Raya Dunayevskaya's Marxist-Humanism is unique, in recapturing the philosophic creativity found in Marx and exploring for the first time all the dimensions that opened up. It is philosophy become fully human, embracing real life and history. Philosophy is no elite preserve. There is no mysticism of the State, the Party, or the Genius. There is no mystification of the meaning of "freedom." Instead, the idea of freedom is made so concrete that it points to the future in the struggles of workers, women and all of the oppressed. That is an achievement worth celebrating in this Dunayevskaya Centenary year.

**Tim Finnigan  
Illinois**

●

**WHO READS NEWS & LETTERS?**

Greetings to every one of you for your hard work! Freedom will someday be real, but for now all must fight for real freedom. *N&L* is the only true voice of working people that allows workers to have our own voice! Others want to put the words in the worker's mouth, but *N&L* allows the workers to speak for themselves. Someday workers may have their own *Blue Sheet* like at GM at the South Gate Plant in California back in the 1970s. Someday the workers at Wal-Mart may have a real workers' meeting and be able to truly fight for freedom! Maybe 2010 will be when freedom truly begins throughout the world! Freedom Now!

**Martin  
Southern California**

\*\*\*

If I recall correctly, I ran across *N&L* about two years ago online when I was doing what I usually spend most of my time online doing, which was researching leftism. I thoroughly enjoy reading the articles I've read in *N&L*, and it is looking like it is going to be my new publication of choice. It doesn't talk over people's heads, but it doesn't talk down to people, either. It explains theory, which is all too often overlooked

in leftist dialogue. I am most interested as of late in the ideas of self-governing socialism, particularly the history of it and the history of its philosophy. I would have supported the Workers' Opposition in Russia rather than Lenin or Trotsky, and I think the fact that the Workers' Opposition was killed by Lenin is the reason the USSR only lived for 70 years. I am ordering a \$5 subscription via PayPal.

**New Reader  
North Carolina**

**VOICES FROM  
INSIDE THE  
WALLS**

Your paper has been extremely informative, especially on the GLBT movement and the healthcare issue. The information allows me to help others look at our government through a new set of eyes.



**Prisoner  
Huntingdon, Pa.**

\*\*\*

*N&L* is the most broadly informative political organ I've been privileged to read. Others fall seriously short in explorations of various issues where a critical analysis is needed. Those who are hamstrung in thinking beyond the restructuring of capitalism fail to grasp the idea of freedom that does not submit to an abstraction, be it capitalism or state-capitalism. I think it is because I have not found another organ that is clearly beyond the old path of an elitist attitude, as in the idea of a "party to lead." Most important is *N&L*'s concept of "human power as its own end."

**Prisoner  
Crescent City, Cal.**

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I was amazed and excited to finally find a newspaper that interests me so extremely. It made me thank our wonderful "justice" system for not giving me life, because I see there is a struggle far too big to fight just in here. Another world IS possible.

**Prisoner  
Ione, Cal.**

**SELECTED PUBLICATIONS FROM NEWS & LETTERS**

*Books*

by RAYA DUNAYEVSKAYA

- Philosophy and Revolution: from Hegel to Sartre and from Marx to Mao** 30th Anniversary edition, 2003.....\$24.95
- Marxism and Freedom: from 1776 until Today** 2000 edition. Foreword by Joel Kovel.....\$24.95
- Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution** 1991 edition. Author's new introduction. Foreword by Adrienne Rich.....\$24.95
- Women's Liberation and the Dialectics of Revolution: Reaching for the Future** .....\$14.95
- The Power of Negativity: Selected Writings on the Dialectic in Hegel and Marx** .....\$24.95
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- The Philosophic Moment of Marxist-Humanism: Two Historic-Philosophic Writings by Raya Dunayevskaya** Contains "Presentation on Dialectics of Organization and Philosophy of June 1, 1987" and 1953 "Letters on Hegel's Absolutes" .....\$3 paperback, \$10 hardcover

by CHARLES DENBY

- Indignant Heart; A Black Worker's Journal** Includes Afterword by Raya Dunayevskaya.....\$14.95

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*Archives*

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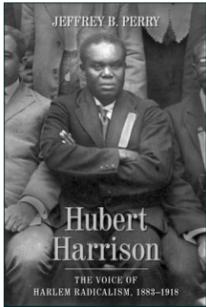
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## Hubert Harrison and Harlem Radicalism



**Hubert Harrison: The Voice of Harlem Radicalism, 1883-1918**, by Jeffrey B. Perry, Columbia Univ. Press, New York, 2009, 600 pages.

to the narrative, notes and an index enable readers to further develop any topic related to the socialist and revolutionary context of Harrison's life and work.

### REVOLUTION AND PHILOSOPHY

Shortly after Harrison arrived in New York in 1903, he won a medal for oratory in the New York Evening High School and had letters published in *The New York Times*: on lynching, in defense of an English anarchist, and against the racist views of Mississippi governor James K. Vardaman. He was attracted to "freethought" and the theory of evolution, and registered increasing dissatisfaction with religion. He convened a study circle with his fellow postal workers. In 1907 he began a history of the Reconstruction period "that will bring a knowledge of psychology and sociology to the exposition of Negro history...that will attempt to bring...something of a philosopher's insight...all this by putting me in full touch with the life of my people will aid me in understanding them better..." For the remainder of his life Harrison rooted his work in the life of Black masses, calling in a 1917 editorial in his paper, *The Voice*, for "a New leadership, based not upon the ignorance of the masses, but their intelligence."

After two of Harrison's letters to *The New York Times* sharply criticized Booker T. Washington, Harrison suddenly ran into difficulties at his post office job. Perry presents evidence that Washington's "Tuskegee Machine" was instrumental in his firing in September 1911. From 1911 through 1914 Harrison became a paid organizer and speaker for the Socialist Party. He was forced out of the Party when he criticized its failures 1) to address racism, 2) to support the IWW and 3) to support the 1913 silkworkers' strike in Paterson, New Jersey.

Just as throughout history the Black masses have put American civilization on trial, Harrison's thought and activity put U. S. socialism on trial. The Socialist Party was unable to transcend the racial and class barriers to develop an American socialism that fully included Black masses. Harrison wrote: "The Negro is the touchstone of the modern democratic idea [whose presence puts] democracy to the proof and reveals the falsity of it" (p. 162). Simple democracy for African Americans implied a revolution "startling to think of" (p. 158). To Harrison, championing the cause of Blacks was the key to revolutionary strategy in the U.S. Perry quotes historian Winston James: "American socialism did not keep faith with Hubert Harrison, Harrison kept faith with socialism" (p. 218).

### NOT NARROW NATIONALISM

Harrison's concept of race-consciousness embraced women's suffrage, sexual liberation and the movement for birth control; the Irish rebellion of 1916 and the Russian Revolution. He revealed European imperialism in Africa as a major motive for World War I. He critiqued the "suicidal policy of certain trades unions in excluding Negroes from membership" because they were then easily used as strikebreakers (p.174).

Harrison identified his philosophy as race-conscious "first" but he was never narrowly nationalistic. Perry points out that he both "laid the ideological and organizational foundation for the race radicalism of Garvey and the class radicalism of [A. Philip] Randolph and [Chandler] Owen." Nevertheless he critiqued both and eventually broke with Garvey.

Even a comprehensive overview of Harrison's work barely scratches the surface of his activity and thought and its meaning for today's struggles. Reading Harrison's biography generates a flood of questions, emotions and speculations. Why, 100 years later, are we still fighting to integrate national self-determination with class struggle? What if U.S. socialism had based itself on the totality of Marx's humanism instead of a mechanistic, anti-dialectical concept of class struggle? Why was this remarkable freedom fighter so utterly forgotten? Most important, can today's revolutionaries continue the dialogue with Harrison's body of work in the freedom struggles of our time? Hopefully, some of that dialogue will take place in the pages of *News & Letters*.

—Susan Van Gelder

## Iran: Ashura revolt shakes regime

The uprising of Iranian people on Dec. 27, 2009, caught everyone by surprise both in its depth and breadth, including the opposition leaders. It was truly spontaneous and self-directed. Unlike previous street protests, no **one**, that is, no organization or leader called for it. It displayed remarkable creativity of the masses in the way it foiled all security preparations of the riot police who were pre-staged throughout the intersections in central Tehran as well as other major cities. The powers that be simply did not anticipate such unprecedented turnout. More importantly, just like all other repressive regimes, they overestimated their own prowess in holding the monopoly of force, and did not, could not, foresee a situation where an unarmed but awakened and determined citizenry would overrun their fortified positions and take matters into their own hands.

Let's recap. The persistent mass movement has for nearly seven long months marched patiently, even silently at times, to express its irrepressible desire for freedom. It has successfully demonstrated to the entire world that without its consent, Iran is ungovernable. It has even appealed to the rank-and-file members of the paramilitary Basij force to join them. Yet it has suffered death, jail, torture and rape. Months and months of unimaginable repression had the effect only of turning the civil intifada of the population as a whole into an explosive power ready to strike back at any moment. Finally the masses erupted on Ashura (a religious holiday commemorating a martyr), making full use of its symbolism as a day to conquer fear and stand up to a tyrannical power.

Not only the youth and women, who are always at the forefront, but also the working poor joined in. Thus, once the Basij opened fire and shot directly into the crowd, killing dozens and wounding many more, a hand-to-hand combat ensued. Make no mistake. This was a precursor of an all-out civil war! People set up barricades, used bare hands, rocks and stones to battle the mighty power of a fully armed riot police. They set police and Basij headquarters ablaze, tore down giant pictures of the Supreme Leader, as the personification of their oppression. They overran the Basij in many locations, and yet their true humanity was on full display when they captured members of the Basij, protected them from harm, disarmed them and stripped

them of their riot gear, and then let them go. Many a Basiji joined the crowd, refused to fire, and even expressed regret at having attacked their "brethren."

But let's harbor no illusion about the breakdown of this repressive institution. It was only after hours of street battle, only after massive reinforcement from nearby towns that the security forces were able to regain control of the streets. Even then, sporadic battles continued into the night. Clearly the Iranian people have stated their case: We will not retreat, and we will not rest until we are free! Without a doubt, with the

events of Ashura, the fight for freedom reached a turning point. No longer are we demanding "Where is my vote?" Gone are the days when the movement aimed at mere removal of Ahmadinejad or called for a recount or a new election. It is now aimed at the entirety of the theocratic system at whose head sits Khamenei as the Supreme Leader.

What is new as well is that the self-mobilization of the masses challenged revolutionary theory. The thinkers and theoreticians who possessed much vital energy in their deliberations and public discourse, seem to have become quiet for now.

Those on the Left who have raised their voice, unfortunately, have made the narrow ground of violence/non-violence their guiding principle, as if that defines what is a full-blown revolution. On the other hand, when Mousavi did finally come

out with a statement, while not retreating from his original demands, he did not articulate any new ideas based on the new objective-subjective stage reached by the liberation movement.

Instead, while challenging the reprehensible actions of the government, and denouncing their open declaration of war, he attempted to de-escalate the situation. After bravely declaring his readiness to embrace death and rightly stating that this movement is not "about me," he then failed to take responsibility for the direction of the movement.

What this new moment demands is to face the stark reality that, once again, practice has far outpaced theory and to take responsibility to articulate a theory of liberation that embraces from within the totality of the people's aspirations; one that helps the continuity of the fight for freedom also the day after this inhuman, class-ridden, sexist, exploitative system is overthrown.

—Raha



Ashura protesters holding up a helmet from a disarmed Basiji

## The socialism of Hubert Harrison

continued from p. 1

here to put an end to the exploitation of one group by another, whether that group be social, economic or racial...the affirmation of this is the present duty of the Socialist Party" (p. 59). Addressing socialists, he wrote, "the ten million Negroes of America form a group that is more essentially proletarian than any other American group" (p. 71).

It was the "essentially proletarian" character of African Americans that led him to the formulation that African Americans are "Negroes first." This was not a form of chauvinism and was not unreasonable considering the nature of race relations in the early 1900s. There were race riots against African Americans in major cities like Chicago, St. Louis, and Tulsa. There was massive segregation and the return of the KKK with pervasive lynchings in the South.

All political parties, including the Socialists, failed to challenge racism. This was a "crucial test" for Harrison and he left the Socialists while never forgetting the importance of the struggle of labor.

In 1917 he founded the Liberty League with a paper called *The Voice* as part of the whole New Negro movement of the Harlem Renaissance. The Harlem Renaissance remembered today is primarily cultural, but what Perry is highlighting through Harrison is that it was a massive social movement. Eventually African Americans organized themselves by the millions in the Garvey Movement. Harrison became an editor of Garvey's paper *The Negro World*.

The two poles usually cited as models for African-American leadership at the time were: either the accommodationism of Booker T. Washington or W.E.B. Du Bois's idea that African Americans should be led by an elite "Talented Tenth." Harrison's support of the Garvey movement reflected a different view of the African-American masses. He called for a "leadership... based not upon the ignorance of the masses but upon their intelligence" (p. 119). He also opposed Du Bois for his support of the U.S. in World War I.

He published in *The Voice* on July 25, 1918, "The

Descent of Dr. Du Bois," a critical answer to Du Bois's "Close Ranks" editorial in Du Bois's magazine *Crisis*. Did Du Bois write this editorial to get a desk captaincy in military intelligence, as some have claimed? Whatever the reason, it caused an intensive debate in the African-American community, and it raised the question of whether Du Bois could be the great leader of African Americans.

### 'SPECIAL GRIEVANCES' SPELLED OUT

What galled Harrison in Du Bois's editorial was the statement "Let us, while this war lasts, **forget our special grievances** [Harrison's emphasis] and close our ranks, shoulder to shoulder, with our white fellow-citizens..."

## BLACK/REDVIEW

Harrison responded that "our 'special grievances' [...] consist

of lynching, segregation and disfranchisement." Thus, "Negroes of America cannot perceive either their lives, their manhood or their right to vote (which is their political life and liberties) with these things in existence... Instead of the war for democracy making [our special grievances] less necessary, it makes them more so" (p. 171).

In spite of all the gains made since the 1920s, today's calls for a "war for democracy" abroad still sound hollow in the African-American communities, which every day experience the terrorism of police brutality, economic deprivation, and other forms of racism.

Perry stresses that Hubert Harrison always put his faith in the masses. For Harrison, everything comes back to the masses as the source of vitality in culture and art, giving them a real direction, a "backbone of every good cause" (p. 405).

This is an absolutely necessary beginning for comprehension of U.S. history and the self-development of the Idea of freedom. The full articulation of that Idea is a philosophy of liberation, which will not only guarantee that that history is not forgotten, but will point a way to a different future.

# Traveling down Gloria Joseph's *Glory Road*

*On Time and In Step: Reunion on the Glory Road* by Gloria I. Joseph (Winds of Change Press, Christiansted, St. Croix Virgin Islands, 00820) is a difficult book to characterize. It is certainly fictional—a novel based on historic figures whose names will be recognized by ordinary, well-read people, especially those in both the Black and Women's Movements. But these historic figures are all living in the "hereafter" and engage in constant very alive dialogues with each other, discussing both the past and contemporary events with an energy that can become a trajectory to the future, for its readers.

Joseph has created a highly original and provocative work by following her story's two main characters, Sojourner Truth and Malcolm X, as they walk down Glory Road and meet up with a mind-boggling number of other celebrated world figures. It is not a "fast read" and cannot be skimmed. It is provocative because these characters argue and debate with each other all the way through the 266 pages of the work, on the philosophical questions that history has revealed.

A few examples will give some indication of what the reader has in store, and reveal the meaning of the distinctive names given to the various lodges where the characters are housed, and that Sojourner and Malcolm visit on their stroll. One can only imagine, for example, the intensity of a discussion on education, at the "Philosophers and Writers' Retreat," between W.E.B. DuBois and Booker T. Washington, in which Sojourner enters and interjects a discussion of Amy Jacques Garvey and the importance of the role of women.

There is the discussion at the "Musicians Mansion" between Tupac Shakur and Mahalia Jackson, known fondly on Glory Road as the "odd couple," on the condemnation of Shakur's misogynous rapping vs. the possibility of setting gospel songs to a rap beat and bringing rap into a place in musical history.

One of the most important discussions takes place in "Caribbean Corners" and involves the tragic stories of Maurice Bishop in Grenada and Walter Rodney in Guyana. What deserves particular study here is the inclusion, as part of the Endnotes to this chapter, of the full pamphlet titled "Grenada: This Invasion Was Not Televised," written by Gloria I. Joseph and Johnnetta B. Cole at the time of the event in 1983.

There is no room in this review to look into all the other dwellings where the characters carry on their pursuits: from Ida B. Wells Tea Room, where she continues to hold forums and debates; to the Skies of the Native American Ghost Riders; or Gay Gardens; or Inventors' Enclave; or the Writers and Poets' Pavillion. Those titles can, however, provide a hint at the cover of this book, where the portraits are far from what you might expect to have been chosen: Mother Jones, Geronimo, Amelia Earhart and Babe Ruth.

"Why a portrait of Babe Ruth?" is fully explained in the chapter on the Athlete's Arena as a serious dialogue between him and Josh Gibson, widely known as the "Black Babe Ruth"—which Babe ends with the conclusion that "racism in sports still stinks to high heavens," and Josh's warning to him to "remember where

we are." These pages are a testament to Joseph's extensive knowledge of sports, male and female.

Indeed, all of the topics and characters she tackles in this fascinating book provide an important picture of who Joseph is. The pages "About the Author" tell us important facts about her education, which goes well beyond her academic degrees to what she called her "truly meaningful education" that took her, from months to several years, in China, France, Southern Africa, Italy, Cuba, South Africa, Germany, and across the U.S. The text tells us about her deep knowledge of history, her openness to differing ideas, her creativity, her wonderful sense of humor; and her love of dress, color, food, of trees and flowers—in the detailed descriptions of all the characters and places she introduces to us.

Most of all we get to know the author through the contentious dialogues she "hears" and the principles she finds important to explain the history and philosophy she has discovered. It is why the last two essays, one on Sojourner Truth, the other on Malcolm X—after the two protagonists she has chosen to follow on their stroll down the Glory Road, have returned to their respective domains—are so important to study as the principles she has discovered for herself.

The essay on "Sojourner Truth: Archetypal Black Feminist" was written in 1990 as part of "Wild Women in the Whirlwind: Afro American Culture and the Con-

temporary Literary Renaissance." In its penultimate paragraph, Joseph quotes from Raya Dunayevskaya—as "one of the handful of white scholars to criticize the feminist historical analysis of the women's rights movement"—who had stressed Sojourner as not only brave, but as Reason, that is, as an orator, a general, and a thinker, above all. Dunayevskaya's point, to Joseph, is that "there is no such thing as women's history that is not the actual history of humanity's struggle toward freedom."

Very early in the book's second chapter, Joseph had quoted this same passage from Dunayevskaya's *Women's Liberation and the Dialectics of Revolution*, but in a more complete form, as Raya's dialogue with South African Lillian Ngoyi on what an "all-people's movement" would mean for today. The full quote is: "If you want to have a successful historical movement for total liberation it **must** involve all people. There is no such thing as Black history that is not also white history. There is no such thing as women's history that is not the actual history of humanity's struggle toward freedom."

That principle is what underlies much of what Gloria Joseph has created in this work. It is truly a thought-provoking journey that needs to be read widely by all who want to be part of that struggle.

—Olga Domanski

## EDITORIAL The real state of the union

continued from p. 1  
revolutionary one.

At the same time President Obama is being attacked viciously by the Right as a "socialist," while socialism is equated with "National Socialism." Various "Tea Parties" made up of John Birchers, white supremacists, and corporate shills make blatant racist attacks, demonizing Obama as the "Other," not a "Real American." Yet the right-wing talking head Glenn Beck has the nerve to call Obama "a racist who hates white culture."

This is a movement to be taken seriously. It is the heir of Jim Crow and the "Southern Strategy," of Wallace and "white backlash." It doesn't represent a majority, but that only makes it more frenziedly hateful. Its rhetoric goes further in racism and homophobic hate than Goldwater was ever willing to tread and includes a new McCarthyism as demonstrated in the attacks upon Van Jones and other Obama appointees. Remarks by Rush Limbaugh opposing U.S. aid to earthquake-ravaged Haiti, and by Rev. Pat Robertson claiming the disaster was a result of Haitians' "pact with the devil" reveal the most depraved racism. It also has a lot of corporate backing.

It is ultimately the fear of revolution, however faint it may be at the moment, that brings big business together with racists, woman-haters and homophobes. The capitalist crisis and the election of a Black president with a mandate for change has focused that fear. **BLACK MASSES AS VANGUARD**

There is a growing disillusion among some of those who supported Barack Obama, for example, Matt Taibbi, who describes Obama's first year in office in the Dec.

9 *Rolling Stone* magazine as "one of the most dramatic political about-faces in our history." His specific criticisms are mainly correct, but he fails to grasp the question of race and racism that is involved.

The failure to grasp this leaves Obama and many others disarmed in the face of the Right-wing offensive,

and risks surrendering to that retrogression without even putting up a fight. At worst, this failure risks falling into a retrogression of one's own. The necessity to oppose the logic of capitalism and imperialism, while also fighting racism, demonstrates once again that Marxist-Humanism's translation of Absolute Negativity as the ongoing revolutionary Black Dimension is the only realistic position for American revolutionaries.

As Raya Dunayevskaya wrote in *American Civilization on Trial* in 1964: "Today, as in the days of the Abolition-

ists, we see the new beginning. It is high time now to proceed to a middle, a theory; and an end—the culmination of the creative drama of human liberation into a new society freed from exploitation and discrimination and the wars that go with it."



Students and members of the Feminist Majority Foundation rallied in December against the anti-choice Stupak-Pitts amendment being part of the healthcare reform bill.

## QUEERNOTES

by Elise

Fawziya Janahi of Bahrain is the "guardian angel" to the Arab world's Transgender people. She is the sole attorney in that region who seeks legal sanction for them, from getting sex change surgeries to obtaining the necessary identification and government papers. Inspired by her Transgender college roommate's struggle and eventual victory to be considered a woman, in which Janahi was her attorney, she hopes for the time when it is legal for Transgender people to transition smoothly in the Gulf. While Bahrain has clear laws about Transgender transition and recognition, Janahi knows much more progress is needed in the entire region.

\* \* \*

Serious health disparities in the Bisexual community were illuminated at the annual Bi Health Summit, held in Chicago in affiliation with the National LGBT Health Summit. Making up about half the LGB population, Bisexuals have higher rates of depression and anxiety, alcohol and drug abuse, suicidal thoughts and physical and sexual abuse. While stigma and biphobia—from **both** the straight and Gay communities—are thought to be key factors for these health disparities, advocacy is among the steps strongly recommended for reducing them.

\* \* \*

Transgender woman Amanda Simpson has been appointed a senior technical advisor in the Department of Commerce by President Obama. Ms. Simpson is a flight instructor and test pilot holding degrees in engineering, physics and business administration.

How to contact	
NEWS & LETTERS COMMITTEES	
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## Teacher exploitation

**Los Angeles**—As a teacher, I am a production worker. The teaching pacing chart is handed down by the district to teach a specific subject per day regardless if the students are learning the material. Of course, if they don't, it is the teacher who has to come up with some magical means to teach and maintain the same accelerated pace. The delivery of material is all planned and teachers are becoming just delivery of knowledge persons who will be replaced soon with some computer center run offshore.

The federal mandate of No Child Left Behind and all the resources the Feds offer as a carrot to the school have created an atmosphere of stress and fear in teachers whose students do not meet the level of achievement set by the federal government. This is a sure recipe for the corporation to get some politician on their side and make the teachers—with overcrowded classrooms and 49-minute periods—take the blame for the failure of the students. It is what management uses to blame workers for not meeting the production schedule. The students are alienated from the curriculum because there is no time to relate the material to real life situations.

The public schools, meanwhile, have opened their doors to corporate consultants who tell us we have to do "everything" until the schools meet the federal and state requirements. As a result the inner city students are losing their hope and aspiration for a future with a job in this economy of bailout of the rich and layoff of the workers. About 80% of the students where I work are dropping out in high school! The accelerated production pace is affecting all professions. Workers of America unite, you have nothing to lose but the national debt.

—Manel

# Copenhagen climate summit sabotages future

continued from p. 1

Summit. The U.S. never ratified the 1997 Kyoto Protocol because it would impose limits on the U.S. but not on China and all "developing countries." The U.S. and China have maneuvered for several years to use climate negotiations to jockey for advantage.

In the spirit of capitalist competition, they are heading together down a suicidal path rather than risk the other gaining an economic advantage—as if to illustrate Karl Marx's analysis:

*Capital "allows its actual movement to be determined as much and as little by the sight of the coming degradation and final depopulation of the human race, as by the probable fall of the earth into the sun.... 'After me the deluge!' is the watchword of every capitalist and of every capitalist nation.... This does not, indeed, depend on the good or ill will of the individual capitalist. Free competition brings out the inherent laws of capitalist production, in the shape of external coercive laws having power over every individual capitalist."*

## CHINA'S POWER, LAW OF VALUE'S HOLD

One new element at Copenhagen was China's display of power. Now the world's top greenhouse gas emitter—though a quarter to a third of its emissions are linked to exports—it is as determined as the U.S. to neutralize any greenhouse gas emission limits that would interfere with capital accumulation. China, though not listed among industrialized countries, even demanded deletion of that list's 2050 target to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 80%. When China demanded removal of the already half-hearted mention of a later 1.5-degree goal, Maldives President Nasheed retorted, "How can you ask my country to go extinct?"

Though China, with an eye to global power, is still trying to represent—that is, assert leadership of—the "developing countries," a division broke out. Many African and island countries fought for a treaty with binding emissions reductions and a goal of 1.5 degrees.

## Youth life sentences

**Los Angeles**—On Jan. 6, the Youth Justice Coalition (YJC) held a press conference at criminal court to protest the inhumanly long sentence of Steven Martinez and other youths. Now 17, he was 14 with no prior record at the time of a killing in South Central L.A. Steven was convicted and sentenced to 50 years to life: 25 to life for first-degree murder, and an additional 25 years to life for gang enhancement. More and more youths are being tried as adults and given life sentences in today's climate of expanding repression.

Steven was visiting his grandmother in South Central L.A. and was invited to go for a car ride with two youths aged 16 and 26 years, both casual acquaintances. A YJC member stated that the 26-year-old was sitting in the back and at some point pulled out a gun and randomly shot and killed someone. The shooter, who was never arrested, was killed in the streets a year ago. The driver was also sentenced to 50 years to life.

Many people made statements to the press. One told of how testimonies of witnesses at the trial raised many doubts of Steven's guilt. The trial was constantly postponed and the prosecutor's charge of gang affiliation was very weak.

A Black woman who had lost a son said, "Every time something happens, it is 'gang involvement.'" A white mother pointed out the weak evidence while a Latina said the justice system needs reform. A Latino youth said there are more facilities to lock up youths than there are community colleges. Many other youths, Black, Brown and white, made statements to the press of the unjust conviction and sentence.

An ACLU attorney said excessively long sentences and Life Without Parole (LWOP) destroys hope, pointing out that Latinos are sentenced four times as much as whites to LWOP and Blacks 22 times as much.

On Jan. 6, Governor Schwarzenegger proposed that privatizing California's prison system as a partial answer to the looming \$20 billion deficit. But privatizing prisons would be an incentive to criminalize more people to increase profit.

State Assembly Speaker Karen Bass said privatizing prisons is not the answer. "We need to look at why California incarcerates more people than any other state," she said.

—Basho

Other rising Third World powers joined Middle Eastern oil potentates to support China's resistance. The U.S. and China colluded, with help from India, Brazil, and South Africa, not only to push aside the bulk of African, Asian, Latin American, and island countries, but to stifle the voices of the masses within each country.

**There are two worlds within each country, and the drive for capitalist accumulation is more pressing to the world of the rulers than is the risk to that second world within China, within the U.S., and so on, of 100 new Hurricane Katrinas, or of catastrophic droughts. China's influence in the summit did not change the fact that, however cloaked in diplomacy and abstruse texts the negotiations are, the decisions are driven by capitalism's law of value. To overcome that, a totally opposite ground is needed: social revolution.**

It is no coincidence that the so-called "climategate" emails of climate scientists were made public shortly before the summit. The campaign of demagoguery by Glenn Beck and others, repeating endlessly the same two lines taken out of context, unfolded so swiftly that it appeared to have been pre-planned to discredit the well-established science of climate change. The fakery of oil-funded "skeptics" reveals the bankruptcy of thought of a society that uses science to drive technology for weaponry but uses propaganda and ideology to keep science separated from the masses.

## PERVERSION OF SCIENCE

The false consciousness cultivated around global warming has become a key element of far-right delusions about scientists conspiring with environmentalists and people of color to "destroy America." (See "Real state of the union," p. 1.) Capitalism's crisis is so great that powerful elements of the ruling class have turned to fascism to ward off science on one side while they use science in the most thingified, militaristic, exploitative ways on the other. What a new twist this gives to Marx's aphorism, "To have one basis for science and another for life is *a priori* a lie!"

We can see today just how deadly this lie can be. The Copenhagen Accord is not enough to avert runaway global warming, with an unthinkable death toll. The Sustainability Institute's climate model projects that the sum of countries' promises as of Jan. 16 would yield global warming of 3.9 degrees Celsius by 2100.

**That level risks devastation of tropical forests and ice sheets. Already today 10 million people are climate refugees, driven from their homes by effects like rising seas, drought, expanding deserts and more intense storms. According to the Global Humanitarian Forum, 300,000 people are dying each year due to climate change.**

The brunt falls on poor "developing" countries: 98% of the people seriously affected, 99% of deaths from weather disasters, 90% of economic losses. As the majority of the poor, women in poor countries are among the hardest hit. Unpredictable weather and prolonged droughts have undermined agriculture in Africa. Grain production in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia is expected to plunge if the world stays on this path.

## HURRICANE KATRINA WRIT LARGE

Limiting global warming is a matter of life and death. What scientists call "adaptation" is illuminated by Hurricane Katrina. Not only did it bring home that climate change is a disastrous reality now. Everything about it shows how capitalism is dealing with and will continue to deal with the fallout from climate change.

It begins with the lack of preparation: shoddy maintenance of the levees and holes in emergency planning, when credible warnings had been issued for years. It continues with the militarization of New Orleans during and after the storm, the corralling of the poor in the Superdome under horrendous conditions, racist shootings by police and white vigilantes. It continues to this day with the restructuring driven by business interests, the tearing down of housing projects whether they were damaged or not, the privatization or "chartering" of public schools, the deliberate demographic shift accomplished by preventing the return of so many pre-Katrina residents, especially African Americans.

This is the reality behind the clinical sound of the term "adaptation." It foreshadows the future for hundreds of millions in this capitalist world order. That is a huge part of what all the fighting is about, and why 350 parts per million has become such a prominent number.

To grasp the truth in the face of today's lies, it is

vital to understand that the attack on science has been stirred up because the system is in such crisis. Burning all the available fossil fuels is a road to catastrophe. Yet in capitalist society any fuels from the ground inevitably go up in smoke, adding to the greenhouse effect. Sobered by the emptiness of international negotiations, many in the movement to stop global warming are turning to direct efforts to "keep the coal in the hole, keep the oil in the soil," by blocking the opening of new coal plants—122 have been blocked or abandoned in the U.S. since 2000—and organizing against destructive

practices like mountaintop removal coal mining, "fracking" and exploitation of tar sands.

## CLIMATE DEBT

Carbon dioxide persists in the atmosphere for centuries. Industrialized countries not only emit far more per person than the rest of the world, but are the source of 75% of anthropogenic (human-caused) greenhouse gases that have built up.

Not only is the U.S. one of the two biggest greenhouse gas emitters along with China—each producing about one-fifth of anthropogenic emissions—the U.S., with less than 5% of world population, is responsible for 30% of emissions that have accumulated in the atmosphere.

Activists sum this up as "climate debt" and demand "reparations." U.S. negotiator Todd Stern rejected this, claiming that, until recently, "people were blissfully ignorant...that emissions caused a greenhouse effect"—with not a mention of the 500-year imperialist relationship established through market competition, military force, plunder and slavery!

By substituting redistribution for revolutionary transformation, the call for "climate reparations" has led some radicals to latch onto corrupt rulers like Ethiopia's Meles Zenawi, as if their rhetoric about climate debt would translate into action benefiting the masses.

In September Patrick Bond wrote that "Zenawi and others from Africa" should "ensure that governments corrupted by the fossil fuel industry and other transnational corporations, as well as local elites, do not become the vehicle for distributing the compensation." That was before Zenawi met with French President Sarkozy, and suddenly started shilling for a proposed \$5 billion aid package. As Mithika Mwenda of the Pan African Climate Justice Alliance put it, "Prime Minister Meles wants to sell out the lives of Africans for a pittance." There is no substitute for genuine control of production and society as a whole by the masses, freely associated. **Nothing less can stop the inhuman momentum determined by capitalism's law of value.**

That is what some parts of the movement are reaching for, as seen in the declaration adopted by the alternative People's Climate Summit of 25,000 in Copenhagen. Titled "System change—not climate change," it declares the need for "people, communities, and countries to determine their own systems of production...especially women's access to and control over productive resources." As a work of compromise, however, the declaration mixes this with tepid reformism.

The most celebrated denunciations of capitalism at Copenhagen were by Presidents Hugo Chavez of Venezuela and Evo Morales of Bolivia. Even Chavez's buddy President Ahmadinejad of Iran denounced capitalism, while his henchmen were busy repressing the freedom movement at home. Since the People's Climate Summit declaration never mentioned capitalism, socialism or revolution, it left the field open for Chavez.

Left cheerleaders didn't seem bothered by Chavez's defense of China's role in the negotiations—or by the emphasis that he and Morales put on "overconsumption" as the enemy. Rulers are quick to prescribe austerity for the masses, when the real problem is that consumption in capitalist society is geared to the needs of capital, not of workers. Tremendous resources are wasted by the military, finance, packaging, advertising and planned obsolescence, while human beings are exploited as labor as well as consumer, immersed in a culture and infrastructure designed around automobiles and commodification of all aspects of life. Without that truth as the basis of action, barriers are raised to the coalescence of workers of all countries with each other and the climate justice movement.

The urgency of opposing the slide to climate chaos is clear; the movement will not settle for a partial success of slowed warming, leaving hundreds of millions of impoverished climate refugees. Success means the establishment of a new classless society capable of halting climate change and adapting in a human way, which depends on working out social revolution as its ground.



Women in Bangladesh mark the International Day of Climate Action, demanding reduction of atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent to 350 parts per million.

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## Wrongfully convicted

**Chicago**—Thirteen-year-old Barney Brown was under interrogation. There was a "big guy with black gloves" and another cop Barney "felt (he) could trust." The "good cop" told him to cooperate with the big guy so he could go home. Well, Barney decided to cooperate and he did get to go home—39 years later.

Barney told his story on Oct. 8, 2009, one year after his exoneration, because he was innocent of any crime. A panel discussion he was on marked the inauguration of the Center on Wrongful Convictions of Youth at Northwestern Univ. Law School. Coerced confessions from youths will be a major focus of the new center.

Some members of the panel were professional people in the criminal justice system. At least two of them admitted that they had made mistakes because they found it hard to believe that anyone would confess to a crime they did not commit. But Jay Salpeter, a panelist and a detective, firmly believes that with the right coercive strategies, anyone could be made to confess—especially children. A ten-hour grilling to a child may seem like a lifetime.

Dr. Bernadine Kavanaugh, who evaluates juvenile suspects, explained what she looks for to determine whether a child is actually guilty. The confession is dubious if the interrogator does almost all the talking, if the child has said he or she understands Miranda, but has not been asked to explain it ("children will say 'uh-huh' just to get adults out of their faces"). "I ask what were you thinking and feeling while being questioned? If there were many interruptions, or the person says, 'At times I felt I did do it,' these are evidences of a false confession," she said.

Most panel members agreed that the system of apprehending, questioning and arraigning children has to be deeply changed. The first requirement was that all interrogations must be taped; and every person who might be a witness should be taped the entire time they are in the police station.

More than half of Illinois exonerations have been due to false confessions. Of 18 children who were exonerated, 13 were African Americans.

Justice for U.S. youth has been in the news, with the Supreme Court hearing arguments against sentencing people under 18 to life without parole. Efrén Paredes, a 32-year-old prisoner who has been incarcerated for 17 years, has made juvenile life without parole a focus of his political activity. He was wrongfully convicted. Go to [www.4efren.com](http://www.4efren.com) to learn more about his case.

—January

## Levi-Strauss' anti-humanism vs. dialectic

Not long before his death in October 2009, the highly centralized intellectual establishment of France celebrated the 100th birthday of anthropologist and theorist of structuralism Claude Levi-Strauss with conferences and the inauguration of an academic prize named for him. The word "influential" is entirely insufficient in regard to Levi-Strauss's work, which was responsible for inspiring a theoretical movement that impacted wide areas of thought, not the least of which was Marxism through its elaboration by Louis Althusser. While the anti-humanist current of thought Levi-Strauss's work animated has diminished from the zenith of its influence in the 1980s and 1990s, his legacy is still strong today.

Levi-Strauss's death gives us an opportunity to revisit a brief but interesting discussion by Raya Dunayevskaya of his thought regarding the concepts of history, meaning and the dialectic. Dunayevskaya's comments appear in her 1983 "Letter to the Youth on the Needed Total Uprooting of the Old and the Creation on New Human Relations," which was excerpted in the Dec. 2009 *News & Letters* and is also reproduced in *The Power of Negativity*.

**Dunayevskaya focuses on Levi-Strauss's hostility to the very idea of meaning itself. For Levi-Strauss, human activity has no inherent meaning. Instead, all thought and activity is "reducible to non-meaning." Inspired by the linguistic theories of Ferdinand de Saussure, Levi-Strauss believes that what is important instead of "meaning" is the unconscious set of rules by which humans order their activity. It is the totality of the rules, and the way in which humans adhere to them, that is the "non-meaning" that takes the place of the "meaning" that structuralist scientific inquiry aspired to leave behind.**

Levi-Strauss believes that his studies of primitive human societies revealed examples of these sets of rules in patterns of kinship and the taboos. The great advantage that primitive societies have over modern industrialized societies, he believes, is that the structures that shape the former are more readily apparent.

The passage Dunayevskaya cites appears in a 1963 discussion among several prominent French theorists and echoes a similar statement made by Levi-Strauss in his 1962 work *The Savage Mind*. There, in the book's important final chapter titled "History and Dialectic," Levi-Strauss writes, "All meaning is answerable to a lesser meaning."

Furthermore, Levi-Strauss expounds in great de-

## Cal. open university students brutalized

*Editor's note: Two participants in the University of California, Berkeley, campus activities during the Fall of 2009 gave a report of their experience. The following are excerpts from their statements.*

**K.:** On Sept. 24 we had a walkout [to protest the proposed 32% tuition raises, lay-offs of staff and forced days off for faculty]. It was the largest rally at Sproul Plaza ever. It made people think about how to organize, to do new things that would draw more attention.

The next action was to be a three-day strike. Workers as well as students called for a strike. There were picket lines for three days, Nov. 18, 19 and 20th, which coincided with the regents' meeting in L.A. where they were going to vote on the 32% tuition hikes, among other issues. On Nov. 20 a group of students decided to escalate. There were protests at every UC campus and we were not being heard. A very diverse group of students, most of whom did not know each other, decided to occupy Wheeler Hall. We were from many parts of the campus, from many different campus groups.

**A.:** For 12 hours we held the doors closed. The police were pulling on the knob on the outside. If they opened the door even a little bit, they would be able to cut the ropes holding the doors closed. They were putting wedges under the doors, drilling holes to try to get the hinges off, etc. It was physically and mentally exhausting, and we had to trust each other that we were not going to be left alone at the door. Whenever the police attacked the door we would yell "Whose university? Our university!"

**K.:** Campus presence swelled. In the afternoon a lot more police started showing up. People outside started to block police in any way they could. Police confronted those outside. It was one-on-one, physical and brutal. I know one girl whose hand was broken. Another friend was shot with a rubber bullet. As people were chanting "this is a peaceful protest" cops were beating them. We were arrested, charged with misdemeanors,

cited and released on-site, mostly because the police knew they were not going to be able to take us to jail, since there were tons of people.

**A.:** We peeled back layers of the administration's moral authority. They unleashed that much brutality on students yet they were not willing to talk to us.

**K.:** Our next action was to do something about "dead week," Dec. 7-11, a week before finals. We would turn it into "live week." We went to Wheeler Hall again and organized places to study, teach-ins, skill-shares, etc. We had something going on 24 hours a day. We were utilizing student space that would not have been utilized otherwise.

On the last day, Friday morning, I was sleeping, others were studying, when the cops burst in and started arresting everybody. There were non-citizen students in there, who could face deportation if they were arrested.

Imagine, you could be studying on your campus, or sleeping, and get arrested on trespassing charges and sent to jail! All 76 of us got misconduct charges, which made no sense. All we were do-

ing was keeping a building open so people could use it. Yet we were charged with preventing classes from taking place!

The reason the university spokesman gave for the arrests is that we were planning a hip-hop concert Friday. They said it was going to be a threat to student safety. The hip-hop concert was going to be the send-off event, a congratulations for keeping the building open.

**A.:** The university said that this was a protest, and when you are protesting you should expect to get arrested. But for many people there, it was not just a protest, it was a community. We were creating something. We called it an open university. We wanted a viable model of student-organized space. We didn't destroy anything, on the contrary we saw beautiful things happen. We showed that we can have a truly public university.

**K.:** You probably heard about the events at the Chancellor's house that night. People decided to go there. It's not clear what transpired. There was property damage and some people were arbitrarily arrested and sent to Santa Rita jail.

**A.:** We don't know what actually happened that night. The university spokesperson's account of it goes completely against a faculty member's account. And he was sitting right there observing it. It may have been a mistake, but it was also a response to the very, very aggressive act earlier that morning when students in Wheeler were arrested. If we are to condemn the breaking of chancellor's windows, we still can't put it on the same level as the violence perpetrated by the administration this semester, including a lot of violence that is not so visible. Excluding people from education, running the university in an undemocratic fashion, are also acts of violence, and much more morally corrupt than students getting a little out of control. It's important to look at these things in perspective.

**K.:** On Nov. 20, when police were brutalizing students, violence happened. What happened at the chancellor's house was not the same order of violence. How could that be called terrorism, and not what happened to the students on Nov. 20? When it happens to a school official it's terrorism, but when it happens to students, it's just what they should expect for peacefully protesting!



Tim Malone/Daily Cal

tail on his rejection of the relationship between dialectics and history. History for him is merely a chronological succession of events in which human beings play out their interaction with the structures that determine their societies: "Merely the reformulation in numerous different guises of an essential structure of human knowledge," as the philosopher Kate Soper summarizes the matter in her excellent 1986 study *Humanism and Anti-humanism*.

**Dunayevskaya contrasts this attitude to the dialectic of Hegel in a brief passage in which she establishes a relationship between Kant's "Thing-in-itself" to the "non-meaning" of Levi-Strauss. In Hegel's dialectic, as well as Marx's, the subject contributes to the creation of the object—a "ceaseless movement of becoming, disclosing the meaning of history."**

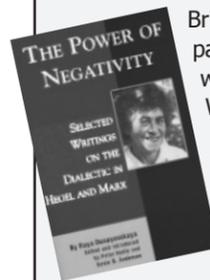
The anti-humanist stream of Levi-Strauss's work had a great impact in France. Among the thinkers influenced was Communist Party philosopher Louis Althusser, who turned the "structure" of Levi-Strauss into his concept of "ideology," which serves the same purpose of replacing "humanist" meaning or consciousness with a system that completely determines the existence of the human being. Michel Foucault, whose contemporary influence exceeds Althusser's, developed Levi-Strauss's anti-humanism into an attack on the concept of subjectivity and an anticipation of the end of even the category of the human being as such.

Studying Dunayevskaya's 1983 letter is an important task today because the dialectical thinking and criticism necessary to the development of Marxism is under attack no less so than it was at the height of Levi-Strauss's influence. In fact, the situation today is more complicated than it was in the 1960s. While a prominent thinker like Antonio Negri's non-dialectical radicalism is directly descended from the Levi-Strauss/Althusser school, someone like Slavoj Žižek, who has a more nuanced attitude toward dialectics, also descends from Levi-Strauss by way of the psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan. Dialectical thinkers like Theodore Adorno and Walter Benjamin are extremely popular in academia, but in a manner completely divorced from the integrality of philosophy and revolution championed by Dunayevskaya.

The organization of thought so apparent in Dunayevskaya's letter is the first step toward the necessary re-organization of the revolutionary movement of today.

—Kevin Michaels

### The Power of Negativity by Raya Dunayevskaya



Brilliant theorist, committed activist, and passionate scholar, Raya Dunayevskaya was a role model for my generation. We are fortunate to have her back... In contrast to the boring pap of commodified culture and political sound bites, Raya's interpretation makes the logic of Hegel's absolute idea a fascinating and compelling read.

—Susan Buck-Morss,  
Cornell University

- Part I: The Philosophic Moment of Marxist-Humanism
- Part II: Studies in Hegelian and Marxian Dialectics, 1956-63
- Part III: Theory and Practice at a Turning Point, 1964-71
- Part IV: After Philosophy and Revolution: Hegel's Absolutes and Marx's Humanism, 1972-81
- Part V: The Changed World and the Need for Philosophic New Beginnings, 1982-87
- Appendix: Excerpts from 1941-51 Philosophic Correspondence with C.L.R. James and Grace Lee Boggs

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## WORLD IN VIEW

### Yemen in U.S. sights

by Gerry Emmett

The December bombing of alleged al-Qaeda camps in the impoverished Sa'ada province of Yemen killed 120 people and injured many more. This represents a dangerous new escalation of the U.S.'s "war on terror." This endless war has already moved from Afghanistan to Iraq, then Pakistan, and now Somalia and Yemen are feeling its effects.

It is particularly ominous viewed against the regional backdrop of increasing militarization. Across the Gulf of Aden is the violent chaos of Somalia where al-Shabaab militants attack and murder relief workers, whip women wearing bras, and desecrate Sufi Muslim shrines and mosques. The U.S. has supplied arms to the Somali government, and staged an attack on al-Qaeda in southern Somalia last September.

Thousands of young Somali refugees have fled the fighting there and sought refuge in Yemen, many to avoid becoming child soldiers. In Yemen they are stigmatized as potential al-Qaeda recruits.

Yemen's own government is divided, with one intelligence agency, the Political Services Organization, having historical links to al-Qaeda. It has been accused of complicity in the escape from prison of dozens of al-Qaeda members, including Nasir al-Wahayshi, leader of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula.

Thus U.S. pressure has resulted in the creation of a second intelligence service, the National Security Agency. Ironically, it is staffed in part by former Baathist members of Saddam Hussein's secret service. (Yemen's President Ali Abdullah Saleh was a great friend and admirer of the Iraqi dictator.) This agency

### Uganda's anti-Gay law

Human rights and LGBT organizations around the world have called on Uganda's government to scrap its proposed genocidal anti-Gay law, which threatens those engaging in Gay sex with life in prison, with the death penalty reserved for "aggravated homosexuality." It also threatens those who simply know of people having Gay or Lesbian sex with three years imprisonment unless they inform. It would be a disaster which would also hinder anti-AIDS efforts.

Gays are subject to beatings, death threats, and blackmail on a regular basis. As one government minister stated, "Homosexuals can forget about human rights." Such anti-Gay agitation serves the Yoweri Museveni regime in drawing attention from its own authoritarianism and corruption, and the potentially even greater corruption that can arise with the development of Uganda's oil and resource wealth.

Museveni is closely tied to U.S. right-wing evangelical Rick Warren. Evangelists Scott Lively of Defend the Family International (a Holocaust revisionist), Caleb Brundidge of the International Healing Foundation, which claims to "cure" Gays, and Don Schmierer of Exodus International, who advocates "conversion therapy," are widely credited with inspiring the latest bill since they addressed large numbers of Ugandan lawmakers and police last year with their anti-Gay message.

The same right-wing churches supported apartheid South Africa and terrorist insurgencies in Angola and Mozambique. The genocidal intentions behind Uganda's anti-Gay bill just give away the game that has been played for a long, long time. It shines a much-needed light on secretive groups like The Family, which organize politicians in the U.S. (including Rep. Bart Stupak, of the anti-choice Stupak Amendment).

took credit for targeting the camps bombed by the U.S.

However, there is another aspect. The area bombed by the U.S. is also the home of Houthi rebels, of the Shi'a Zaidiyyah sect. They have been fighting against the Yemeni government which they see as dominated by Sunnis and particularly the Saudi-aligned Wahhabis. Thousands have died since this conflict flared up in 2004, and the Houthis have been condemned by relief agencies for the use of child soldiers.

This comes against the background of huge new U.S. arms sales to Saudi Arabia and Egypt. Egypt had not been allowed to purchase U.S. arms during the Bush administration. These arms sales are aimed at Ahmadinejad's repressive, corrupt and discredited government today. In the hands of such reactionary and repressive regimes, these missiles and bombs will equally be aimed at a potentially revolutionary new government in Iran. The horrors of that possible scenario were played out through the 1980s in the Iran-Iraq War and must not be allowed to repeat.

### Free Gaza!



A year ago, the world watched in horror as Israel's brutal "Operation Cast Lead" devastated Gaza. Aimed at crippling Hamas, the fundamentalist ruling party, the attack destroyed infrastructure and killed and injured thousands, many of them civilians. On Dec. 31, the Gaza Freedom March was held to oppose the continuing siege imposed upon Gaza by Israel. Made up of 1,360 delegates from 43 countries, it also drew attention to Hosni Mubarak's Egyptian police state.

Egypt is enforcing the blockade, to the point of building an iron wall underground to block tunnels used for smuggling supplies. The March and Viva Palestina aid convoy were denied entrance to Gaza by Egyptian authorities. There were skirmishes with security forces, and dozens of peaceful marchers were roughed up. Solidarity marches were also held in Ramallah and Nablus; and in Tel Aviv in Israel, sponsored by the Coalition of Women for Peace.

A further irony in a situation fraught with irony, an anti-smuggling fatwa issued at the behest of the Palestinian Authority, Hamas' West Bank rival, drew attention to the plight of many Palestinians who have nothing but their labor to sell. Up to 300 Palestinian laborers have been killed while working in the tunnels between Egypt and Gaza. Their lives were valued, in a Hamas fatwa, at \$9,000 to \$11,000 (for married men).

### Haiti's unnatural disaster

Haiti: thousands upon thousands dead, thousands more dying—trapped in wreckage, unable to receive medical care as hospitals are destroyed—and the vast shantytowns where tens of thousands lived have collapsed and hillsides are strewn with destroyed houses.

The unnaturalness of this natural disaster cannot be buried with the vast loss of life. The conditions of human life that have made the Haitians particularly vulnerable to the consequences of this massive earthquake are not "natural," and have been growing for many decades. Vulnerability to natural disasters is almost a direct function of poverty. "Impacts are not natural nor is there a divine hand or ill fate," noted Debarati Guha-Sapir, director of the World Health Organization's Center for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters. "People will also die now of lack of follow-up medical care."

Poverty is the principal reason for the poor construction of Haitian homes. People who make on average \$2 a day can't afford to build something that can withstand earthquakes and hurricanes. Cement is often mixed with excessive sand to keep the cost down. Steel reinforcing is barely used. Lumber isn't used in most construction because of the vast deforestation, as Haitians cut down trees for charcoal for cooking. The environmental disaster that is Haiti has been created over decades. Poverty isn't a home-grown fact of Haiti, but an imposed condition brought about by dozens of countries' complicity with or indifference to the deplorable conditions of life and labor that Haitian masses face every day. The rush to save lives is of first priority. But continued "aid" to Haiti, done in an external manner that denies self-determination for Haitians, will only perpetuate Haiti's man-made tragedies.

—Eugene Walker

### Dennis Brutus

South African poet and revolutionary Dennis Brutus passed away Dec. 26, at his Cape Town home. He had been battling prostate cancer.

Dennis Brutus leaves a profound legacy. A poet of prison and exile, he wrote a poetry of freedom and humanity: "...grant their faith that I might hood / some potent thrust to freedom, humanhood / under drab fluff may still be justified..." (Prayer, 1966). Said Patrick Bond, "Given his role as a world-class poet, Brutus showed that social justice advocates can have both bread and roses."

A founder of the South African Sports Association, Brutus was banned from political activity for his efforts to have apartheid South Africa excluded from the Olympics. He was shot and imprisoned in 1963 after defying that ban. He was instrumental in the country's Olympics suspension in 1964, and expulsion in 1970.

Thereafter Brutus lived in the UK and U.S., participating in all anti-apartheid and social justice movements. He also had to fight the efforts of the Reagan administration to deport him in the 1980s. With the fall of apartheid in South Africa he remained active in grassroots political struggles, often as a Left critic of the African National Congress-led government.

Most recently he pointed to the limitations of the Copenhagen conference on climate change, warning against "brokering a deal that allows the corporations and the oil giants to continue to abuse the earth."

Dennis Brutus is survived by his wife, May, two sisters, eight children—and by a great poetic and political legacy for all of us.

## 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.