"Human power is its own end"—Karl Marx

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# Black youth lead revolt challenging deadly racism, aiming to dismantle system

### by Franklin Dmitryev

American civilization never ceases to put itself on trial, as shown by the revolt in Minneapolis that jolted the world. George Floyd's life was extinguished on May 25 in

### LEAD-EDITORIAL

eight minutes, steadily, re-

morselessly, by a white cop, Derek Chauvin, who was assisted by three other cops in front of a crowd begging them to spare the man's life. The police take their impunity so much for granted that they were unfazed by the witnesses and a damning video—and, as expected, the department immediately lied that Floyd had died from "a medical issue."

No wonder that, within three days, protests became an uprising, burning down a police station. Since the taking of Black lives by racist cops and vigilantes is so pervasive, protests broke out in several cities from Los Angeles to Memphis. By early June, they had spread to over 2,000 U.S. localities—big cities from San Diego to Boston; towns from Hanalei, Hi., to Montrose, Ga.—and dozens of countries. Each action was in solidarity with George Floyd and Black America, and at the same time revolt against the racism and police violence in that town and nation.

### **REVOLUTIONARY YOUTH TAKE THE LEAD**

What erupted onto the historic stage was a new generation of revolutionary youth, led by Black youth, women and men, Queer and straight, joined by youth of all races and many older people in cities, suburbs and small towns. It was the most widespread, sustained revolt since the 1960s. Its militance, continuing strong after over three weeks at press time, reflected the depth of its challenge to this deadly racist society and the breadth of its support.

Homemade signs predominated, many saying "Black Lives Matter," but many others bearing individual outpourings long or short, such as "To be a Black queer woman in Amerikkka is a triple threat...and NOT in a good way"; "Tu lucha es mi lucha" ("Your struggle is my struggle") held by undocumented immigrants; "Am

## **VOICES FROM THE INSIDE OUT**

# George Floyd and 13th Amendment

by Robert Taliaferro

George Floyd. This name resonates around the country, and world, as a symbol of struggle and the need for change. He also symbolizes the need to imprecate the militarization of police within our culture, particularly in communities of color.

Sadly, it took viewing George Floyd's death on TV and social media platforms to spark a delayed—serious—discussion of race. Equally sad is that it took this man's death to spark a review of police tactics that have been known to be problematic for decades, especially when it comes to dealing with people of color.

Though the debate is past its prime, here's the problem: will such discussions be sustained once the cameras are turned off and the reporters leave, or will they once again fall short of needed reforms and honest solutions?

### MANY SHARED FLOYD'S FATE

As we have discovered in the weeks since Floyd's murder, quite a few other people of color had suffered the same fate. Unfortunately, their murders were on **continued on p. 11** 

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I Still Black When I Save Your Life?" held by a Black woman healthcare worker; "Down with capitalism"; "This is only the beginning."

In Chicago alone, there have been hundreds of protests and actions, in virtually every corner, from the Black neighborhood of Englewood on the South

black neighborhood of Englewood on the South tion, p. 11), and many young

Demonstrators march against racism and police brutality in Washington, D.C., on June 6, 2020.

Side to the almost completely white Northwest Side neighborhoods of Jefferson Park and Edgebrook. There was a Kids March on the South Side. Students held a sit-in at the University of Chicago, demanding the elimination of the campus police, one of the largest private police forces in the country, with a long history of harassing African Americans to exclude them from the Hyde Park enclave surrounded by poor Black areas.

Black and Latinx mothers from Lawndale and Little Village on the West Side held a vigil in solidarity with the protests and in opposition to isolated acts of violence between Latinx and Black men. More than two dozen Chicago events observed Juneteenth.

### **REVOLT IN MANY DIMENSIONS & NATIONS**

Protesters organically brought together the dimensions of their being: Women demanded "Say her name!" and called attention to the killing of Breonna Taylor by Louisville police in March, shot eight times in her bed during a no-knock raid because a drug dealer had used her address to send a package (see "Anti-racist protests across the U.S.," p. 8). Thousands came out for Black Trans lives on June 13-14 in the Brooklyn Liberation rally, the All Black Lives Matter March in Los Angeles, the Drag March for Change in Chicago, the Queer Black Lives Matter March and Vigil in San Antonio, and the Trans Resistance Vigil and March in Boston.

The preparation for today's revolt included the new stirrings of youth in the last four years, as part of the Women's Marches that challenged Trump's ascent, the March for Our Lives spearheaded by the survivors of the massacre at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High in Parkland, Fla., and the climate strikes. Now many marchers are making the connection

between the state's racist violence and the slow violence of environmental racism.

In each case, young people revealed a new drive to make the resistance to this society's systemic racism central to their movements (see "Youth in Action," p. 11), and many young women of color came

to the fore, especially in the climate strikes (see "Black women speak a humanism," p. 2). That is not alone a question of individual leaders, issues and alliances. What is needed is recognition of the vanguard nature that Black masses in motion have historically had, and continue, which points to the need for a unifying philosophy.

In country af-

ter country—New Zealand, Australia, Canada, France, Britain, Germany, Brazil, Colombia—protests called attention to the deadly racism endemic globally. In Hong Kong and in Idlib, Syria, activists related Floyd's killing to the violence perpetrated by the state against their rebellions.

In Africa, 54 countries urged the UN Human Rights Council to debate police brutality and racism in the U.S.

However, protests related Floyd's killing not only to the racism of imperialist international relations but also to police violence in Africa and interethnic violence that is often manipulated by the rulers. Black Lives Matter rallies were broken up by the police in Ghana and Uganda. In Nigeria and South Africa, Say Her Name protesters called attention to the high rate of violence against women, and singled out the rape and murder of students Barakat Bello and Uwaila Vera Omozuwa in Lagos (see "Women WorldWide," p. 2) and the lynching of Tshegofatso Pule near Johannesburg.

# YESTERDAY'S UNTHINKABLE ON TODAY'S AGENDA

Reverberations across the U.S. included reporters' revolts against racism in newsrooms, forcing resignations of high-level editors from *The New York Times*, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* and other publications. Several statues of Confederate generals and slave-owners fell; in the UK, the people of Bristol threw a statue of slave trader Edward Colston in the river. Regional labor councils began considering expulsion of police unions, proven enemies of labor. Bus drivers in Minneapolis and Chicago refused to transport arrested protesters to jail.

Under Trump, the illusion of post-racialism continued on p. 10

# **Hong Kong: Two years of revolt**

### by Bob McGuire

On June 4, tens of thousands of people in Hong Kong, defying a ban on demonstrations, commemorated the 1989 Tiananmen Square Massacre by pouring into Victoria Park and Mong Kok. Neither did the ban on public demonstrations under the pretext of COVID-19 stop thousands from taking to the streets beginning on May 21 to oppose the Beijing government's intention to impose a National Security Law directly on Hong Kong.

### A YEAR OF EXTRAORDINARY REVOLT

A full year of extraordinary popular revolt in Hong Kong began June 9, 2019, with hundreds of thousands marching against an extradition bill that would have undermined the legal autonomy of Hong Kong by sending its residents—at the whim of the Xi Jinping regime—to face certain injustice. Despite utter intransigence on the part of the Hong Kong authority under Chief Executive Carrie Lam, and vio-

lent tactics by police and hired thugs from organized gangs used against as many as two million demonstrators, weekly mass marches forced withdrawal of the extradition bill last September.

Marchers did not settle for that victory, but vowed to continue demonstrating until the rest of the movement's Five Demands had been met: investigating police brutality and misconduct, release of all those arrested, retraction of official judgment of protests as riots, and the resignation of Carrie Lam as Chief Executive.

The movement has included labor support from the beginning, despite the ties of the local Trade Union Federation to the ACFTU that is beholden to bosses and to the Communist Party and government in China. As a result of the demonstrations, more than 85 independent unions have been newly chartered.

Marchers again and again expressed solidarity

continued on p. 3

# Black women speak a new humanism

### by Terry Moon

Since George Floyd's murder, words come to life: "American Civilization on Trial: Black Masses



as Vanguard." The murders of Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Rekia Boyd, Nina Pop, of legions more, have, indeed, put American civilization on trial and again found it guilty of a deadly racism that has been fought for centuries.

### YOUNG WOMEN IN THE LEAD

It is Black masses who are now leading this fight for full freedom, for a radically different world. It is they who first took to the streets and made it clear that this America, from this moment, will be different

Black women—many of them very young (see "Youth in Action," page 11)—have been at the heart of many of the rallies and marches, calling and planning them, leading them, speaking out at them, and treating those who have been injured by supposedly "non-lethal devices" that are in reality weapons wielded by many cops in a way to cause serious injuries and sometimes death. Women organized for food, water, masks and hand sanitizer to be handed out to protesters who needed them.

While the leadership of so many young women is new, women's outsized participation has a revolutionary history, including the recent history of Lesbians, Trans Women, and others who started Black Lives Matter in 2013 and changed the world.

They, in turn, built on the shoulders of those in the Civil Rights Movement like Gloria Richardson and Ella Baker. The names, lives and struggles of Black women revolutionaries that go back to the time of slavery highlight what it means to struggle for freedom for over 400 years, over and over, setback after setback, and never, ever stop.

Even in Nashville, Tenn., which still protects its statue of Ku Klux Klan founder Nathan Bedford Forrest, six teenage girls as young as 14 organized a march of 15,000. Calling themselves Teens4Equality and using social media, they were helped by Black Lives Matter and others.

### **VOICES FROM THE MOVEMENT**

Fifteen-year-old Zee Thomas told the crowd:

"As teens, we are tired of waking up and seeing another innocent person being slain in broad daylight. As teens, we are desensitized to death because we see videos of Black people being killed in broad daylight circulating on social media platforms. As teens, we feel like we cannot make a difference in this world, but we must."

Seventeen-year-old Tiana Day, with help from her friends, organized and led thousands of people who marched across the greater San Francisco Bay Area to the Golden Gate Bridge. She said:

"It's really important that the youth today reaches out because we know we are the generation that will bring change and we will be able to conquer racism....What is happening in society today is wrong. We know the justice system is flawed. We know racism still exists today after 400 years of oppression. And we know that this is the generation that will fix this together."

### 'THE RADICAL CHANGES I WANT...'

Georgetown University student Kayla Edwards Friedland, who has made it a point to demonstrate and to confront the police, said,

"The big, radical change that I want—the ruling class is not just going to hand it to us. The police state is not just going to hand it to us. It has to be taken. And this is about the basic right to live. But I believe what we're doing is love."

<u>Nineteen-year-old Kayla Webb</u>, writing of why she demonstrated in Louisville, Ky., wrote:

"It is the lack of job availability. It is the gentrification. It's the cultural gaslighting of insisting we be peaceful and bite our tongues against monuments to community destruction in neighborhoods held financially hostage with rent hikes and foreclosures. It is the redlining, the history of blockbusting. It is the gerrymandering and disproportionate incarceration. It is the white men in nice suits with nice smiles like Kentucky Gov. Andy Beshear and Louisville Mayor Greg Fischer who hold news conferences to apologize and kiss babies, but call the National Guard to silence civilians. It is the consequences paid for their roles in systemic oppression and violence. It's the way nothing changes."

A marcher in New York City, Peruvian-born 29-year-old Belinda Stahl, carrying a "THIS ENDS NOW" sign, explains how it is that people can continue to protest after being beaten by cops. She said,

"It's even more unifying. You are all unarmed against people in riot gear. You're just standing there and what do you have around you? You have people."

Belinda Stahl's answer to the question, "What

do you have around you?" is profound: "You have people." What is being expressed in these demonstrations that have been viciously attacked by police, Trump, and the Right in general, is not hatred but a humanism, all the more amazing because it is fight-



A demonstration in June 2020, one of many that took place in St. Louis, Mo., after the murder of George Floyd by a white policeman.

ing the anti-humanism of racism and sexism.

This is not a movement that will be satisfied with Democratic electoral politics—which doesn't mean that people won't vote, since that's been part of the freedom struggle too. It does mean that revolution is most certainly on the agenda, and the awareness of that—even when it is not articulated—is what scares the rulers and invigorates the rest of us who desire and fight for a new human society.

## WOMENWORLDWIDE

### by Artemis

Demonstrators marched in Nigerian cities for several days in June, protesting the rise in rape and violence against teenage girls. In Lagos, a coalition of rights groups marched to the state parliament demanding all states create a sex offenders list, and then to police headquarters demanding justice for the rapes and murders of college students Uwaila Vera Omozuwa and Barakat Bello. In the petition to lawmakers, Women Against Rape in Nigeria stated, "these unfortunate events are not a standalone, rather they are a culmination of unhealthy cultural practices." The woman-led marchers wore black and carried signs saying "End Rape."

In April, the Feminist Coalition Feministe (FCF) issued a Statement on Mass Killing in Nova Scotia. On April 17, a gunman's murder of 22 people began with an assault on his live-in girlfriend, who escaped. Noticing "tell-tale signs of misogynist male violence," the FCF joined with feminists across Canada in calling attention to the media's failure to ask police about the killer's history of domestic violence. Women in the FCF criticized the police for failure to seriously investigate this and other cases of violence against women. They stated, "Women have been experiencing their own pandemic around the world that has not received nearly the attention COVID-19 has received."

The Texas Equal Access Fund (TEAF), which funds low-income women seeking abortions, is suing an anti-abortion group for defamation in a first of its kind lawsuit. Last year, Right to Life East Texas repeatedly called TEAF and similar organizations "criminals" in city council meetings, the media, and social media. Kamyon Connor, executive director, said, "We just can't continue to tolerate misinformation being presented to the public around abortion because folks are already so confused and abortion is already so stigmatized."

In Britain, a study by NatCen Social Research on girls and women ages 16-34 found those from the poorest backgrounds are five times more likely to harm themselves. Poverty, debt, struggles to pay bills, and neighborhood safety are some contributors to self-harm. This is bound to worsen since young women often have jobs in sectors like hospitality and retail affected by lockdowns.

A pandemic-safe rally of 100 cars in Edmonton passed by the Alberta Legislature in June to mark a year's passage since the release of the final report on the national Canadian inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. Almost none of its 231 calls for justice have been fulfilled. Demonstrators demanded police take investigations more seriously and demanded more representation in issues that affect them. Juanita Murphy of the Center to End All Sexual Exploitation stated, "The color of my skin doesn't mean you get to ask me how much to charge to pay me to have sex. It doesn't give you the right to throw pennies at me walking down the street, calling me dirty names."

# 'Power Worshippers'

by Adele

The Power Worshippers: Inside the Dangerous Rise of Religious Nationalism (Bloomsbury Publishing, March 2020), by Katherine Stewart, is an extremely important book that explains the religious Right as a "Christian nationalist" movement. Stewart studied its history, conducted interviews with leaders and followers, and attended anti-abortion marches and conferences of major organizations like the Family Research Council.

### **OUT TO DESTROY DEMOCRACY**

The public often misunderstands this movement as a culture war among citizens disagreeing on social issues. In reality, it is not a grassroots movement but one deliberately designed by ultra-rich businessmen and families to impose a system of complete political, social, and economic control. Stewart uses the term "Christian nationalism" to emphasize its true goal and similarity to worldwide authoritarian movements past and current. Constantly claiming it wants "religious freedom," this movement implies it wants its viewpoint included in democracy when it really wants to destroy democracy itself.

The founders of the U.S. intended to create a pluralistic, secular government based on Enlightenment values of equality and democracy. For decades, Christian nationalist David Barton fabricated an immense amount of easily debunked propaganda claiming that the founders intended the U.S. to be an authoritarian nation based on Old Testament law

Religious Right leaders got this idea of "Dominionism" or "Christian Reconstructionism" from their main philosophers, Rousas J. Rushdoony and Robert Lewis Dabney. Both defended slavery, racism, and patriarchy as a supposedly God-ordained, inescapable social hierarchy. They opposed Marxism and labor unions. Stewart explains these thinkers were part of a counter-revolution against the Enlightenment values of the American Revolution, and this counter-revolution continues with today's Christian nationalism.

This movement's propaganda claims it began as a popular revolt against Roe v. Wade. In reality, it was started by wealthy businessmen, politicians, and right-wing theologians five years later in 1978 for the purpose of seizing political power to oppose public school desegregation. Since this cause was unpopular, they settled on opposing abortion to manipulate voters, especially religious people.

Christian nationalism uses the concept of conquering the "Seven Mountains" of cultural influence: government and military, education, media, family, business, religion, and the arts. It focuses on propagandizing children through infiltrating public schools with the goal of destroying public education. Stewart describes how it has infiltrated every aspect of society, including "steeplejacking" formerly liberal churches of every denomination. Hospitals are increasingly controlled by right-wing Catholicism, and Stewart describes how she herself almost died as a result of dogma replacing science.

### U.S. CHRISTIAN NATIONALISM GOES GLOBAL

Christian nationalist leaders created international versions of their well-funded, manipulative organizations like the Child Evangelism Fellowship and the Alliance Defending Freedom. They work with global alt-right movements and support dictatorships worldwide. They collaborated with the Russian government to put Trump in office. This partnership also created the World Congress of Families, exploiting fear of immigration and economic insecurity to impose authoritarianism on a personal level.

It promotes domestic violence and child abuse and opposes reproductive and LGBTQ rights. The Gospel Coalition, a religious Right "church planting" organization promotes the same opinions.

One of its leaders, Doug Wilson, even stated, "The sex act cannot be made into an egalitarian pleasuring party. A man penetrates, conquers, colonizes, plants. A woman receives, surrenders, accepts."

Stewart says, "Overcoming this kind of reactionary and authoritarian movement isn't just something Americans can do; it is what has made Americans what we are." Christian nationalism's biggest lies reveal its biggest weaknesses. It claims to be the "moral majority" with "traditional values," but most people support the egalitarian, pluralistic, secular democracy that is our true and traditional source of strength. They claim to be the only true Christians because they fear the revolutionary power of liberal Christians' "Social Gospel."

Stewart says since "reactionary authoritarianism...draws much of its destructive energy from social and economic injustices," "Christian nationalism is the fruit of a society that has not yet lived up to the promise of the American idea."

Hopefully, she will write more about those who are fighting for a just society, but this book is an important alert to the extent and nature of this threat.

# **Shackdweller solidarity with George Floyd protesters**

**Durban, South Africa**—June 5, 2020: People dying from the coronavirus can't breathe in their last hours. They die suffocating. It is a terrifying illness. In the U.S. Black people are dying from this virus at a much higher rate than other people. This is due to the long history of racism.

George Floyd, who died at the hands of racist police in the U.S., also died suffocating, saying that he couldn't breathe. For more than 400 years Africans have been dying from racism in the U.S. Racism kills with everything from poor housing, overwork, inadequate healthcare, stress, bullets and the knee of a police officer on a person's neck.

Coronavirus is a terrible disease. Racism is much worse. It has killed more people than the coronavirus ever will. When ordinary Americans go to a hospital with coronavirus, the nurses and doctors and other hospital workers don't even have the right safety equipment. Yet when Americans take to the streets to protest against the disease of racism they are met with police and soldiers with millions and millions of dollars of expensive equipment. It is very clear what is important to the elites in the U.S., and to the racist in the White House.

#### **SLAVES REVOLTED FROM THE BEGINNING**

The first Africans were brought to the U.S. as slaves in 1526 [with the Spanish to what is now South Carolina]. They revolted and most of them escaped and went to live with the Indigenous people. That revolt has never stopped. Today U.S. cities are in open rebellion against racism. Thousands and thousands of people are saying that enough is enough! We are in full support of this rebellion.

In our political education work, often organized in self-built classrooms on occupied land, we discuss the history of racism, and the history of resistance, including the revolt of enslaved Africans in Haiti in 1791-1804. We have learnt that racism was invented in America and taken to the rest of the world from there. We all know that to kill a snake you must cut off the head. We will not put a final end to racism until it is defeated in the U.S.

### **SOUTH AFRICA TO U.S. SOLIDARITY**

The struggle against racism is a global struggle. If you are an impoverished black person in South Africa or Brazil, your life counts for nothing to the state, or to most of the rest of the society. From South Africa to Brazil our leaders are assassinated with impunity when we organize to build our own spaces to think for ourselves, to decide for ourselves and to build our own power from below. The comrades in South Africa, Brazil, England, Palestine, Turkey, India, Ireland and around the world are all

# 'Mourning delayed'

**Detroit**—Despite Detroit Water Department claims that because of the pandemic they have restored all 1,100 water shutoffs in the city, advocacy groups and individuals have been witnessing continued water shutoffs to residents. When the Water Restart program began in March, they reported that some 5,000 applications had been received. What became of the other 3,900? The controversy continues.

The police department, recovered from a substantial COVID-19 outbreak, has enforced social distancing on streets and in stores without incident. Residents who have been directly affected by this illness are not about to ignore non-compliance.

With the economy reopening, grocery stores require shoppers to wear masks and have marked their floors for social distancing. Keep Growing Detroit, a non-profit which facilitates family and community gardens in the city, used to hold pick-up events where urban gardeners would enjoy meeting and greeting each other as much as getting their plants and seeds—a rite of spring for us. This year's curbside pick-up system just wasn't the same, though necessary to prevent the spread of the virus. Gardening classes are now online video demonstrations. Good information but no fun: no hands in the soil.

### **ISOLATION FROM FAMILIES**

The most difficult situations are hospitalizations and funerals. Hospitalization is a black box for family and friends; communication between the overworked staff and outside world is low priority for the hospital.

It is the lowest-paid caregivers and sanitation staff, unsung heroes who are closest to the patients, who give of their time to use their own personal phones and tablets to help patients contact their families.

At funerals the necessary distancing (no large gatherings, no hugs or touches for the bereaved, no repasts) is the most painful for all. To paraphrase Lorraine Hansberry, "mourning delayed is grieving denied." Families have live-streamed and videoed funerals; a community group has created a memorial album on its Facebook page, but survivors miss and mourn the loss of their traditional rituals.

—Susan van Gelder

in solidarity with the comrades in the streets of the cities across the U.S.

From the early days of our movement we have received invaluable support from comrades in the U.S., especially when we have faced repression. If we were not in lockdown due to the coronavirus we would be heading, in our thousands, to the U.S. consulate in Durban and the embassy in Pretoria, to show our support for the rebellion.

### PROMISE OF DIRECT ACTION

Today all we can do is to send this letter of support to all our comrades in the U.S. It is a promise that we are with you and will remain with you and will take direct action to support you when we can.

We also promise that we will do all that we can, working with other progressive organizations, to make sure that Donald Trump is never able to set foot in South Africa. Every American comrade who is on the streets in this rebellion is welcome, at any time, to any of our occupations.

Our movement began from a series of road blockades organized from shack settlements around South Africa in 2004 and 2005. Our movement grew

# Hong Kong revolt

continued from p. 1



Huge demonstration in Hong Kong on May 24, 2020.

with Tibetans and Uyghurs in nominally autonomous Tibet and Xinjiang, where China has incarcerated a million Uyghurs in camps and slave labor factories and taken steps to erase their language, culture and Muslim religion as "terrorist."

### DEMONSTRATORS BRUTALLY ATTACKED

Demonstrators have paid heavily, with mass arrests, beatings, tear gas, bean bag projectiles and rubber bullets that have blinded protesters and journalists. While celebrating a year of resistance in Hong Kong, they marched in solidarity with Black Lives Matter marchers in the U.S.

Freedom movements in Hong Kong have also paralleled Black-led U.S. movements: In 1967 Chinese youth warehoused in slums by British colonialists and energized by violent attacks against workers on strike rose up and took control of the plush areas of Kowloon, just weeks before the rebellion of Blacks in Detroit (see page 4).

On June 4, 1989, Deng Xiaoping brought troops and tanks from the country's borders to Beijing and cleared Tiananmen Square at a cost of more than 3,000 lives. He then worked to suppress all memory of that movement that had confronted the regime in the name of freedom and democracy.

Millions strong across all of China, the movement had created autonomous trade unions as an alternative to Party-dominated ones and convinced People's Liberation Army troops who invaded the Square in May not to turn their guns on the people.

The people of Hong Kong took the responsibility of commemorating June 4 each year while revolutionaries on the mainland could not—first under British colonial rule until 1997, then under a "one China, two systems" semi-autonomy, on paper guaranteed until 2047, under authority from Beijing.

Dominance of the streets by the people against all repressive measures gathered widespread popular support. They also swept away government control of District Council elections in November, raising the stakes for the general election this September, even though half the seats are reserved for government insiders. They have struck fear into the ruling class as can be seen as nine Hong Kong billionaires, already supporting enactment of the National Security Law to legalize "national security organs of the Central People's Government," set up agencies in Hong Kong "to safeguard national security."

Hong Kong workers helped spark a revolution across China in 1925 with a year-long general strike. It is clear that the intention of the Xi regime is to stamp out all such sparks burning brightly in the current persistent mass movement in Hong Kong.

from this courageous, organized disruption, burning tires, arrests, rubber bullets and police dogs.

Today we have a movement of more than 70,000 paid-up members who can occupy land, build homes, meeting halls and gardens, organize road blockades, win battles in court and, most importantly, create a space where everyone's dignity is respected and everyone can participate in making decisions about our lives and our struggle.

We hope that a powerful movement, or many powerful movements, will emerge out of the courage, disruption, fires, rubber bullets, teargas and police dogs of this rebellion.

Be strong. The oppressed people of the world are with you.

—Abahlali baseMjondolo

http://abahlali.org/node/17128

### Migrant workers in India face lockdown

India—Labor in general, migrant workers and daily wage earners in particular, are vulnerable to the impact of COVID-19. Worldwide they are overrepresented among the homeless. In India, hundreds of thousands of migrant workers are desperately trying to return to their hometowns, battling hunger and scorching heat. "India is walking home," headlined *The Indian Express*.

India is currently in its fourth nationwide lock-down—Lockdown 4.0. According to the *The Indian Express* of May 20, more than 4.8 million people globally had been infected, while over 318,000 deaths had been reported. [By press time, these numbers nearly doubled.] The positive rate for migrant workers which the state tested is about 8%—double the national average.

### **LOCKDOWN SPREAD VIRUS ACROSS INDIA**

According to the May 22 *The Hindu*, the huge number of migrant workers returning to Uttar Pradesh during lockdown caused a rise in positive cases. The Health Department said then that so far 1,230 migrant workers who had returned to Uttar Pradesh had tested positive. In other states the number of people testing positive had gone up because of the return of migrant workers.

The government had promised them two meals a day, but lines are long and food insufficient. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced a package of 1.7 trillion rupees aimed at helping the poor. Some returning migrants have been forced to sleep in trees because of overcrowded family homes and they don't have separate rooms to self-quarantine.

"Social distancing" for migrant workers and daily wage earners is not supported and they do not have access to the basic necessities of life. Migrant workers don't have basic handwashing facilities. They are dying with hunger on the roads. The government should have arranged transportation for the vulnerable and supplied mobile medical facilities, including hygiene, food and water. Whenever economic crises occur, migrant workers often face the biggest losses.

### PRESENT AND PAST OF THE OPPRESSED

The concept of "crisis as context" connects with Walter Benjamin's rejoinder to traditional Marxism in his essay "The Concept of History." Benjamin's point is that the "present" of the oppressed is never an "exception" that is disconnected from his social past. Analogously, the current state of exception facing the migrant workers in India is barely an exception. Rather, it is temporally connected to—i.e., forming a "tradition" of—multiple and ever deepening fractures of lived spaces, histories, and livelihoods in their everyday existence.

Many questions need to be answered regarding migrants during the COVID-19 outbreak. What steps is the government taking to manage their health during the pandemic? It is shameful to note that the "Vande bharat" [an express train], could do nothing for migrant workers as they struggled on foot to reach home.

### **WORKERS FORCED OFF ROADS**

During the lockdown, migrant women gave birth on the roadside, rested for two hours and then started the journey again. The police would not allow migrants to walk on roads, so they took to the railway tracks. This led to the accident near Aurangabad in Maharashtra on May 8 where 16 workers were killed by a train as they slept on the tracks.

Since then we've been seeing the realities of the thousands and thousands of migrant workers trying to reach their hometowns. The government should pay attention and look for better ways to help them.

—Nusrat Firdos

Do you have something to say about workers' struggles, about the fight for freedom? News & Letters has a principle that people in struggle speak for themselves. Get in touch with us. See how on page 9. We want to hear from you.

# FROM THE WRITINGS OF RAYADUNAYEVSKAYA

Editor's note: News and Letters Committees issued the pamphlet Black Mass Revolt in October 1967, following uprisings in Detroit and Newark. It was signed by the organization. Raya Dunayevskaya was the principal author of some parts, including the final Part V, "Where to Now?" which is excerpted here. The pamphlet can be found in the Raya Dunayevskaya Collection, #3526.

"Has Whitey got the message?" asked one of the Black militants. "Have our own leaders? The system has got to go."

We trust no one will, at this late stage, presume

to ask that young militant whether he "really" meant the capitalist system as if, facing the aftermath of a raid on a blind pig [speakeasy] on 12th Street, Detroit, the youth was talking about a system to break the bank at Monte Carlo.

Now that a new page in the dialectics of liberation—its thought as well as its struggles—has been opened, the question is: where to now? The dynamism of the debates around the question of Black nationalism reveals that the new fea-

ture of class awareness distinguishes this Black nationalism both from that of the "Nation of Islam" and of "Black Christianity." Heretofore the latter two differed from each other by their religious, rather than their class, nature. Now they must relate themselves to the Black nationalism that is conscious of its class character which, in turn, has relegated the question of violence vs. non-violence to secondary importance. Instead, the primary question has become one of future direction.

The significance of the Detroit revolt is that here "Burn, baby, burn" meant putting to the torch not only white but also some Black establishments. Not only that. The Black masses had here raised the question of the middle-class nature of their Black leaders.

It may satisfy some vain self-styled leaders to think they have but one problem, that of "civilizing whites." But the Black masses know that the Black "intellectual vanguard" is the same flesh as all elites. Elitism, no matter what color, is blinded by the concept of the alleged backwardness of the masses. Because this has always been so, those masses have no illusions about leaders, no matter what their color, who are glib with words against whitey, but tonguetied when it comes to passing on leadership tasks to the rank and file.

Here is what one who had attended the Black Power Conference in Newark had to say on the subject:

The Black Power Conference in Newark is another example of how the leadership looks at the masses of Black people. It was held in the rich business district of Newark, in the Episcopal Diocese house and two of the richest hotels there. Also, it cost \$25 to attend, which put it out of the reach of the poor working-class Black man.

At first they didn't even want to let Newark people in without paying. Then it came to light that it was just to let people blow off steam, but to keep the old leadership in the spotlight, that all the projects afterward would be decided on by leaders who would then tell those who attended what to do. We changed some of that, but not everything.

Ever since the rebellions in Harlem and Watts in 1964 and 1965, there has been a movement among the Black masses of America toward either total freedom or death. Harlem and Watts manifested the fact that the civil rights movement was dead; that the Black man in this country wanted more than just civil rights.

The Black people want Freedom and Self-Determination, which, in itself, means the total overthrow of this society—in other words, revolution, And that is just what it is called by the youth as well as by the old—the Revolution.

The name of Black Power caught on. We have pride in being Black. We see both young and old (but mainly the youth) taking an interest in Black art and culture. The fact that they are now supporting the Black artists and writers and studying their own

# **From Black mass revolt to Freedom**

history to find out about themselves points this out. They are calling each other brother and sister and literally meaning it.

But though the Black Power slogan is popular, it is not the name that the masses give to what they are doing. They have another name for it. It is Revolution.

The whole point against whitey is to get rid of the power structure, that is to say, the capitalist class system. Without tearing that out by its roots, no freedom is possible. Tokenism will not do. That must go. Far from creating jobs for the masses, or ridding the slums of rats, much less ridding them of the tenements themselves, or sending the poor Black man's children to the universities from which one may reach

Congress, the Senate and now even the Supreme Court, tokenism props up the status quo, "the system."

Too many of the leaders who talk about Black Power mean only electoral power as if that would change the system. They talk about being the majority, or promise they "soon will be," in the cities. But the masses down South, where they are the majority, know that voting doesn't change anything very much. It isn't only that whitey cheats them out of their majority-

that they do expertly even when the Blacks do come and vote. But the greater truth still is this: so long as the "boss and Black" relationship remains, no vote can change their conditions of life.

So overpowering is that relationship of "boss to Black" that when the New Deal first came South, even the federal power had to bow to it. And it is even more true now that "neutral" mechanization— Automation—has taken over. Just consider the single fact that even in the state of Mississippi, in the 17 counties where most of the cotton is grown, no less than 75% of all cotton picking is done, not by human labor, but by machine. It is in the heart of the South, in the places where the Negro is still the majority, where there is actual starvation, actual infant mortality that compares with what it is in the most technologically underdeveloped countries like India—where the actual health conditions of the adult population in any village are comparable to those in Lowndes County, Alabama, or the Mississippi Delta.

It drives the masses from the farms to the cities, in the South as well as the North. But, though there

is 65% urbanization among Negroes, this too solves no problems as unemployment follows the Negro wherever he goes. Of course, they have certain power, as the revolts in the cities have shown. But, unless one is strategically placed in industry, one cannot stop its wheels from turning and thus stop capitalism in its tracks.

Prisoners from the 1967 Detroit rebellion, jammed into the brutally

overcrowded Washtenaw County Jail.

To give any other impression by claiming that the organization of the ghettos is



A protester stands on a police car with a smashed windshield in St. Paul, Minnesota, May 28, 2020. Photo by Lorie Shaull.

equivalent to the organization in the factories is only to sow disastrous illusions. The masses are right to reject these illusions, and, instead, try to find some solidarity with white labor—the white rank-and-file workers who do oppose management. Not only are they involved throughout the country in big strikes together, but the Black workers are right to use this as the reason for not isolating themselves from the white workers by lumping them in the same category as the whitey who is boss.

It may appear to the middle class Negro that it is only a question of working out "new lines of communication" with the masses to bring the "message" to them. But the Black masses refuse to blind themselves to the inherent faults of leaders—even the uncorrupted ones—who are under the illusion that they can get something for the masses within the system. The masses know that, by any name, these crumbs called "reforms" are, in fact, an acceptance of the system.

Nor are they about to accept a Sunday sermon as a "philosophy of history." Just as Black national-

ism didn't change its class nature by moving from Elijah Muhammad's "Nation of Islam" to the Christianity of a Black Jesus and a Black Madonna, so Black Power, exhilarating as that naturally is, will not mean tearing the system up by its roots unless it means mass power, working-class power. This is what a Black worker meant when he said, "I like to listen to Rap Brown and Stokely Carmichael. I like to hear them lay it on the line to whitey. They talk it up good. But that doesn't mean I'll follow them. I have to see things change right here, first," and he pointed to the production line.

Like the human force itself, theory, too, cannot be created out of thin air, no matter how many sermons some leaders and their publicists christen "a philosophy of history." For a philosophy of liberation one must have a view of the movement of history. Theory has its own history, its own roots, its own dynamic. No greater page has been written in American history, for example, than the one by the Abolitionists. Their philosophy of history—to abolish slavery—was the greatest for its time and place.

But once that vision exhausted itself with the abolition of chattel slavery by Civil War, not even a Frederick Douglass, who saw the need for political struggles, nor a Wendell Phillips, who saw the need for a new force white as well as Black labor—could extend the lifetime of the old philosophy of history.

The time had come, with the end of the Civil War, for a new philosophy of history based on a new, united labor force, and a new vision. This new vision was one of man himself who would be whole, ending once and for all the class division between manual and mental labor. Man himself would be that unity of body, heart and mind which could, by its mass movement, reshape the whole course of human history.

That is precisely the greatness of Karl Marx; he never separated mass movement from the underlying philosophy of freedom that would change, in its entirety, the whole course of human development. The very idea of theory was transformed from an intellectual exercise into a historic narrative which, precisely because it dealt with actions of masses who were doing their own thinking, became, at one and the same time, self-emancipation and historic Reason.

It will not do to speak of a "philosophy of history" as if that, to use an expression of Marx's, is nothing more than "the evacuating motion" of the intellectual's own head. Unless the philosophy arises out of a historic movement of masses struggling for total freedom, and the whole world is its stage, it can neither answer the urgency of our life and times, nor bear the seeds of the future forward movement of humanity. Because the Carmichaels understand this (but only in part), they are trying to associate "Black Power" with the struggles of the "Third

World." The advantage there is that this means the mellowing of the blackness, since there are many oppressed whites, yellows, and whatever other color the human is.

The trouble is that this "Third World" that is being associated with "Black Power" seems to be only that part of it which follows the "Communist line"— and that only at the moment when it is not revolutionary, but more racist than either nationalist or

internationalist. At the same time, Carmichael is so preoccupied with "shortcuts to revolution" (guerrilla warfare) that he doesn't even realize that, instead of a shortcut, he is holding on to a short circuit. But the revolution in America is not about to short circuit itself before it has ever gained sufficient momentum to achieve the goal of total freedom.

The advantage of all the talk of Black Power is its own dynamism, the fact that it is altogether too late now to turn it back to a talk among "leaders." What some call the civil rights doldrums, and others call the fatal division within the Black nationalist movement, we, of News and Letters Committees, see as the organization of mass thought by the masses themselves. There is no substitute for this self-organization of thought, any more than there is a substitute for the self-emancipation of the masses. The task is too large, too vital, to be left to intellectuals, or even to a "cadre organization." It has to be a mass activity.

At the same time, the very need for such mass participation will not tolerate mere waiting for "the

continued on p. 5

American

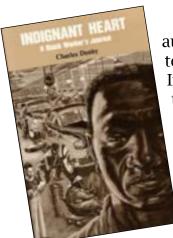
CIVILIZATION

On Tria

# Marxist-Humanist Literature on the Black movement for freedom

<u>All</u> News and Letters Committees books and pamphlets takes up the Black struggle for freedom and that is the main theme of several. Three of the many are:

# Indignant Heart: A Black Worker's Journal, by Charles Denby

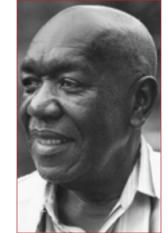


Charles Denby's autobiography is a testament to the struggle for freedom. In Part I, Denby recounts the hardships he endured growing up as a Black person in the rural South. He escapes to the North only to discover a more sophisticated form of racism and bondage. Part II, written 25 years later,

chronicles his experiences in

the mid-1950s as the Civil Rights Movement was about to explode.

We hear his stories as an active participant in all the mass struggles of the next two decades—from the 1955-56 Montgomery Bus Boycott to the 1967 uprising in Detroit whose history is echoed today in the mass demonstrations following the murder of George Floyd. He takes up the radical Black Caucuses in the Auto unions that followed the Detroit



Charles Denby

Rebellion, and his participation and understanding of Marxism and the Left and how it did, and did not, comprehend the depth of thought and action of the Black freedom movement.

American Civilization On Trial: Black Masses as Vanguard, by Raya Dunayevskaya
Contents:

### Introduction

- 1. Of Patriots, Scoundrels and Slave Masters
- 2. Compelling Issues at Stake
  Part I. From the First through the
  Second American Revolution
- 1. Abolitionism, First Phase: From "Moral Suasion" to Harpers Ferry
- 2. Abolitionism, Second Phase: The Unfinished Revolution

# Part II. The Still Unfinished Revolution

- 1. Northern Labor Struggles to Break Capital's Stranglehold, 1877-1897
- 2. 1¼ Million Forgotten Negro Populists

### Part III. Imperialism and Racism

- 1. Rise of Monopoly Capital
- 2. Plunge into Imperialism
- 3. Racism
- 4. New Awakening of Labor: The IWW

### Part IV. Nationalism and Internationalism

- 1. The Negro Moves North
- 2. Garveyism vs. Talented Tenth
- 3. Marxism

### Part V. From Depression through World War Two

- 1. The CIO Changes the Face of the Nation and Makes a Break in Black "Nationalism"
- 2. March on Washington Movement
- 3. The Communists Oppose the Independent Black Movement

### Part VI. African-Americans as Touchstone of History

- 1. Black Urbanization
- 2. The Two-Way Road to African Revolutions

### Part VII. Facing the Challenge: 1943-1963

- 1. The Self-Determination of People and Ideas
- 2. The New Voices We Heard
- 3. What We Stand For—Who We Are

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

# by John Alan

# FROM THE WRITINGS OF RAYADUNAYEVSKAYA

### Black mass revolt

continued from p. 4

day of revolution." The need demands daily practice, daily laboring at the task of working out a new relationship of theory to practice. It is this which transforms the possibility of achieving a new unity of theory and practice into an actual adventure. . . .

The purpose of developing this unity of Black and white, of theory and practice, of national and international relations, is to construct the means by which the tearing up of the capitalist system by its roots would assure the reconstruction of society on totally new, truly human foundations—free from wars, racism, economic crises and the mutilation of human beings.

Toward this end, we invite you to join with us. The task that still remains to be done can be achieved only by spontaneous actions of the masses themselves. But no Great Walls separate spontaneity from organization. They, too, are related—as is thought to action. Any separation of one from the other would be fatal. The unifying cement for the two is the type of organization which includes the organization of one's thought. That task, too, cannot be achieved without you. We invite you to join with us on the hard road to total freedom.

—News and Letters Committees

### **Contents**:

Preface by the National Editorial Board of News and Letters Committees

- **Ch. 1**. Permanent War or "Revolution in Permanence"? The Continuing Challenge of Black Masses as Vanguard
- **Ch. 2**. The Struggle for Civil Rights and the Limits of Political Emancipation
- **Ch. 3.** Dialectics and Economics: The New Challenges Posed by Globalized Capital
- **Ch. 4**. Prisoners Speak for Themselves—People of Color and the Prison Industrial Complex
- **Ch. 5**. The Self-Determination of the Idea In the African-American Struggle for Freedom



John Alan

**Appendix**: Grenada: Revolution and Counter-Revolution, by Raya Dunayevskaya

### From chapter 3:

"Of all the movements and revolts that emerged in the 1990s against reconstructed capitalism, the most significant was the Los Angeles rebellion of 1992. Though

set off by the acquittal of the police officers who had viciously beaten Rodney King, the revolt called into question the entire legacy of police abuse, judicial misconduct, unemployment, poverty, and alienated conditions of life and labor that have become so endemic to the development of today's global capitalism."

To order any of these books or pamphlets, click on cover image or see page 7

# AMERICAN CIVILIZATION ON TRIAL, COAST TO COAST

I saw the demonstrators marching through my neighborhood from my window and ran down in my nightgown and mask to join them. Thousands of protesters have taken to the streets in many cities since the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis. These protests go deeper than Floyd's murder. They expose the lies and hypocrisy and make explicit the slogans, "We are all in this together" and "We



Chicago, June 6

are one," that have been thrown around since the COVID-19 outbreak. Here in Chicago one young Black protester said to me, "If we

are 'one,' we too could be murdered by the police. Black people are fighting for the right to exist." One elderly white couple held up a beaten-up sign that said, "We will not forget." The woman told me, "We marched against this over 50 years ago. We held up this same sign then. What does it mean that we are here again? We need permanent change." Suzanne Rose Chicago

June 3 began with people calling and texting Detroit city officials saying: Release Tristan Taylor from jail and drop the incite to riot charge. By 2:00 PM Tristan was released and the incite charge was dropped. The June 4 march was bigger than the day before and character-changing, some think. People kept marching and when curfew hit at 8:00 PM about 500 people remained in protest and ready to face cops and arrest. Then Mayor Mike Duggan with police Chief James Craig said enforcing the curfew was "optional" and decided not to enforce it. Many people stayed in the street and folks in neighborhoods were watching it all. People in the march celebrated. It was a good day in Detroit.

Demonstrator Detroit, Mich.

This report from my favorite cousin, a conservative Catholic and never an activist, on a protest march in my hometown of Morgantown, W. Va., was evidence to me that the murder of George Floyd is an historic turning point: "I got stuck in a very well organized and peaceful demonstration in downtown Morgantown. I sat in my car on High Street for probably 25 minutes and just watched. Basketball and football players demonstrated along with coaches, and lots of white people too. They had bullhorns and I listened to two of the speakers. They were both African American and were trying to stress the importance of Black people voting to get things changed. There have been demonstrations all over our state for two days and not one arrest.

Erica R. Morgantown, W. Va.



Memphis, June 18. Photo by <u>Sean Davis</u>.

I'm no expert at crowd estimates, but the entire court-yard of the Memphis, Tenn., Civil Rights Museum, the street, and the park across from the museum were all filled with people

gathered for training in nonviolent civil disobedience on June 4. Organized and led by The Coalition of Concerned Citizens (CCC), the evening was filled with good information, inspiring meditations, and encouragement to participate in community organizations seeking justice through a variety of means. Please note that Memphis Mayor Loeb/Strickland refuses to meet with the leaders of CCC, and leaders of the Memphis Interfaith Coalition for Action and Hope, among others, but instead staged a photo-op

# READERS'VIEWS

event on June 3 with someone handpicked by the Mayor. This is no way to fulfill the responsibilities of political leadership. Congrats to the organizers of the training session for continuing to act for the well-being of all of us in Memphis.

Activist Memphis

A week or so ago the owner of several downtown Tampa, Fla., restaurants which target entertainment to a sizable Black clientele posted on social media "shoot them all." When a woman asked "Who? The cops? The protesters?" she got no reply. She then put his post on blast. A protest in front of one of the restaurants was organized the next day. About 300 people came out for several hours. The police were a block away but did not confront the demonstrators. Meanwhile, numerous reports of sex discrimination in his businesses, date rape drugs he put into girls' drinks and then raped them, and other abuses emerged on social media. But the owner, Franco, proceeded to text his staff at one location: "Don't accept [N-word] money tonight." As Charles Denby wrote in Indignant Heart: A Black Worker's Journal, "Few can look upon a calm sea and know when a storm will sweep all filth to the shore."

Downtown resident Tampa, Fla.

### **COPS IN SCHOOLS**

The School Board in Chicago, appointed by the Mayor, voted 4-3 on June 24 to keep 200 Chicago cops stationed in public schools, instead of reallocating the \$33 million they drain from kids' learning into the nurses and counselors that so many schools are missing. Their decision was no surprise after Mayor Lightfoot voiced her opposition to removing cops—the surprise was that all three women on the School Board listened to teachers, students, parents and protesters and voted against the Mayor's wishes.

Parent Chicago

### **POLICE AND POWER**

Who do these people think they are who used a no-knock warrant to bust into someone's house in the middle of the night in plain clothes and thenwhen one of the people they've scared out of their minds fights back-murder another, as they did to Breonna Taylor? What kind of world do we live in where we give these people (mostly white men) such power and weapons? And to engage at that level when there is no imminent threat, no violence occurring except what they themselves have created. It's enraging. They're like the worst gang and paramilitary force combined. I imagine they're kind of like the Taliban. It is madness.

Feminist Chicago

It's not about good or bad cops. They are all human beings, some with more humanity and integrity than others. It's about an economic system that thrives on inequalities. Only social inequalities guarantee profit. The police/military were created to protect aristocracies from the hungry, and to promote their agendas. There are new forms of aristocracy in the world now. The U.S. began as an empire divided by class, race, and gender. It continues as one. An empire will always confront the resistance, despair, intelligence, and rage of the less powerful. Sometimes there will be more abundance, therefore less rage. Other times there will be more hunger, anger, and fear.

The police are here to control us. They will be hiring more people, they will be training them in their death-oriented philosophy.

Anna Maillon
Los Angeles

The cops in Miami showed how they regard the citizens as cannon fodder on Dec. 4, as they gleefully played "cowboys and Indians" with the jewelry store robbers while using innocent citizens in their cars as human shields. The Miami cops are typical of cops nationwide. They are not "officer friendlies." They protect the rich and their main job is to make as many arrests as possible to keep that street-to-court-to-prison pipeline full.

Prisoner Olney Springs, Colo.

### STYLE AND MEANING

Under the impact of Black mass revolt, the Associated Press has finally decided to capitalize "Black" when talking about people—half a century after N&L did. That's good, but their justification is incoherent. The principle that should be followed is the recognition of Subjects of revolution, which is why N&L capitalizes words such as Indigenous, Gay and Women's Liberation.

Franklin Dmitryev Chicago

### **SPORTS FANS SPEAK**

Because of George Floyd's murder by a Minneapolis cop taking a knee on his neck, New Orleans Saints quarterback Drew Brees was asked about Colin Kaepernick taking a knee to protest police violence against Blacks. He evaded the question as he and so many other football players and NFL owners have for three years, by pretending it was disrespectful to the troops. But times have changed since the three years that Kaepernick has been blacklisted. Within a day the outcry from fellow athletes, fans and the public forced Brees to issue an apology claiming he hadn't understood the issue. Even NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell, who oversaw all 30 teams denying Kaepernick a job, added his own apology. It is no commentary on the sincerity of either apology to point out they knew their old answers would no longer work. Football fan

Chicago



Christopher Columbus statue outside the State Capitol in St. Paul, Minn., after a group led by American Indian Movement members tore it down on June 10. Photo by <u>Tony Webster</u>.

It astounds me that in New York Gov. Cuomo and Mayor de Blasio are defending the statue of Christopher Columbus towering over Central Park, even as monuments to other slave traders and pedophiles have been toppled after George Floyd's murder. If they are fearful of disloyalty to their Italian ancestry, then pick an Italian American. Some would suggest replacing Columbus with labor martyrs Sacco and Vanzetti, but even Yogi Berra would do. I'm no Yankees fan, but one pearl of wisdom from Yogi is made for our COVID-19 quarantine and "OPEN IT UP" times: "Nobody goes to that restaurant any more, it's too crowded."

Sequestered West Bronx

### **REVOLT: WHERE TO NOW?**

The outpouring of grief and anger in the USA is welcomed as it shows the spontaneous movement of the masses. However it would have been more effective if there had been a general strike. The problem here however is that while the consciousness of the masses are rebellious this has to translate into a revolutionary Marxist consciousness that places self-awareness of workers to replace capitalism with a socialist society not only in the USA but globally. A huge task but it still needs to be done to stop humanity descending into a state of barbarism.

North East England

The violence against police, the rioting, the looting and the arson during the protests over the police



Susan Stellar for N&L.

murder of Mr. George Floyd are a reflection in a mirror held up by the dispossessed, the marginalized, the vulnerable minorities to this violent, racist, sexist, ageist, corrupt, outmoded system—capitalism—that we exist under. The hypocritical capitalist politicians and

media are blinded by their servitude to mammon. While they condemn violence and looting, sermonizing that it detracts from the message of "justice for George," they are in accord with centuries of violence and oppression against Black people and other minorities. That the death of one person could set off such mass protests across the entire planet is a measure of the fragility of the dying capitalist system. It is like a patient with COVID-19 in the ICU.

Curtis Battle Creek, Mich.

### **HEALTH WORKERS SPEAK**

I do caution as a healthcare worker, that it can be dangerous to consider this pandemic as a war. That discourse is used to rationalize our suffering, martyrdom and death. Healthcare should be focused on care and healing, the opposite of war.

Health worker Los Angeles

\*\*\* Currently workers have difficulties surviving in spite of the extra money that people on unemployment can get, unless they still "could" work. In the states that have returned to work, workers have not been able to get unemployment as long as a job is available to them. I'm an essential worker at a mental health agency working with people escaping/healing from domestic violence. Most of my coworkers make minimum wage. A couple people left at the beginning of the pandemic because they were working very hard and receiving so little money it was too much for them. Most of us are exposed to people living on the street. I work with people that have been in shelter for a few months. The frustration is that they all had plans to keep moving on with their lives. People are feeling frustrated and overcome with despair. It's hard to keep their spirits high. I'm grateful to have a job. I can't quit. If I wanted to take a break, it would be an unpaid furlough.

Another health worker Los Angeles

Editor's note: Due to pandemic restrictions, for the time being N&L will unfortunately be online only.

### METHODOLOGY AND LIBERATION

Dunayevskaya's concept of "Why Being Against 'What Is' Is Incomplete without the Corollary, What One Is For" (see "Methodology of Perspectives" May-June 2020) is important. The opposition to police brutality and institutional racism is a magnificent manifestation of the importance of "being against." Is the expression "Black Lives Matter" a seedling posing what we are for, total liberation? How can that flourish? What methodology aids the process of coming to full human freedom?

Dunayevskaya poses the challenge for us to work out What We Are For in a way that is Concrete and Universal. It needs to be Concrete to answer the problems and contradictions of the here and now. It needs to be Universal, encompassing the whole history of humanity's fight for freedom, so that we can learn not to fall into traps of "shortcuts" that lead to dead ends, or incomplete reformism, both of which leave us still unfree.

How to be concrete as well as universal? How to be against the old society and for a new revolutionary beginning? This is where the philosophy of dialectics comes in, that is, the struggle for liberation captured as method. If we can comprehend this method as it has been historically developed by



Hegel and then the most revolutionary

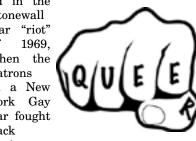
by Marx, and at the same time actively recreate it for ourselves in the here and now of this rebellious moment, then we will be reaching towards a new human beginning, a new society.

> **Marxist-Humanist Mexico City**

### **LGBTQ LIBERATION**

Thank you for this very comprehensive overview of the specific ways the pandemic is affecting LBGTIQ people ["Being LGBTQ in the COVID-19 era," p. 11]. Thanks to the mass protests for Black Lives Matter, the mainstream TV news framed Gay Pride demonstrations this year as root-

ed in the Stonewall Bar "riot" 1969, of when the patrons in a New York Gay bar fought back against



police brutality and a raid on the bar, sparking the entire Gay liberation movement. The story noted that the first Gay Pride March in 1970 in New York was a protest march, not a cultural parade.

> **Susan Stellar Detroit**

### WORKER-STUDENT VICTORY

An update on "#FixTheElevators," March-April N&L: In a victory for worker-student solidarity, the Board of Governors at Wayne State University has agreed to an additional \$6 million to fix 16 elevators.

> Hank **Detroit**

### **IMMIGRANTS AND THE COURT**

As I was reading about the Supreme Court's 6-3 decision on discrimination against LGBTs, I happened upon another good nugget: U.S. v. California is dismissed without review. So sanctuary cities laws

**Solidarity activist Pasadena** 

Working against the oppressor in immigration court is stressful and helpless at times. The Supreme Court victory regarding DACA was well celebrated and gave us hope that one day there will be a reform for our broken immigration system!

Reyna **Cyberspace** 

I'm a DACA recipient and for the longest time I've wanted to be an elementary school teacher. I remember not knowing a single English word and I'm just thinking about the teachers who helped me learn English. For that reason I want to help other kids as well.

### **DACA** recipient **Cyberspace**

I am a Temporary Protected Status recipient and I believe that we also should get a shot. DACA and TPS recipients not only contribute towards the economy of the U.S. but we also deserve better lives for ourselves and our families as we have the courage to keep on going in the midst of uncer-**TPS recipient Los Angeles** 

Happy day for our movement and DACA recipients. I'm never forgetting about my family who never benefitted from the program, and never forgetting that papers do not equal our radical liberation. It doesn't end until all

> For liberation **Cyberspace**

### **BLACK AUGUST**



of us win.

I really enjoyed the article "Black August, from 1971 to 2011-13" (Nov.-Dec. 2019 N&L). I've used it to educate the younger fellows here.

**Prisoner** Sumner, III.

### **VOICES FROM BEHIND BARS**

I love getting N&L. It gives my soul much-needed hope and continuously keeps my spirit high. Just knowing that people all over the world are not just experiencing some of the same struggles that I face, but are resisting, fighting, and advocating for freedom, keeps me strong and lets me know I'm not alone. This is the real news, not

that "fake news" designed to keep the masses misinformed.

> Prisoner Sonyea, N.Y.



Being down ten years and being on this side of the fence has made me look at the world

with new eyes and a much bigger heart, because of the type of people who cross my tracks. When I get out I will give the real story on how the California Department of Corrections and rehabilitation is getting down, so we can bring a stop to the injustice.

**Prisoner** Represa, Calif.

I was convicted of "destruction of an energy facility" or destroying a coal-fired power plant. Capitalism will literally burn through all the natural communities on earth within a few generations. Capitalism: turning living communities into dead communities. The Dept. of Justice tried to place a "terrorism enhancement" on me at sentencing. They failed! And yet, the Bureau of Prisons placed a terrorist management variable on me in order to place me in a medium/high security violent prison run by racially motivated gangs fueled by rampant drug addiction and readily available drugs in a prison the guards have control of. So I am a radical social justice activist trying to stop global warming, doing eight years in a violent prison ruled by racially motivated beatings.

> **Prisoner** Florence, Colo.

I know from experience that the U.S. imprisons citizens for political writing. This arbitrary and lawless state action threatens every thinking American, though too few acknowledge it. I cannot but defy them, proving they have not silenced me, by devoting the rest of my life to fight for justice. I have learned orders of magnitude more than I knew before being imprisoned. **Eric Pepke** 

Petersburg, Va.

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# **Anti-racist protests across the U.S.**

Protests of George Floyd's murder and police brutality in general have erupted all over the Chicago area—from demonstrations so huge and militant that Mayor Lori Lightfoot felt compelled to stop all public transportation and close streets leading into the heart of Chicago, to the smallest suburbs and neighborhoods. Below are reports of only a few.

### **Chicago Uptown**



On June 5, hundreds showed up at a rally in Chicago's Uptown neighborhood for EMT worker Breonna Taylor. It was called only the day before. Taylor was a 26-year-old Black woman living in Louisville, Ky., whom plainclothes police murdered when they busted down her door serving a "no-knock warrant" in the dead of night. They pumped eight bullets into her as her boyfriend tried to protect her by throwing his body over hers.

### SAY HER NAME: BREONNA TAYLOR!

At the "Say Her Name" rally there were a couple thousand people and it was pretty diverse in terms of race, class and LGBTQ people—a nice Chicago crowd. It reminded me of why I love Chicago. The majority there were women.

The event was started by Ashabi Owagboriaye, who put a notice on Facebook. At the rally she said:

"Black women are often forgotten. Black women are loved in the shadows. Black women are often discarded, used and abused.

"Once people are done with us they pretend that they don't know us, forget all the atrocities they have acted upon us and then act as if we're the ones at fault for speaking out because we're angry....I don't think you understand how exhausting it is to keep seeing stories about Black women getting hurt and then no longer hearing about them as if they were not even part of our lives."

### Chicago West Side, Union Park

June 6 saw a huge anti-racist rally and march in Union Park on the West Side. There were eas-

ily more than 10,000 there. It went from militant chanting to parading back and forth.

After the rally people marched down to the old Cabrini-Green hous-

ing project, where there were salt trucks and National Guard tanks blocking roads, protect-

a week. The next day there were two police boats on the river! For what? That's crazy. The mayor ordered all the freeway exits and enance ramps blocked from way north, through all of downtown, to way further south. My sister couldn't get off the expressway. She saw a lot of military tanks. They're not there to protect protesters or free speech. They are there to prevent it. I saw nothing

ing the gentrified area. They'd been there for

but van after van after van filled with police. But despite that police and military presence, thousands of people showed up anyway, even if it took longer to get there.

### **Chicago North Side**

On June 7. I went to a protest in Lincoln Square on the North Side. It appeared to be huge, several hundred at least. It was so big that I couldn't get through to the park. We saw people lined up on

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Montrose, down Lincoln to at least Sunnyside. After the rally, protesters marched from Lincoln Square to Wrigleyville to hold a sit-in outside the Chicago Police Department's 19th District station. There was no planned march, so this was spontaneous.

-Chicago feminists



### **Outrage in San Francisco Bay Area** Walnut Creek

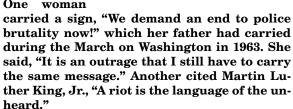
Since May 29, there have been ongoing demonstrations sparked by the outrage over the police murder of George Floyd. They spread throughout the many San Francisco Bay Area cities, including ones not especially known for activism like Walnut Creek. Many demonstrators, chanting "I can't breathe" or "Hands up, don't shoot" as police lines formed around them, highlighted the pervasive and regular police terror against unarmed Black people on the streets.

### San Francisco

A crowd of several hundred gathered in San Francisco on May 30. People were very sober and

their signs projected many aspects of the horror of this moment as well as how each one was asserting their individual responsibility. They showed respect for others by taking precautions against the other imminent danger of COVID-19.

deep A sense of history was present throughout. One woman



The many "Black Lives Matter" signs reflect-

 $_{
m ed}$ ways which people expressed

universal meaning, "white silence = violence." This harkens back to AIDS activists' slogan "Silence = Death" as well struggles

against domestic violence. Others said, "An injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere" and "I don't wait 'til it's someone I know." Yet another Black Lives Matter sign read "Still we rise."

The universality of the message was not contained within U.S. borders. People carried signs in Arabic. Some signs read, "From America to Palestine: abolish police, prisons and the state" and "Police brutality = state terrorism."

The revolt is challenging the capitalist system from the perspective of people asserting their right to live. Many have been pushed over the edge since the pandemic. They already had either a precarious connection to living through a low-wage job or had been totally discounted and left to fend for themselves on the street.

This San Francisco demonstration, as many others around the country, persisted into the evening when many went on their own spontaneous "shopping spree." One of the signs in the afternoon caught the totally inverted inhuman character of the present moment: "Vote out the looter in chief!"

-Marxist Humanists

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## THOUGHTS FROM THE OUTSIDE

## Capitalism & looting

On May 30 I was in San Francisco after 10:00 PM (see "Outrage in San Francisco" this page). I saw a police car but they didn't follow me. By the time I got to Howard Street, police were everywhere-motorcycles lined up in a row blocking the street. The sidewalks were full of mostly young people, the majority dressed in black, walking fast. I thought there must have been a concert that just let out. But that couldn't be true because of COVID-19.

At the downtown shopping area, there was a traffic jam, which is rare at that time of night. Lights were flashing in the distance. I thought there might have been an accident. Little did I know, right in front of me something had evolved. I didn't know what it was until I saw the youngsters bend the corner carrying items like shoes, sweatsuits, little TVs, etc.

It seemed to have been a signal for people to jump out of their cars and get theirs. It was like organized madness. They were running, but carefully. As soon as they got what they could, they got back in their cars and dispersed. Within minutes I was alone. On the one hand I understand why they did that, I was happy about an attack on corporate Amerika. On the other hand, why do we have to resort to this type of activity?

### CAPITALISM CREATES IMPOVERISHMENT

The previous day, the mayor described stages the city would have to go through to open businesses. But many jobs are not coming back. A whole lot of people are suffering. This pandemic will last at least till September. Staying home does not put food on the table. What can you do?

Even at the best of times, under capitalism the only thing you can do is sell your labor. Labor becomes a mere means to life. Even before this, many were living on the edge. I was shocked how many have fallen off that edge, living on the street, forgotten. What I saw that night was a lot of people asserting their right to live. This, after we all saw Minneapolis police smiling while choking a Black man, George Floyd, to death.

Of course, there are a lot of opportunists, taking advantage of this moment to promote their own agenda. People have various ideas; many old organizations say "follow me." Many ideas won't do. When people start talking about Black businesses, that is not a solution. When the Black Panther Party in the 1960s talked about Black businesses, it was only in terms of something temporary that we need until we get over. Those who see Black business as a viable alternative have met their historical barrier, they have no vision beyond this. We need fresh ideas.

We can't forget why this is the reality. A lot of Black businesses are marginal. Can we imagine a society where money is not the determinant of what is real? Through looting, people are crossing the class divide. Those who object don't feel the pain of people who have nothing in a society which doesn't acknowledge they are human. This feeling of being totally disconnected from official society is pervasive in the Black community.

### THE POLICE SERVE CAPITAL

One day I was riding the T train. A bunch of teens, a little rowdy, got on the train. They were running from the police. One of them asked, "Why are we running?" Another answered, "Don't you know when you see the police you have to run? If you have to ask, you must not be Black." Why do we have to explain to children, 11, 12 years old, that they have to fear people in uniforms? Why is that the only hope of keeping them relatively safe? Why, after all these years, do we still have to have this conversation?

It's not enough to point out that police are today's slave catchers. The police are not here to "serve and protect" you. The police are here for capital to maintain itself. Now, after mass demonstrations against decades of police murders of Blacks, there is talk again of police reform. Really? After decades demanding an end to police brutality, no reform has worked. As Black singer-songwriter Keith Sweat said, "merry-go-round, merry-go-round." How do we get off this merry-go-round? It means questioning the system itself.

A group of us former prisoners, United Players, are passing out food to children. It's one way we are trying to divest ourselves from this system. Karl Marx says that capitalism creates a lot of wealth, but it also creates poverty, it creates the reserve army of the unemployed, which is necessary for capitalism's existence.

The police are there to enforce that reality. We can't create a new reality by cooperating with authorities who enforce the current reality that is antithetical to our humanity. What we prisoners learned at Pelican Bay is that we have to begin from our own activity and relations with each other.

# Trump bars immigrants but invites in COVID-19

As COVID-19 spread its way across the U.S., polling firms like Bipartisan Policy Center asked people what types of responses the government should prioritize. Curbing immigration consistently ranked at the bottom, even among Republicans, but you wouldn't know it by listening to Donald Trump.

After taking little or no action before or during the pandemic to secure PPE, ventilators, and testing kits, Trump exerted effort to close the border with Mexico. Racist White House advisor Stephen Miller has tried for years to pinpoint diseases like mumps and the common cold as a public health rationale to cut immigration.

### 'NO HEARING REQUIRED' TO DEPORT

Trump's Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued a directive to border agents on March 20: immediately deport immigrants without documents, no hearing required. On April 21, Trump extended the summary removals to all immigrants. Refugees in the border region of northern Mexico, already waiting in line for months due to a per diem limit on admission which was already in place, are now stranded indefinitely.

The Associated Press reported that a 13-year-old girl from El Salvador arrived in April to claim asylum. Her mother, a former police officer, resides legally in the U.S., but the girl was deported and is presumably a target of the same street gangs who threatened her mother.

A similar fate awaited a teenage boy from Honduras, until a federal judge temporarily blocked the policy as applied to child asylum seekers, who have the right to a hearing under a 2008 law to prevent child trafficking. The judge's injunction, however, only applies to the individual case while litigation

If Trump's policy is eventually ruled unconstitutional by the District Court, he will likely make an emergency appeal to the Supreme Court, which has been quick to grant such appeals on 5-4 decisions. In a January dissent, Justice Sonia Sotomayor denounced how "claiming one emergency after another, the Government has recently sought stays in an unprecedented number of cases.

#### **ELIGIBLE FOR HEALTHCARE BUT DENIED**

At the time of her writing, the court was granting a hearing in the 24th "emergency" in three years! It ultimately decided in a 5-4 ruling to allow Medicaid and food stamps to be added to the definition of "public charge" in a rule denying immigration rights

The addition of Medicaid means even documented immigrants who are eligible for healthcare under the Affordable Care Act (ACA) might put themselves in jeopardy if the

to beneficiaries of some government programs.

## Free Chanthon Bun! Stop ICE transfers!

San Rafael, Cal.—On June 9 several dozens of us gathered in front of San Quentin prison, with many more participating remotely, to demand freedom for Chanthon Bun. The board had found him suitable for parole. But instead of honoring the board's deci-

sion, the California Department of Corrections and rehabilitation (CDCr) intends to transfer him to an ICE detention center, another form of imprisonment and another serious risk of contracting COVID-19.

### HISTORY OF SAN QUENTIN

The protest began with a historical grounding of this moment by Rev. Deborah Lee of Interfaith

Movement for Human Integrity, who gave a history of San Quentin prison, bringing in the current "outcry against police brutality...[which is] about the whole system...Black men are imprisoned at ten times the rate of white men, Black women five times the rate of white women, Black immigrants are 7% of immigrants but 20% of those facing deportation."

She continued, "We see not only police brutality as

a weapon, but the weapon of COVID-19. [The outbreak] shows disregard for the lives of those in California's prisons, jails and detention centers."

Ny Nourn, from Advancing Justice-Asian Law Caucus, named some of the many organizations participating, including those advocating for prisoners, immigrants, people of color, young women and oth-

Urszula said the California Coalition for Women Prisoners opposes all CDCr to ICE transfers, especially while the pandemic continues to spread. It is unconscionable for CDCr to send Chanthon Bun from one unsafe institution to another. The swift release of older and immunocompromised prisoners is necessary to save hundreds of lives.

### NONE OF THE VULNERABLE RELEASED

Gov. Gavin Newsom received a list of 25 vulnerable women who have active commutation requests he could approve. He has not released any. Patricia Wright, a Black woman with terminal liver cancer who has less than six months to live, has served more than 20 years. She said, "I suffer from loneliness. It's harder than cancer. It's heart-wrenching being away from my children and grandchildren."

Wright is a survivor of domestic violence

who speaks for many others deprived of their voice. We stand in solidarity with all people demanding justice. We, the whole society, need protection from the brutality of prison guards, ICE agents and police, and from domestic vio-

> lence. CCWP stands with Chanthon Bun, and all human beings struggling for freedom. Stop ICE transfers now!

Oscar, from All Of Us or None, recounted his experience with prison and ICE. A Salvadoran refugee, his four brothers have already been deported, one of whom was killed after being sent to El Salvador. Oscar demanded an end to mass incarceration, citing its effects on immigrant communities.

Ali, a Black former prisoner who spent decades in San Quentin prison, spoke about the despair on the streets that leads to some young people making bad choices. They end up in these inhuman concentration camps. He spoke of the need to

break down all racial divisions in society and rebuild it so it reflects all of us.

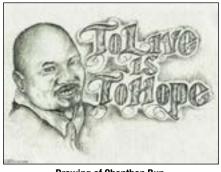
### **INTENTIONALLY SPREADING COVID-19**

Dr. Nicole Tantoco said, "Last week ICE reported that nearly one half of the people they tested in the detention camps are positive for COVID-19. The transfer of patients from one cage to another

under these conditions is in direct violation of my Hippocratic oath. As all CDCr and ICE facilities are emerging as centers of COVID-19, I stand with the beautiful people of this coalition to urge Gov. Newsom and CDCr to free them all!"

Another doctor reported data from the Marshall Project that, as of June 8, over 40,000 people in U.S. penal institutions have tested positive for COVID-19 and that 496 individ-

uals have died. That is unacceptable! We are in the middle of a powerful Black Civil Rights movement. It demands that we rethink and reimagine what a just society will look like. —Urszula Wislanka



Drawing of Chanthon Bun.

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system puts them into expanded Medicaid. Furthermore, a low-income individual who gets placed into Medicaid by ACA regulations is usually prohibited from shopping for subsidized plans through the ACA marketplace.

Last December, when Latino USA spoke to Maria, a green card holder queueing in line at a privately-funded free clinic in Chicago, she said: "I could apply for Obamacare [ACA], but instead I want to wait five years when I'll be a citizen." She was afraid of the "public charge" rule jeopardizing her plans of citizenship.1

### SOME CITIZENS LESS EQUAL THAN OTHERS

This de facto stripping away of healthcare is certain to have dire consequences with COVID-19 a constant risk. The \$1,200 pandemic checks did not go out to taxpayers without a social security number.

Citizens who are married and filed jointly with a partner who has no Social Security number also receive no money. Sometimes, DACA recipients ("dreamers") received the only pandemic check that is supposed to sustain them, their parents and siblings.

Private donors are helping fill this financial gap in some places, building solidarity funds through the National Day Labor Organizing Network in Los Angeles or the Resurrection Project in Chicago. Alix Webb, an organizer in Philadelphia with Asian Americans United, told the Philadelphia Inquirer: "In early March, we began seeing hundreds of families in our communities lose business, places of employment, and having to make hard choices to work in unsafe conditions...This fund is to offer direct financial support — for food, rent, supplies, for safety."

1. Although the current "public charge" rule doesn't apply to green card holders, there is no telling how much further any future executive orders will go, and there is a possibility of losing status for other reasons and having to reapply.

### by Elise

Since the police murder of George Floyd, organizers of LGBTQ Pride events in major U.S. cities are solidarizing with Black Lives Matter and other anti-racist movements. Capital Pride in Washington, like most Pride events now online, will be an effort to "end inequity, injustice and violence against people of color." Charles Buchanan and Flower Boi's in-person rally, Pride is Cancelled, will be held in St. Louis on June 5. Mr. Buchanan believes "black queer and transgender people are the most marginalized within black people." He wants Black Lives Matter to explicitly support the Black Transgender community. Los Angeles Black LGBTQ leaders are planning a solidarity march, of which LA Pride is a supporter. LA Pride's march with Black Lives Matter to protest systemic racism was abandoned because Black people thought they were not being sufficiently consulted. Intersectionality is correctly viewed as one of the ways that full human rights can be achieved for people of all races and for LGBTQ people.

Turkmenistan, one of only two Central Asian countries (along with Uzbekistan) where same-sex relations are illegal, has been escalating Queerphobic actions. Dr. Kasymberdy Garayev went missing twice last year and returned home permanently only after he recorded a video recanting his earlier statement that he was Gay, and apologizing for the pain he caused those he knows. A well-known actor and his husband and several other men were arrested and sentenced to prison for sodomy, which carries a sentence of up to two years. A young Gay man studying in Russia, forced to return to Turkmenistan when he tested HIV+, was later beaten by police and arrested as he sought treatment. Fortunately, he now lives in an undisclosed European country, thanks to help from an LGBTQ+ rights groups.

Aimee Stephens, the Transgender woman at the center of the case on which the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act prohibiting discrimination by sex includes gender identity and sexual orientation, died in May due to failing health. She was 59. ("Queer Notes," Nov.-Dec. 2018 N&L). Stephens was fired after she came out as a Transgender woman to her boss at R.G. & G.R. Harris Funeral Homes in Garden City, Mich. After a federal appeals court ruled that she had been illegally fired from her job as a funeral home director and embalmer, the funeral home appealed the case to the U.S. Supreme Court, which ruled 6-3 on June 15 that firing an employee, even in part due to their gender identity or sexual orientation, is illegal. Several media outlets, including The New York Times, Associated Press and The Detroit News, dead-named Ms. Stephens, listing her birth name, a practice frowned upon in the LGBTQ community. To help offset her end-of-life costs, which her family was unable to meet, Aimee Stephens End of Life Costs GoFundMe page has been set up.

# Black youth challenge racism, demand new society

continued from p. 1

had already evaporated, except in the mythmaking of right-wing ideologues. That, however, lives on in the legal fictions used by the Supreme Court and the Department of Justice to rationalize reactionary moves like gutting the Voting Rights Act and neutralizing oversight of racist police departments. Attorney General William Barr denied the existence of systemic racism in the police, while his boss Donald Trump said the chokehold that killed Floyd "sounds so innocent, so perfect."

It is only through the power of this revolt that reforms that seemed unthinkable yesterday are being passed today. The Minneapolis City Council unanimously voted to dismantle the police department. In several states, politicians who previously would not touch the slogan "defund the police" are now trying to co-opt it. Previously hard-fought but ineffective reforms like body cameras became yesterday's news, and the words "abolition" and "systemic change" were on many lips.

### WILL NEW ABOLITIONISM ELUDE LIMITS?

Abolitionists name themselves after the movement for immediate abolition of slavery, the greatest, most revolutionary movement of 19th-century America. Their agitation, countering the intransigent defenders of slavery, led to the Civil War, whose unfinished revolution still haunts us. The aim is to abolish not only the police but mass incarceration, which is the latest of many forms of racist social control imposed since the Civil War to maintain racial divisions and class exploitation.

Speaking of abolition—creating a world without prisons or police—is abstract to the extent that it shies away from acknowledging that this requires abolition of the class society from which these repressive forces grow, and that it can only happen through social revolution from below and its completion in the reconstruction of society on truly human foundations. That abstractness leaves openings for tendencies and leaders that would limit and co-opt the reforms proposed by abolitionists.

We have to confront the nature of the state as an excrescence of class society, which always requires force to maintain class hierarchy, and therefore requires the function that police and armies perform.

History's model of an abolition of the police is the 1871 Paris Commune. While it lasted, it did not "simply lay hold of the ready-made State machinery," as Karl Marx pointed out then. It smashed the state of which the police are a part, superseding it by a communal type of self-government. Only such a revolution that breaks down the hierarchical economic relations, including the separation of mental and manual labor, could achieve the kind of abolition aimed for today. Since the hierarchies of class, race and sex are intertwined, they must all be attacked together. The dialectics of liberation are such that all generate Subjects of revolution.

### SYSTEMIC RACISM HOSTS COVID-19

In the year of pandemic, the killing of George Floyd struck another chord: African Americans in this movement are aware that their death rate from COVID-19, nearly three times that of whites, is considered acceptable by this country's leaders, as are the deaths of other people of color, including Latinx people, people who labor in factories such as meatpacking workers, and disabled and older people—all are expendable.

They are aware that they disproportionately make up the "essential" workforce—people whose labor is demanded, though with less pay, worse benefits, fewer protections from infection, and now the administration is pushing to force them back to work in unsafe conditions by making them ineligible for unemployment or other benefits.

They are aware that they disproportionately make up the "inessential" too, in the sense of the part of the working class that is left without jobs or the means to support themselves, those who are homeless or incarcerated, or will soon be forced into those conditions.

They are aware that this institutionally racist society set them up to be more vulnerable to the disease, from exposure to pollution to discrimination in housing, working conditions and healthcare and to the fact that racism itself is a cause of disease.

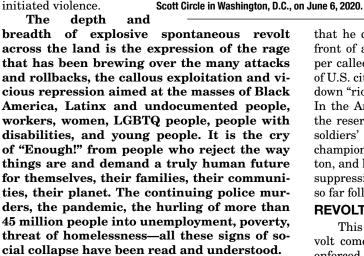
At the same time, they are aware that this cannot only be blamed on the most flagrantly racist administration in memory. On the contrary, just in the Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolis, in 2015 and 2016 Jamar Clark and Philando Castile were murdered by police who were never punished. In those last two years of the Obama administration, over 2,000 people were killed by the police across the country—a rate of murder that continues to this day.

### SPONTANEOUS REVOLT EXPLODES

Everyone can see that the uprisings are about George Floyd's death, and at the same time that they go far beyond one killing, or three killings. The police murders that have become more publicized in recent years are bad enough—as well as murders by racist vigilantes like the ones who killed Trayvon Martin in 2012 and Ahmaud Arbery this year.

However, they are the tip of the iceberg of an oppressive apparatus functioning as an integral part of a pervasively racist, exploitative class soci-

ety, that is expressed in everything from COVID-19 deaths and targeted harassment of people of color for alleged mask-wearing or quarantine violations, to higher rates of unemployment, evictions and astronomical maternal death rates of Black mothers. That is why protests quickly spread, and why many quickly turned into clashes with the hated poinitiated violence.



In Chicago, Los Angeles, Miami, the police were unable to stop their cars from being burned, turned over, tagged with graffiti. Demonstrations in city after city showed that the actions were multiracial—primarily Black people but as well Latinx, Asian, white people out in force. At the urging of protest organizers in a number of cities, whites acted as human shields between a mainly Black crowd and hostile police. That is not only a question of "being allies" but a recognition that aligning themselves with Black mass revolt is needed to move toward freedom.

It is this multiracial character that Trump and his supporters hope to cover up by claiming that "Antifa" provoked violence, disregarding the farright militants who had advertised that they would try to exploit the protests. It was a far-right boogaloo boi who killed a sheriff's deputy in Santa Cruz and a security officer in Oakland.

### BLACK REVOLT CENTRAL TO U.S. HISTORY

The historical memory of Black America does not only encompass oppression but also revolt, from antebellum slave revolts to the 1960s rebellions, from the multiracial 1992 Los Angeles rebellion and its echoes in 100 cities to the 2001 Cincinnati uprising. Most recently, after the Black Lives Matter movement emerged due to the murder of Trayvon Martin in Florida, the revolts in Ferguson, Mo., and Baltimore were sparked by the murders of Eric Garner, Michael Brown and Freddie Gray.

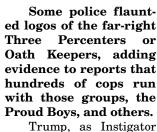
That does not mean this time is the same. For one thing, Trump's installation in the White House emboldened the fascist, militantly racist elements of U.S. society, who are now, with Trump's support, crying for the blood of protesters, dubbed "thugs" and "looters."

Wherever fascism has taken power, the police have been a crucial part of its mass base. Across the U.S., police riots met protests, even peaceful ones. Vicious, unprovoked attacks included use of tear gas and pepper spray—chemical weapons known to help the coronavirus spread, as do kettling protesters, arresting them en masse and crowding them into vans, and throwing them into crowded, unsanitary jails, which are among the worst contagion hot spots.

The orgy of police violence did not spare a seven-year-old maced by a Seattle cop, or 75-year-old Catholic Worker activist Martin Gugino, whose skull was cracked when Buffalo cops shoved him to the ground and left him there bleeding. Police intentionally attacked, harassed or arrested 400 journalists, blinding Linda Tirado in Minneapolis in one eye.

When mayors or governors declared curfews, cops used them as an excuse to assault and arrest protesters and passersby, in some cases blocking people before the curfew started so they could charge them with violating it. The authorities also targeted community institutions that sheltered protesters, like the Chicago Freedom School and Blazing Saddle, a Gay bar in Des Moines, Iowa.

Even the spotlight shined by the revolt did not stop the police killing spree: Tony McDade, May 27 in Tallahassee, Fla.; Sean Monterrosa, June 2 in Vallejo, Calif.; Rayshard Brooks, June 12 in Atlanta; Terron Jammal Boone, June 17 in Rosamond, Calif.; Andres Guardado, June 18 in Gardena, Calif. Right-wingers attacked Black Lives Matter protesters, killing Robert Forbes in Bakersfield, Calif., and sending another man to the hospital in Albuquerque, N.M. In half a dozen cities, they drove cars and a truck into crowds.



astronomical maternal death rates of Black mothers. That is why protests quickly spread, and why many quickly turned into clashes with the hated police forces, after the police initiated violence.

The depth and

Trump, as Instigator in Chief, called out the military in Washington D.C., which used helicopters to intimidate protesters. To counter his image of cowering in a bunker, he had cops attack peaceful protesters in Lafayette Park so

that he could stage a photo-op hoisting a Bible in front of a church. His Defense Secretary Mark Esper called for troops to "dominate the battle space" of U.S. cities. After threatening to send troops to put down "rioters" and "terrorists," Trump backed down. In the Army, 40% of active-duty troops and half of the reserves are people of color, and many enlisted soldiers' sympathies lie with George Floyd and his champions. However, Trump, his allies in Washington, and his base made clear that they favor a bloody suppression of the movement, and the military have so far followed their orders.

### **REVOLT IN AN UNPRECEDENTED TIME**

This new moment of Black and multiracial revolt comes at a time when rulers worldwide have enforced lockdowns made necessary by their own public health negligence, and by the lack of preparation dictated by crumbling capitalism's desperation to cut corners in the face of the low rate of profit. They have been exploiting the situation to inhibit all kinds of freedom movements, although reactionary, armed anti-lockdown protests proceed unencumbered. But patience is wearing thin.

There is no sense in waiting for a return to normal, because there is no return to normal. We are already in a new situation because of the pandemic intertwined with a deep economic crisis—a fluid situation, where the Minneapolis revolt is the newest part of the struggles underway over what kind of future the planet will have and who will determine it.

As this year's News and Letters Committees Draft Perspectives Thesis put it: "In the future, we will be living on a planet damaged by capitalism, but the possible kinds of life we can have are poles apart, depending on whether we succeed in fundamentally transforming society. In the absolute opposite of today's society, one based on freely associated labor instead of slavery to capital's production for production's sake, we can leave behind misery, precarity and antagonism, and self-development and cooperation can flourish, as can a rational relationship to nature. To get there, we need the clear direction that can only come from a philosophy of revolution."

What shines through the revolt is the underlying philosophy of humanism, and the political maturity of our age. Just as the multiplicity of handwritten messages reflected a dynamism of ideas, the hunger for theory was shown in the way books about racism and antiracism surged to the top of best-seller lists.

This new revolt arose with awareness of the risks of physical closeness during the pandemic, and with full expectation of police repression. While it is not, as yet, the beginning of a revolution, it once again reveals Black masses as vanguard in the revolutionary transformation of the U.S. and it is a sign of the depth of the passion to uproot this racist, exploitative society. Mass self-activity, the only path to freedom, "illuminates the road to the reconstruction of society on new, truly human beginnings."

The negative in that self-activity is easy to see: efforts to tear down the systems of racism and other oppressions. The positive in that negation is not as easy to hear, but it is crucial to listen—and not only to support the revolt, letting it speak and highlighting the reason in what the rulers and media portray as unreason, but to let the Idea of Freedom hear itself speak. The negation embodied in spontaneous revolt is a needed first step. To proceed to the reconstruction of society on truly human foundations requires unification of theory and practice, including a clarification not only of what masses in motion are against, but what they are for. In this way the permanence of revolt that Black masses have always represented in the United States of America can become the fullness of permanent revolution.

1. Quoted from American Civilization on Trial: Black Masses as Vanguard (News and Letters, 2003), which comprehensively demonstrates how Black masses have ever been the vanguard of freedom movements in U.S. society.

# **YOUTH IN ACTION**

### by Buddy Bell

During a stifling May heat wave in Israel, many schoolboys and some schoolgirls came to public school wearing shorts. Although that was fine for the boys, some of the girls were forced to change or go home, including in Ra'anana and Petah Tikva. Days later, a group of 12 girls from the Hefer Valley region planned to go to school together, wearing shorts. Public schools in Israel are presumed to be secular, but the girls were refused entry to their school. The day after, similar protests had spread to Kfar Saba, Modi'in, Lod and other towns.

### **High school youth fighting racism**

A national uprising of resistance to racism in policing has infused cities and towns. Youth—and especially young women of color—are leading many or most of these protests.

In **Monrovia, Calif.**, daily protests fill the park in front of the public library. Organizer <u>Selah Kelly said on KGEM</u>: "The people in this town want change, so the people that were there [on the first day]—they visualized it and said, 'You know what? I'm going to tell someone else about this, I'm going to make a flyer'... Everyone is doing their part, and it's a beautiful thing."



Some of the thousands of demonstrators in Chicago's Union Park, on June 6, 2020.

In **Wexhaw, N.C.**, hundreds of students from Ardrey Kell High School gathered to hold a protest and repaint their school's iconic rock after its graduation season design supporting the Black Lives Matter movement was defaced. <u>Kayden Hunt said to the Charlotte Observer</u>: "We want to spread love in this area, to spread that we deserve to be here, to feel comfortable here as Black students."

In Kansas City, high schooler Janelle Brown said on KCTV: "For myself for a long time, I saw [marching, protests] as 'that's the past.' I've had my own personal instances with racism and prejudice, but it amplified with George Floyd's murder. His murder was the tipping point." In Auburn, Ala., a university student told AL.com: "America still has their knee on our necks. They're suffocating us from resources, housing, all those things."

In Creve Coeur, Mo., teenager Lauren Donovan said on KSDK: "I remember hearing one of my neighbors say 'keep that Black Lives Matter stuff in Ferguson.' I feel like if we bring it into their backyards they have to look at it. [Racist violence] is not something that just goes on in Ferguson or just north county, predominantly Black neighborhoods. It goes on everywhere." After students from several Denver, Co., high schools coordinated a large march to the capitol building, Kaliya Carillo told CBS: "Young voices are the most important right now. I think we're the next generation coming up, so we need to show our leadership."

## **Stop Nestlé water grab**

**Flint, Mich.**—On April 24 an administrative law judge upheld a decision by the state government of Michigan to allow Nestlé Corporation to withdraw up to 400 gallons of water per minute, an increase from 250 gallons per minute. Nestlé is, fortunately, unable to take advantage of this decision yet because it lacks the necessary pumping capacity.

Osceola Township in Osceola County in northern Michigan had denied Nestlé's request for a permit to build a booster-pump building. Last December, the Michigan Court of Appeals upheld the denial of the permit.

Water is taken from three wells, including a well near the headwaters of Twin Creek and Chippewa Creek. Michigan Citizens for Water Conservation found that in seven culverts the water level had dropped between five and 12 inches and that the water temperatures were higher than normal. Even the existing draw of 250 gallons per minute is not sustainable.

Nestlé pays \$200 per well a year for a permit and does not otherwise pay for the water although it pays local property taxes. Nestlé Corporation has a large bottling plant near the wells and sells bottled water under the brand name "Ice Mountain."

—Dan B

# *Latin America under COVID-19*

Mexico City—With COVID-19 wreaking havoc, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) warned that the region will face the largest recession in its history. Twelve million more people will lose their jobs, bringing the total of unemployed people on the continent to 38 million, leaving 29 million more in poverty, bringing the total to well over 200 million. A food crisis looms, not because food is lacking, but because a huge sector of the population cannot afford to buy it.

### CAPITALISM'S CONTRADICTIONS REVEALED

The pandemic is revealing the grave contradictions of Latin American capitalism that, on the one hand, is strongly dependent on U.S., European and Chinese investment and extractive resources exploitation, and on the other hand, is "home-grown," particularly in Brazil and Mexico, who are striving to join the so-called developed world. Making everything worse, the COVID-19 response is under the direction of incompetent leaders and is resulting in needless suffering and mounting deaths.

Brazil—Under the fascist rule of Jair Bolsonaro, as we go to press Brazil has the second highest number of COVID-19 cases in the world. The death toll may be reaching 100,000, no one knows. Bolsonaro demands that all the states open their economies, fires health ministers who disagree with him and tried to remove COVID-19 statistics from government web sites. The great Brazilian photographer Sebastião Salgado has organized a petition demanding the protection of Indigenous peoples of the Amazon who are being devastated by the pandemic. Bolsonaro is seeking to further open up the Amazon to destructive developmentalist projects.

**Peru**—"Peru is now one of the world's worst coronavirus hot spots—its hospitals overwhelmed, its people fleeing the cities," notes *The New York Times*. It reflects a devastating inequality wherein the vast majority survive day by day in a country where few have any savings and only one in three Peruvian households have access to running water. Even Peru's president Martín Vizcarra commented: "This isn't just a health or sanitary crisis, but a social and economic crisis without precedent."

Nicaragua—The government has downplayed and obscured the reality of COVID-19. President Daniel Ortega has not implemented social distancing measures and it is one of the few nations in the world where baseball and soccer with the public in the stands was not stopped. Recently Ortega admitted that the coronavirus "is progressing slowly," but said that no one can stop working because "the country is dying." Like Brazil, in Nicaragua, no one knows the real situation of the virus.

Mexico—With the vast majority of Mexico under a "red stoplight," President López Obrador continues his travels to Mexico states, insisting on the need to rally the population to the "new normality," and continue the country's developmentalism. He is setting a terrible example in a country which needs to continue social distancing as a high rate of COVID-9 infections continues. —Eugene Walker

### **VOICES FROM THE INSIDE OUT**

#### continued from p. 1

dark and secluded streets—or in several cases, the supposed safety of their own homes—outside the view of social media. It was only Floyd's death, and the blatant callousness of the man who perpetrated the act, which brought many other incidents to light.

#### WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

The question is: what happens now? One of the sad indictments of the American psyche is the short attention span the country has when discussing race and racial disparity within our society.

George Floyd's death, tragic as it is, is the result of systemic racism which has existed on the shores of this country from before its incorporation as the USA.

Even the phrase "United States of America" has been an ill-defined concept as the country has been anything but united during its tumultuous 244-year history, and nothing—nothing—has been more divisive and unchanging a subject as race. Even Justice Thurgood Marshall, upon his retirement from the Supreme Court, stated to Black attorneys that "Nothing has changed" when it came to race relations—a statement not widely quoted by mainstream media.

After national tragedies we tend to find common ground, but this has proven to be short-lived. The irony is that one of the greatest, long-standing national tragedies is the lack of a lasting national strategy on racial disparity, especially as it pertains to every aspect of the criminal justice system.

### TRAGEDY OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

Since the end of the Civil War, communities of color have been decimated by conditions of socialized slavery that were incorporated within the early forms of the Prison Industrial Complex and which continue today.

Social death and disenfranchisement; inequitable representation on juries; overcharging people of color and over-sentencing those same persons; inadequate representation; Jim Crow—all these are incorporated in mass incarceration and police abuse of power.

Horrifyingly, the expression on the face of George Floyd's executioner was as blank—and callous—as the expressions seen in historical photographs on the faces of participants of lynchings in the South.

Here's a novel idea: while we are involved in tearing down symbols of racism around the country, even in the hallowed halls of Congress, let's also look at the words of the 13th Amendment.

Let's repeal that amendment and create a new one which states: "Slavery is now and forever abolished in the states and territories of the United States," period. And while we are at it, let's move to have states remove their allowance of slavery from their constitutions as well. That would be a start.

It is hard to have an adequate discussion on racial disparities when an element of chattel slavery is still codified on a national level. Let's start with the basics and say, "Enough!" Perhaps then real change will happen.

# Being LGBTQ in the COVID-19 era

### by Elise

The COVID-19 pandemic is hitting minority communities especially hard. The LGBTQ community is no exception. Due to economic hardship, many LGBTQ people move back in with their families. This can be dangerous because many families are not supportive or are hostile toward their LGBTQ member.

### TRANS PEOPLE SUFFERING

Transgender people are particularly hard hit. In the COVID-19 era, many Transgender people's transition surgeries have been delayed. Some LGBTQ people do not want their sexual orientation or gender identity disclosed to healthcare workers out of a justifiable fear of discrimination. Trump and his administration continue their efforts to allow healthcare providers to delay or refuse medical care due to the provider's religious beliefs, even after those efforts were struck down by federal judges in 2019. On the grounds of that edict, though, Transgender man Evan Minton was denied medically necessary treatment this year.

The pandemic is increasing the hardships they face in employment and healthcare and increasing homelessness. Before the pandemic, it was documented that Transgender people experienced those hardships more than their cisgender peers. For more information on healthcare rights—including mental healthcare—Transgender people can go to www.transequality.org/know-your-rights/healthcare.

LGTBQ people suffer more from mental illness, in part because many of us are rejected by our families, friends and much of society. We also experience

more food and healthcare insecurity. About 17% of Queer U.S. citizens do not have health insurance. Many of the same states with no civil rights protections for LGBTQ people did not expand Medicaid under the 2010 Affordable Care Act. LGBTQ youth experience a higher rate of homelessness, which is exacerbated by this pandemic. The disparities get worse for Queer persons of color.

In South Korea, an anonymous individual was pinpointed as the partygoer who infected 79 people with COVID-19. Because he had gone barhopping in the trendy Itaewon neighborhood where LGBTQ people gather, LGBTQ people were being verbally harassed as the cause of a second spike of COVID-19. If Queer people avoid getting tested or treated out of fear of being outed, Queer activist group Chingusai says, reduction of the new spread will be delayed.

### LGBTQ PEOPLE BLAMED FOR VIRUS

Gay couple Fabio Vlana and Daniel Schepers were spat on by teenagers in Amsterdam who also assaulted them with homophobic slurs. In Kampala, Uganda, police arrested Queer people, at their shelter, for the crime of spreading COVID-19. Clearly, Queer people are being scapegoated.

Transgender rights groups in California (see "Queer Notes," *N&L*, May-June 2020) are calling for an Emergency Transgender Wellness and Equity Fund for California state.

Other organizations that LGBTQ people can reach out to for the latest news and resources at this pandemic time include Lambda Legal and GLMA-US in the U.S., Chingusai in South Korea, Elton John AIDS Foundation, OutRight Action International and Urgent Action Fund for Women's Human Rights.

# **WORLD VIEW** COVID-19: U.S. nursing home genocide

### by Gerry Emmet

The U.S. had fair warning. One of the first

outbreaks of COVID-19 was in a Kirkland, Wash., nursing home. The illness spread quickly among residents and

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention was explicit: "It is critical that long term care facilities implement active measures to prevent introduction of COVID-19" (March 18).

Despite this, residents of nursing homes and assisted living facilities have made up an estimated 43% of U.S. deaths from the virus. How bad is this? These deaths have occurred in a group that only makes up

0.6% of the population. In any other situation these numbers would raise the specter of geno-

The hardest hit state, New York, also had the most nursing home and assisted living facility deaths, 6,381 by June 12. This was exacerbated by Governor Andrew Cuomo's decision to send thousands of COVID-19 patients into these facilities.

### Asian brinksmanship

On June 16, North Korea destroyed the border liaison office set up with South Korea in 2018. This led to fears of war on the Korean peninsula that were only mitigated on June 24 when North Korea's Supreme Leader Kim Jong-un announced he was "suspending" military action.

The North's action was meant to pressure the South to stop Northern exiles from sending balloons with anti-regime messages across the border. It was announced by Kim's sister, Kim Yo-Jong, who also threatened further attacks-which Kim Jong-un then overruled. Previously, Kim Yo-Jong was the face of improved relations between North and South, and was seen as a possible successor to Kim Jong-un during his rumored health crisis.

Kim Jong-un emphasized Kim Yo-Jong's subordinate role, and at the same time her actions reestablished the image of an impenetrable regime her diplomatic role had seemed to soften.

### **CHINA-INDIA ONCE MORE**

A horrific clash in Ladakh, along the India-China border, took the lives of 20 Indian and an unknown number of Chinese soldiers on June 15. It was fought with stones, iron bars, and barbed-wire clubs, since a prior agreement prohibits firearms.

China's President Xi Jinping faces numerous internal problems, including a renewed COVID-19 crisis, which (as in the U.S.) has wiped out millions of small businesses; worldwide anger at the cost of the pandemic; and severe flooding.

India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi also faces a COVID-19 crisis, and the fallout from huge demonstrations against his bigoted Citizenship Act last year. Though the crisis has been de-escalated, both rulers have used the bodies of their dead to burnish their nationalist strongman images.

### DYING SCARED, NEGLECTED AND ALONE

Cuomo is hardly the only one with blood on his hands. The next hardest hit state, New Jersey, did

the same thing and 5,368 had died by mid-May. As late as May 20, the Minneapolis Star-Tribune reported that Minnesota was still sending COVID-19 patients to nursing homes, despite 80% of the state's 600 deaths having occurred there

Most of those who died were also in lockdown, isolated from family and friends. As one New Jersey woman asked, "Did my mother die scared, neglected and alone?

But this scandal worked two ways. For-profit nursing homes from New York to California have evicted many Medicaid patients—to the streets—in favor of taking in more profitable (by \$600 a day) COVID-19 Medicare patients.

Thus capitalism reduces "healthcare" to a machinery of death. But to be human is infinitely more than one's monetary value. To be present when a "confused" elderly woman suddenly remembers with brilliant clarity a day in 1935 is to be witness to a miracle.

To see a loved one awaken from a coma and describe her dreams, and your place in them, is beyond any price.

### **WAREHOUSING HUMAN BEINGS**

Another factor that has made this situation even worse is that COVID-19 lockdowns have sometimes made it impossible for ombudsmen to check on patients. That is, if there are such services.

Many facilities that serve poor and vulnerable communities in Chicago, for example, receive little oversight from the Illinois Department of Public Health or other authorities. At one West Side facility 101 of 200 mostly African-American residents tested positive. Over half of Illinois' deaths have been in nursing homes—3,433 out of 6,398 as of June 7.

This genocide of the sick and elderly, with all its dimensions of race and class, must be faced squarely and become a turning point in how age and illness are understood. Right now human vulnerability is reduced to a thin bridge of dollar bills over an abyss that swallows up illness and age as greedily as war swallows up youth and health.

# Syria's problem is Assad, not sanctions

Not long ago, the genocidal Bashar al-Assad regime propagandists were touting a Syrian "renaissance." That lie has disappeared as the Syrian pound collapsed, losing over 80% of its value. This caused yet further misery throughout cities and villages devastated by regime and Russian bombs, Iranian mercenary militias, and sadistic murderers that a corrupt world allows to pass for a "government."

Discontent has been manifest even in regimecontrolled areas as stores close and food and medicine become even further out of reach for all but the elite-and even they have come into internal conflict, between the Assad and Makhlouf branches of the ruling crime family.

### THE BIG AND EVER-GROWING LIE

Assad now claims this currency collapse is caused by U.S. sanctions triggered by the Caesar Act passed by Congress in December. The Caesar Act was inspired by horror at the mass torture-murders documented by and smuggled out of the country by a regime photographer. Its passage took years of struggle by Syrians, Syrian-Americans, and allies.

In reality, the figures targeted for sanctions have appropriated the wealth of the country and turned it against the people, using it to crush every trace of humanity, every creative impulse, everything that might give "wealth" meaning. The problem isn't sanctions, the problem is genocide.

### THE TEST OF WORLD POLITICS

Meanwhile, resistance continues in northern Idlib-where Russia has just resumed bombingand in the south, in Druze-majority Suwayda, and in Daraa, where a low-level insurgency continues. These testify to the possibilities lost when the U.S. held back the Free Syrian Army's Southern Front.

The extent to which the existence of the Assad regime, with the complicity of all world powers, has degraded human life is impossible to overemphasize. It has made open genocide a constant, consciously chosen, officially enforced part of all of our lives. It is meant to dehumanize us. Opposition to this remains the absolute test of world politics.

Despite all this, Free Syrians can still speak the word, humanity. When humanity finds its own voice it will speak the words: Free Syria!

### **Memmi's century**

The great Tunisian-Jewish French writer Albert Memmi passed away May 20. He was 99 years old. Memmi's complex identity registered the tensions of his century. He described his situation as, "Native of a colonial country, a Jew in an anti-Semitic universe, an African in a world dominated by Europe," and he expressed this beginning with his early autobiographical novel The Pillar of Salt (1953) and his editorship of the newspaper Afrique Action.

Influenced by Jean-Paul Sartre's writings, Memmi's The Colonizer and the Colonized (1957) remains an influence. It stands alongside classic works like Aimé Césaire's Discourse on Colonialism (1955) and Frantz Fanon's Black Skin, White Masks (1952) and The Wretched of the Earth (1961).

### **HUMANISM FROM THE ASHES**

In attempting to recreate a humanism from under the experiences of colonialism, Nazism, and Stalinism, a new universal not separated from the particularity of Black, Jewish, or Arab identity, these writer-activists created a body of revolutionary literature that continues to speak to our time.

This is also a historic moment that remains unfinished—the questions they raised haunt Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America as well as the Balkans, Xinjiang, Soledad and Minneapolis.

Memmi's own humanism struggled with the post-colonial situation and the Palestinian/Israeli conflict, from Portrait of a Jew (1962) to his stoicismtempered late work like Decolonization and the Decolonized (2004). He left no easy road map. His thought will live on.

NEWS AND LETTERS COMMITTEES

# Who We Are And What We Stand For

News and Letters Committees is an organization of Marxist-Humanists. It has always stood for the abolition of capitalism, both in its private property form as in the U.S., and in its state property form calling itself Communist, which appeared as the Russian Revolution was transformed into its opposite. That retrogression anticipated the next stage of development—the age of state-capitalism. We stand for a society of new human relations, what Marx 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 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, was Chairwoman of News and Letters Committees from its founding to 1987. Charles Denby (1907-1983), a Black rank-and-file autoworker, author of Indignant Heart: A Black Worker's Journal, was editor of the paper from 1955 to 1983.

tween the movement from practice which is itself a form of theory and the movement from theory to philosophy is reflected in Dunayevskaya's three major works.

Marxism and Freedom, from 1776 until Today (1958), established the American roots of Marxism while presenting a comprehensive attack on present-day Communism, which is a form of state-capitalism. It re-established Marxism in its original form as "a thorough-going Naturalism or Humanism," while pointing to the new Humanist philosophy expressed by the working class. It presented history and theory as emanating from the movement from practice.

Philosophy and Revolution: From Hegel to Sartre and from Marx to Mao (1973), written after the failed revolts of the 1960s, articulated the integrality of philosophy and revolution as the characteristic of the age and, tracing it historically, caught the link of continuity with the Humanism of Marx. As against the vanguard party, the integration of dialectics and organization reflects the revolutionary maturity of the age and the passion for a philosophy of liberation.

Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution (1982) ex-

ery of a continent of thought and of revolution in his youth to the "new moments' of his last decade. Written for our time of revolutions in developing countries, the rise of the international women's liberation movement, and global economic crisis, it reveals the absolute challenge to make real Marx's "revolution in permanence" as the determinant for the relationship of theory and practice and as ground for organization.

These works spell out the philosophic ground of Marx's Humanism. American Civilization on Trial: Black Masses as Vanguard (1963, 1983) concretizes it on the American scene and shows the two-way freedom road between the U.S. and Africa.

In 1989 News and Letters Committees published Dunayevskaya's original 1953 philosophic breakthrough—her two letters on Hegel's Absolutes-and her 1987 Presentation on the Dialectics of Organization and Philosophy in The Philosophic Moment of Marxist-Humanism.

This body of ideas challenges all those desiring freedom to transcend the limitations of post-Marx Marxism. In light of the crises of our nuclear-armed world, climate change, and failed revolutions, it becomes

imperative not only to reject what is, but to further work out the revolutionary Humanist future inherent in the present. The recreation of Marx's philosophy as Marxist-Humanism is recorded in Dunayevskaya's archives, The Raya Dunayevskaya Collection-Marxist-Humanism: A Half-Century of Its World Development, deposited at Wayne State University in Detroit and available to all.

We aim to continue to develop Marxist-Humanism and make it available to all who struggle for freedom. In opposing this capitalist, racist, sexist, heterosexist, class-ridden society, we have adopted 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 free copy of the Constitution of News and Letters Committees or see it on our website: www.newsandletters.org