

NEWS & LETTERS

“Human power is its own end”—Karl Marx

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Masses resist Burma’s murderous coup

The people of Burma have taken to the streets in cities and villages daily by the tens of thousands since the army, under Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, carried out a coup on Feb. 1. The coup came less than three months after the overwhelming re-election victory of the

EDITORIAL

National League for Democracy (NLD), which won with 80% of the ballots. The military used Trump-like math and cried election fraud despite their own control of the process.

They not only detained Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and other leaders of the NLD, but private citizens on their list. The first demonstrations were a sea of pictures of San Suu Kyi. One Rohingya noted just a solitary sign that regretted the genocide against Rohingya Muslims. But as the demonstrations brought out many new layers of the population, activists began rethinking the limits of supporting NLD and their history of not standing up to the Rohingya genocide.

Demonstrations grew to hundreds of thousands, mostly young women from the ranks of teachers, garment workers and medical workers. They defy the state terror of the army and police forces, who killed at least 18 protesters on Feb. 28 alone. On March 3, 38 were killed.

WOMEN, LGBTQ+ ON THE FRONT LINES

An 18-year-old protest leader, Ma Kyal Sin, was shot in the head while passing out water to allay tear gas. More than 1,500 have been arrested. (See “Taking on Myanmar Generals, Women Emerge as ‘True Warriors,’” *The New York Times*, 3/5/2021.) LGBTQ+ participants made themselves visible by carrying rainbow flags as they faced likely erosion of rights under direct military

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VOICES FROM THE INSIDE OUT

Prisons enable COVID

by Robert Tallaferra

A recent personal email expressed surprise and anger with how the COVID-19 pandemic has been addressed within prisons. The email noted that one would think prisons were safe as they are the ultimate bubble. This is far from the truth, as prisons have always been the preeminent super-spreader environment.

A recent report published by the Prison Policy Initiative (PPI), a prison advocacy group in Massachusetts, noted that since March an estimated 230,000 prisoners in state and federal prisons around the country have tested positive for COVID-19. This has resulted in nearly 1,700 prisoner deaths. Additionally, almost 60,000 prison staff have tested positive, with over 100 staff deaths.

INCOMPETENCE = 100% INFECTION RATE

In Wisconsin the positive test percentage in the state’s population is about 8%, but in Wisconsin prisons the positive rate is over 50% of the current prison population—10,400 of the state’s 20,000 prison population, according to statistics recently published by the *Wisconsin State Journal*. This has resulted in at least 25 prisoner deaths due to COVID-19.

Nationwide the positive rate of infection is around 5% to 6% of the general community population. Comparatively, 10% of the U.S. prison population has tested positive. Some 5% of the nation’s total prison population’s positive cases are in Wisconsin.

The *Wisconsin State Journal* highlighted how the mismanagement of the virus in one facility created a nearly 100% infection rate there and at least one death.

Recent tests at another facility in the state exhibited similar patterns of those infected due to the way the

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ONLINE: www.newsandletters.org

Women from India to the USA fight against misogynist violence

by Terry Moon

Violence against women is vast. The worst of it includes rape, torture and murder—sometimes all three in one onslaught. Physical and economic violence have been exacerbated worldwide in the era of COVID-19. Under the pandemic, women’s share of the burden is worse than men’s—from unemployment to higher incidence of violence. This includes: female genital mutilation/cutting; being brutalized by those who say they love you; forced pregnancy; being singled out in times of war where violence against women is both considered a soldier’s “right” and is ordered from above as a way to break the back of resistance; so-called “honor” killings; and assaulting, groping, insulting, and cat-calling women for daring to walk down a street, ride a subway or a bike—in short, for participating in the world.

COVID-19 has revealed how criminally inadequate is the thinking regarding domestic abuse. When lockdowns began there had been no planning for victims of domestic violence, now locked in with their abusers. The number experiencing domestic violence, overwhelmingly women, exploded. The added beatings and murders—which are continuing—are devastating. Examples of increases in violence include **Lebanon**, 54%, and in **Tunisia**, a fivefold increase. In one large **Chinese** province violence “more than tripled.” The Catalan region in **Spain** had a 20% rise. In Latin America: “violence in **Colombia** spiked 94%; **Paraguay** experienced a 35% jump; in Buenos Aires, **Argentina**, calls spiked 48%.”

In Mexico the increase was 60%, which translates to almost 1,000 women murdered in the first three months of 2020. At the same time Mexico’s “Leftist” president cut funding for women’s shelters and declared most calls to domestic violence hotlines “fake.” Studies by the UN Population Fund and Johns Hopkins University among others “assume a 20% increase in violence during an average three-month lockdown in all 193 UN member states....Researchers expect 15 million additional cases of domestic violence for every three months that lockdown is extended.”

Here in the U.S., because the Trump Administration had no interest in tracking the rising incidents of domes-

tic violence, there are no nationwide statistics, unlike in other countries, although we do know that in 2018 more than a million women were abused, with women of color more affected than white women. Since the pandemic, states report rises from 10% to over 30%. This is just the tip of the iceberg as the pandemic has made it extremely difficult for women to access hotlines or leave their homes to get help.



Vanessa Guillén shortly before she was murdered.

EVERYTHING CHANGES YET REMAINS THE SAME

Domestic abuse used to be something no one talked about, but the Women’s Liberation Movement has, from its beginning in the mid-1960s, brought violence against women out of the closet and into the open in all its hideous manifestations. Yet it has been unable to stop it. Sexism, like racism, is systemic to almost every culture worldwide. Let’s look at just two examples—although there are thousands—where violence has been called out, made clear, protested against, yet remains.

In April 2020, 20-year-old Army Specialist Vanessa Guillén went missing from Fort Hood in Texas. It wasn’t until three months later on July 5, 2020, that her beaten, dismembered, burned and buried body was found. Guillén’s

murderer, Spec. Aaron Robinson, who worked in a building near where Guillén worked, killed himself when confronted by the police. The crime here isn’t only the brutal murder of Guillén, the crime is also that it should never have happened.

The struggle against sexual assault and harassment in the military has been going on for over 30 years. Hundreds have died and tens of thousands more have been assaulted and harassed, many with their lives ruined. Why? Because the military has refused to let go of their power and insists that commanders, not military prosecutors, have the right to decide which sexual assault crimes to try. In 2013 Senator Kirsten E. Gillibrand tried to legislate taking power out of the chain of command but was stymied by her Senate “colleagues.” Her measure was the first—ever—to offer at least a partial solution to military rape and abuse. Even eight years ago in 2013, there had been over 20 years of pontificating from the military touting their clearly meaningless “zero tolerance” for sexual

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Racism still core to immigration policy

by Buddy Bell

President Biden spent much of his first days and weeks in office issuing executive orders with significant impact on people’s lives, particularly in the area of immigration. To list some of the most consequential is to illuminate a compounding level of damage wreaked by the former president.

There will be a new taskforce on reunification of separated migrant children with their families (*but no permanent residency or recompense of any kind for this inflicted trauma*).

DEPORTATION SLOWED

The Muslim Ban is denounced and cancelled. The Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program will function as created in 2012. Notwithstanding over-policing and deeply problematic criminal court systems, deportation will also be deferred for undocumented people who do not have a felony arrest record. Biden did order a 100-day moratorium on all deportations, but it was blocked in a national injunction issued by a federal judge in Texas who was appointed by Trump.

The declaration of a border “emergency” is called off. (*Trump used it to build border fencing by moving money from other parts of the budget.*) The definition of “public charge” is reset. (*Trump tried to make immigrants who so much as received a healthcare subsidy under the Affordable Care Act ineligible for citizenship.*) The Census Bureau will no longer try to estimate the number of undocu-

mented immigrants in each state. (*Trump attempted to leave them out of the apportionment process for the House of Representatives and the Electoral College.*)

During the worst global refugee crisis in recent memory, the cap on refugee visas will be increased from 15,000 to 125,000, which is higher than all eight years under Obama but only about half of the peak level in 1980. The so-called “safe third country agreement” with Guatemala has been cancelled. It required Honduran refugees in flight from a U.S.-backed, corrupt drug-state to first apply for asylum in Guatemala, a country ill-equipped to offer safe haven given its own poverty and routine human rights violations.

The “Remain in Mexico” policy is no longer in effect for newly arrived asylum-seekers. However, people stranded in Mexico because their cases are part of a backlog of over 25,000 are required to somehow procure an internet connection to register online (on a website that crashes) and only 300 people from this backlog are admitted each day.

Biden’s draft for the U.S. Citizenship Act of 2021 includes a legalization plan for any undocumented person who entered the U.S. before Jan. 1, 2021. Current language increases annual caps on family visas, unskilled worker visas, and diversity visas (a program which mainly boosts the number of immigrants from Africa), and the per-country cap is repealed for skilled worker visas. Also

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Review: *Sisters in Hate*

by Adele

Sisters in Hate: American Women on the Front Lines of White Nationalism, by Seyward Darby, is an important contribution towards comprehending why people



join right-wing movements, and how to encourage them to leave while inoculating society against hateful and authoritarian thinking. Darby uses legal scholar Frances Lee Ansley’s definition of white supremacy: “a political, economic and cultural system in which whites overwhelmingly control power and material resources, conscious and unconscious ideas of white superiority and entitlement are widespread, and relations of white dominance and non-white subordination are daily reenacted across a broad array of institutions and social settings.”

WHITE NATIONALISM IS INGRAINED IN THE U.S.

Darby explains that white nationalism, “the belief that America should remain a predominantly white country, led by white people,” is an inseparable part of U.S. authoritarian movements.

While patriarchy, misogyny, and violence are being studied for their roles drawing men into a movement promising them dominance, many women are also drawn to it. Darby describes how women historically and currently are essential to the movement’s effectiveness.

The Daughters of the Confederacy erected monuments the Left fights to remove, and they deliberately influenced school history textbooks. White women were instrumental in the survival of the Ku Klux Klan and in getting Trump elected. This is in spite of white nationalism being an authoritarian movement that is harmful to society and against women’s own interests.

Darby studied research on racism and the far right as well as reading right-wing websites and social media. She interviewed right-wing women, focusing on three leaders, and discovered involvement in the white nationalist worldview is a cult-like mindset. She emphasizes that the repugnant propaganda blaming people of color for social problems has been constantly debunked and should be considered too ridiculous to be believed.

Right-wing women even believe degrading stereotypes of themselves as naturally lacking intelligence and maturity. They believe women’s participation in society has allowed it to become “feminized” by encouraging diversity, although both are proven to enrich culture. The women interviewed became famous with blogs, podcasts, and radio and YouTube programs, speaking out for men to control women’s voices, agency, and reproduction.

SOME REALIZED THEY ‘DIDN’T NEED HATE’

Researchers identify emotional needs people attempt to fulfil by joining white nationalist groups and activism, and Darby describes how her interviewees embody this. They need to belong to a community and to feel significant, in this case in a supposed battle to save society as they believe it existed in a past golden age. They seemed to struggle to justify their adherence to the belief of white supremacism, claiming it’s not as bad as people think. Darby links this to researchers’ finding that white nationalism is not a fringe movement but rooted in the everyday racism normally considered not as extreme or harmful as violence. Women also join to feel valued but find they are only valued for reproduction.

Some interviewees discovered these inconsistencies and how authoritarian movements deflect attention from real sources of social and economic problems and anxieties. One realized, “the problem was being working class in an economic system that cared about what it got from someone like Rae, not what it could provide her.” They also described individuals offering friendship or opportunities “that made them realize they didn’t need hate.” Darby encourages everyone to get involved in anti-racist groups and activism, have “frank conversations about whiteness,” and support groups like Life After Hate helping people to leave far-right groups.

Darby emphasizes the urgent importance of researching the far right, which attracts more followers seeking and finding false answers to social, economic, and environmental problems as these problems worsen. She has an important message that, little by little, people like anti-racist activists and the interviewees who exited can turn the situation around.

WOMENWORLDWIDE

by Artemis

The Canadian Parliament voted Feb. 22 to mark the first National Human Trafficking Awareness Day, the same date of their 2007 declaration condemning all forms of human trafficking and slavery. Anti-trafficking organizations stated it will help end shame for survivors and protect youth from traffickers’ tactics.

Traffickers are often known to victims as “boy-friends,” family members, classmates, or online “friends.” Joy Smith of the Joy Smith Foundation stated, “These traffickers...make a lot of money and they groom their victims in such a way that they won’t say anything, that they can’t say anything—if they survive...if they don’t just disappear.”

The families don’t understand why these young people can’t reintegrate back into their families. Courage for Freedom, a survivor-led charity, marked the day by asking social media users to repost their meme: “I want to eradicate the buying and selling of girls, boys, and children in Canada.”

* * *



Loujain Al-Hathloul

In February, Loujain Al-Hathloul, a prominent Saudi Arabian women’s rights activist, was released after spending almost three years in prison for leading the successful campaign to legalize driving for women. She had been sentenced under a broad counter-terrorism law for charges including “sharing information with foreign diplomats and journalists” and “trying to change the Saudi system.”

Her family emphasizes that she is still not free, only on probation, banned from travel, forced to sign a non-disclosure agreement, and under government surveillance.

They expect her to resist prohibitions against talking about the case and to push to free the other imprisoned activists and make the government acknowledge they were tortured. Her sister Lina Al-Hathloul stated, “She knows that she’s a symbol now and that, if she gives up, then she gives up on everyone else as well.”

* * *

In November, Scotland became the first country to make menstrual supplies free, awarding a grant to the charity FairShare to deliver them to low-income households. The bill was introduced by Labor MSP Monica Lennon, an activist against period poverty since 2016, and unanimously approved.

Research showed almost half of girls had missed school because of their periods, with 10% unable to afford period products and 15% struggling to afford them. In February, New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern announced an initiative to provide free period products in schools.

* * *

In February, Facebook announced settlement of five lawsuits filed last year by civil rights groups stating it allowed companies to illegally make ads for job opportunities, home sales, and credit offers visible only to men, young people, and users in white neighborhoods.

One group of women filed a discrimination complaint with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission on behalf of all women seeking jobs during a time period in 2017 and 2018. They accused Facebook and nine companies of violating the Civil Rights Act by placing ads for jobs, including those of truck driver and window installer, so that no woman would see them.

Facebook will no longer target users by gender, age, or zip code for ads related to housing, employment or credit offers. Naturally, Facebook did not accept liability for potentially violating anti-discrimination laws, but civil rights groups state the settlement marks a shift from the company’s usual strategy of deflecting public criticism.

Burma’s coup resisted

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A general strike called by labor unions on March 8 shut down much of the country. The military responded with more terror, invading hospitals and universities and muzzling the press.

This deeper, more human level of opposition is not just to the coup, but the nationalist monks as well as

NLD’s positions. A 28-year-old doctor, Yin Yin Hnong, said, “Young women are now leading the protests because...we care about our future generations.” Young women leaders who protest by day, but have to hide by night—such as Ei Thinzar Maung and Ester Ze Naw, who herself comes from the Kachin minority—have consistently spoken up for the rights of minorities and against ethnic cleansing of the Rohingya.

CHINA AND RUSSIA BACK UP HLAING’S COUP

General Hlaing has counted on the veto power of China and Russia at the UN to obstruct international condemnation of the coup. China, a prime investor in Burma’s oil, gas and mineral riches before expanding control of pipelines and harbor projects under its Belt and Road Initiative, has intervened in the actual post-coup repression.

While most flights within Burma are grounded, multiple daily flights from Kunming in China are replenishing stores of ammunition and other equipment. This is the same playbook as in Belarus, where dictatorial president Alexander Lukashenko has made clear his intention to meet massive demonstrations against his sham re-election with brute force while the threat of direct Russian military intervention looms.

San Suu Kyi, as the visible face of the brutally suppressed 1988 uprising, had survived two decades of house arrest until her release in 2010. She had guided the NLD in forming a government in 2015 under the peculiar and precarious system in which the army claimed great swaths of independence and permitted civilian rule only under the thumb of the military. Her complete lack of criticism of the military campaign of genocide against Rohingya Muslims in Rakhine State in 2017 was first taken as proof of how limited her authority really was.

SAN SUU KYI ABETS GENOCIDE

But her full-throated defense of the army and its mass slaughter of Rohingya Muslims and torching of their villages, forcing three-quarters of a million Rohingya to flee their homes for shelter in Bangladesh, Malaysia and elsewhere, eroded her international standing as a defender of human rights and democracy.

The NLD victory in the November 2020 elections was even greater than in 2015. But it did not protect her from the army arresting her and fellow officials and asserting total power once more.

Even though no regrets or apology were heard from San Suu Kyi or the rest of the NLD on their collusion with genocide, the movement to stop the military coup has gone beyond mere support for the deposed government.

A new social solidarity is emerging. Rohingya living in Yangon participated in marches there. And those in refugee camps shared expressions of solidarity with other Burmese defying the army, despite the lack of solidarity from them when Rohingya were being expelled from their homes.

We express solidarity with the new, deepening movement of women, youth, workers, LGBTQ+ people, and ethnic minorities including Karen, Chin and Rohingya. The struggle continues.

Cáceres, Presente!

They have believed that impunity is eternal. They are wrong, the people know how to make justice
—Berta Cáceres

✎

March marks the fifth anniversary of the assassination of Berta Cáceres, Honduran defender of the rivers, the Lenca people and life. The perpetrators not only sought to steal the life of a social fighter, they also tried to extinguish all struggles she fought for: those of the Lenca people and those who support the Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras (COPINH).

The hitmen, plotters and the State who murdered her, would do anything to build a hydroelectric plant on the Gualcarque River. The Lenca people have defended that land as part of their territory.

The Lenca have identified nine men as murderers of Cáceres, five linked to the army, and three to the hydroelectric plant. The Honduran state is allied with the global corporations that exploit and plunder the natural resources of countries where Indigenous peoples still dwell.

Cáceres was assassinated by a colonial economic system that reinforces systematic racism—classifying and bossing around the population and territories of Indigenous peoples and Afro-descendants of Honduras and the rest of Latin America.

With that act of violence, Berta Cáceres’ life sowed new seeds. She was an example to the people of her native La Esperanza, and continues to galvanize the Lenca in defense of their territory. She is an example of the struggle and clarity of all Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples who unite in the defense of their land and lives.

—Excerpted from COPINH statement

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Unemployed workers organize and march, demanding relief

San Jose, Calif.—On Feb. 13 about 20 people, newly organized as Northern California Unemployed Committee, came downtown to draw attention to the disparities within capitalism exacerbated by COVID-19. They demanded the federal government stop taxing unemployment benefits and that it restore the \$600 per week unemployment supplement.

The first speaker, an economist, explained that the “recovery” from the pandemic will only increase existing economic disparities. A young restaurant worker related his experience and that of his colleagues. He said when they lost jobs, they would initially be denied their unemployment claims and have to fight to have them validated.

THOUGHTS FROM THE OUTSIDE

Lucky I have a job?

by Faruq

While in prison I read in *N&L* Htun Lin’s columns on his experiences as an admission clerk in a major hospital. One, “[Workshop Talks: Reclaim our labor](#)” (March-April 2015), highlighted a theme, “The rank and file hear daily...‘Just be glad you have a job.’” Htun Lin then, as I do now, felt it necessary to challenge this notion.

Now that I am out of prison these two years, this expression has come to mean something new to me. It is true that capitalism leaves us no choice but to live through having a job, a job that is more and more precarious. The jobs are threatened by constant volatility: automation, recessions, pandemics, etc.

Without a decent job, my lot would be quite different. Without a job, what are the options outside of falling back into so-called “criminal activity”? Without employment, people are forced to turn to survival mode. There are breakdowns of social cohesion, instances of “survival of the fittest.” Just last week the window in my car was broken and then my car was stolen.

DEPENDENCE ON ESSENTIAL WORKERS

Many businesses went under due to the pandemic. Many people were forced to leave the workforce. Most people working today are referred to as “essential workers.” During any lockdown in prison, there are always a few workers of various ethnic groups assisting with the running of the prison. Prisons could not exist without prisoners’ labor. Capitalism has the same dependency. It cannot exist without workers’ labor. That is the similarity between prison life and the life outside, the larger prison.

What is essential for capital to reinforce its authority and what is essential for people to live as human beings are very different things. By seeing through the rhetoric of the “privilege of having a job,” the reality of life under capitalism will become clear.

A different window on reality is looking at the way people freely help each other. People in the homeless encampments try to care for each other. I see them sharing sandwiches. I see one person practice wellness checks on everyone in the camp. One person, an addict himself who had already used the Narcan he had on two other people, approached me one morning asking if I had Narcan to help a third person, since he knows we carry it. People in the camps also develop their human capabilities: they draw, for example, or make art from discarded materials. It is worth noting that people in the most materially deprived circumstances display such care and concern.

FORCED LABOR AT AMAZON

Human care and concern is the opposite of capitalism. That can be seen, for example, by the explosion of exploitation of workers at the largest, most profitable companies like Amazon. During the pandemic Amazon’s business soared. We see Amazon recruiters offering us a job for \$17/hour. Amazon trucks are everywhere, they have been hiring like crazy. I know former prisoners driving those trucks who cannot afford to live in San Francisco. They commute from Stockton, Tracy or beyond. Amazon workers all over are complaining about the horrid conditions, the torture of their physical and mental well-being, with robots setting their pace of work. (See “Rally for Amazon Workers’ Union Drive,” p. 5.)

Another false option presented to young people today is to join the armed forces. After the Vietnam war, when conscription was no longer sustainable, the U.S. created a “volunteer” army. But it is not volunteer. Youth are forced into it by a lack of other options for their future.

I come from a military family. I saw my uncles come out of the armed forces as broken people, broken in bodies and in spirit. Many, even if they were not injured, came out as alcoholics or addicted to other substances. One of my father’s friends had constant stomach pain from his drinking. He would eat half a stick of butter to try to coat his stomach to relieve the pain.

Now, too, the military often breaks the young people who join. Look at the suicide rates among soldiers and former soldiers. A mother complained, “I sent you my young boy, you sent me back a murderer, a savage.”

What I learned, whether in an actual physical prison or outside, is this society is a prison, and the only way out is through new human relations.

Then when they lost the \$600 supplemental unemployment payments, they could no longer afford to live in the Bay Area. One young woman then spoke to how the pandemic devastated some workers:

“The economic recession caused by COVID-19 has disproportionately affected women. It has greatly impacted service sectors, such as restaurants, hospitality, and retail, which predominantly employ women....Employment among low-wage service workers has taken an overwhelmingly large hit in this crisis, and those jobs are disproportionately held by women and people of color....The long-lasting effects of this will intensify pre-existing wealth and gender inequality.

WORKING WOMEN IN A TRIPLE BIND

“This pandemic has also put many working women in the difficult position of choosing between their financial security and their own safety, as well as the safety of their loved ones. Stay-at-home and social-distancing measures have closed schools and childcare facilities, leaving families with children responsible for childcare with limited options....Additionally, women are often primary caretakers of at-risk elders, and are forced to choose between keeping their loved ones safe and maintaining employ-

Reopening schools mirrors class divide

Detroit—Everyone wants schools to reopen. But the divide between “reopen schools NOW” and “reopen schools SAFELY ASAP” mirrors the class divide in U.S. education. In wealthier districts, parents push politicians to let schools—and school athletics—open now. They cite damage to their children’s mental health. They blame teachers’ unions for resistance, with little thought of the teachers and other school workers themselves.

In inner-city districts, the main concern is school safety. Detroit Public Schools opened in the fall of 2020, and closed again after Christmas in response to increasing COVID-19 cases. Only 20-25% of the students had returned to in-person learning. There was no outcry against teachers, only appreciation for both online and remote instruction.

IT’S A MASSIVE JOB TO REOPEN SAFELY

We know that districts, and schools within a district, vary greatly in ability to open safely. But why did the CDC wait until February 2021 to issue “guidelines” for school re-opening? Was it because these indicate massive infrastructure investment, like major modifications to ventilation systems in most buildings? Because the CDC under Trump did not want to be seen supporting teachers’ unions?

By CDC guidelines, very few schools could open safely “as is.” Nevertheless, newer buildings, strong social distancing practices, and low student populations would allow in-person learning in both rich and poor districts. How safely? We don’t have data yet. The CDC did “recommend”—but did not “mandate”—teacher vaccinations for in-person teaching, leaving many teachers at the mercy of conservative politicians who don’t prioritize them as essential workers.

Unvaccinated teachers also remain vulnerable to community spread outside school. Parents and older students may be exposed at work, on public transportation, and in large social gatherings. Lies that COVID-19 isn’t real can increase viral spread.

Fortunately, strong teachers’ unions (like the Chicago Teachers Union) are demanding full access to vaccination against COVID-19. Parents struggling with children in virtual learning at home should appreciate teachers enough to respect their fight for a safe workplace—for themselves and for the children.

—Retired teacher



ment while risking COVID-19 exposure.

“A third of the women workforce are considered essential workers: grocery clerks, home health aides and social workers. They have been and continue to be put at risk of getting COVID-19 by their employers in exchange for minimal hazard pay, no benefits, and low wages.

“My close friend L. has been employed by Whole Foods, and contracted COVID-19 due to the company’s misconduct. Her store has treated

its workers with no regard to their safety. They do not have hazard pay, they allow maskless customers into the store, they increased the maximum store capacity to more than 150 people during the holidays, and they treat their workers as expendable. When one of her co-workers passed away after contracting COVID-19, Whole Foods let their employees know by taping an obituary to the time-clock, and made no changes to their safety practices or hazard pay policies.

“Forcing women, and predominantly women of color, to choose between the health and safety of themselves and their loved ones and employment at a company that does not value them as anything but workers, is unjust. In our current system women, who put their families and their own safety over the profits of a company that does not care about them, do not qualify for unemployment benefits. The systems in place MUST serve the people, especially those who have faced the hardest hardships. Anything less is morally reprehensible.”

—Participant

Racism still core to U.S. immigration policy

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repealed would be the three- and ten-year bars to visa issuance when someone is deported.


The executive orders and the citizenship draft bill are flowered with language like: “new Americans and their children fuel our economy, working in every industry... They open and successfully run businesses...” In other words, capitalists and their Congressional lapdogs are reminded they can squeeze some value out of these new Americans. Biden also wants to “address the underlying causes of migration [and] confront the instability, violence, and economic insecurity that currently drives migrants from their homes.” His bill proposes a \$4 billion line item for that purpose.

Oscar Chacón of the Chicago-based organization Alianza Américas said: “I am happy to see the Biden-Harris administration talking about root causes of migration, but if we were really serious as a nation about changing what makes people come to the hard decision of leaving their countries, we would have to at least tackle two major obstacles. First is the prevailing economic policy paradigm, which in these countries is all about profit making, just like it is in the U.S. The second thing we would need to completely rethink is how to truly create healthy democratic societies that allow people to have a say in what they are facing on a day-to-day basis.”

ROGUE ICE OFFICERS RUIN LIVES

With executive orders imminent and with no love lost for either justice or democracy, rogue officers within ICE and the rest of the customs agencies loaded up immigrants and especially Black immigrants on hurried deportation flights. Such frenzied malice occurred not only on the night of Jan. 19 but also Feb. 1, right after the Biden 100-day deportation moratorium was blocked in the Texas courtroom. A group of Cameroonian asylum seekers were tackled to the ground in an attempt to mark their fingerprints on deportation waivers. A man who is not Haitian was pulled off a Jan. 19 flight to Haiti only after the intervention of Congressman Mondaire Jones. The same man was deported to Haiti on Feb. 2 when officers decided to ignore the freshman Black Congressman.

Black immigrant Allen Orr is now an immigration lawyer and incoming president of American Immigration Lawyers Association. He said, “Biden has a heavy lift. He has to fight two battles. One is the immigration battle as a whole, but the other one is the long history of racism in this country... Some people are just racist, and a lot of those people are in our immigration enforcement system and hold high positions... they have to be removed. Part of that is removing the policies and part of that is watching discretion [of government personnel]... Deporting kids to Haiti that are two months old doesn’t make sense and it’s not American policy... that just shouldn’t happen.”



The struggle in Bosnia for self-determination and freedom laid the ground for the ongoing Syrian revolution. The pamphlet contains Raya Dunayevskaya’s “A Post-World War II View of Marx’s Humanism, 1843-83; Marxist Humanism in the 1950s and 1980s” as well as articles from *News & Letters* \$10, includes shipping. To order, see p. 9.

FROM THE WRITINGS OF

RAYADUNAYEVSKAYA

Editor's note: From the paper on "Hegel's Absolute as New Beginning," which Raya Dunayevskaya delivered to the Hegel Society of America conference in 1974, we present the section on the relationship of the movement from practice to philosophy, as published in the Nov. 1974 News & Letters. It critiques philosophers, including those who consider themselves Marxists, specifically Theodor Adorno and his philosophic legacy, Negative Dialectics (Continuum Publishing, 1995), in contrast to the Czech philosopher Karel Kosik's Dialectics of the Concrete (D. Reidel Publishing, 1976).

Hegel's Absolutes never were a series of ascending ivory towers. Revolutionary transformation is immanent in the very form of thought. As we saw from the chapter on Absolute Idea [in Hegel's *Science of Logic*], the unifying force was free creative power. By the time we reach the mediated final result, Absolute Mind, the absolute negativity that was the moving force in Logic, in Nature, in *Geist* [meaning Spirit or Mind], where we saw them as concrete stages of human freedom, there no longer was any difference between theory and practice. This is why our age can best understand Hegel's Absolute. It has been witness to a *movement from practice* for two long decades (ever since the death of Stalin lifted the incubus from the heads of the masses in East Europe).

To this writer, Hegel's genius is lodged in the fact that *his "voyage of discovery" becomes one endless process of discovery for us.* The "us" includes both Marx's new continent of thought of materialist dialectics, and Hegel scholars, as well as the movement from practice that was itself a form of theory once its spontaneity discovered the power of thought along with its physical might.

This writer has followed very closely this movement of revolt ever since June 17, 1953, and saw in it a quest for universality because she had already discerned in the dialectical movement of the three final syllogisms in Absolute Mind, a new point of departure in the Idea and in the movement from practice.¹

THIS MOVEMENT FROM PRACTICE hardly had the ear of contemporary Hegelians, orthodox or Marxist, as evidenced in the erudite, Leftist director of the famous Frankfurt School, the late Theodor Adorno. His very reason for being, for thinking, for acting, was Dialectics, that is to say, for negations of what is. He entitled the summation of his life's thought, his intellectual legacy, *Negative Dialectics*. This book, however, has little to do with the dialectics of negativity, and least with the concept of Subject, by which Hegel distinguished his view from all other philosophers who left the search for truth at Substance only. As "concretized" by Marx for the proletarian class, Subject is supposed to have been accepted also by Adorno, but again, Adorno keeps his distance and originality locked up in what he calls *Negative Dialectics*.

From the very beginning of the Preface of his work (p. xix), Adorno informs us that the positive in the negative—"the negation of the negation"—is the enemy: "This book seeks to free dialectics from such affirmative traits without reducing its determinacy." The so-called "theoretical inadequacies of Hegel and Marx" revolve around what he sees as the all-encompassing evil, the concept, that "subsuming cover," its "autarchy" [pp. 11-12, 144, 408].

Naturally, Adorno keeps his distance from "positivists" and the vulgarisms of the knighted Karl Popper and his infamous "Hegel and Fascism" school. Nevertheless, Adorno, almost out of nothing, suddenly brings in Auschwitz and introduces some sort of kinship between it and absolute negativity. He writes: "Genocide is the absolute integration....Auschwitz confirmed the philosopheme of pure identity as death....Absolute negativity is in plain sight and has ceased to surprise anyone" [p. 362].²

BY "ALMOST OUT OF NOTHING," I naturally do not mean that Auschwitz was not the reality of Fascism, nor do I mean only the suddenness and shock of introducing such subject matter in the climax of a book

1. See Dunayevskaya's May 1953 "Letters on Hegel's Absolutes," N&L, Sept.-Oct. 2014, Nov.-Dec. 2014, and Jan.-Feb. 2015.
2. Contrast Adorno's accusation of "conceptual fetishism" against Marx's famous "Fetishism of Commodities" as "truly a piece from the heritage of classic German philosophy" (pp. 189-90) to Karel Kosik's analysis of the very same section: it "can be characterized in Hegelian terms as the unity of being and non-being, of the differentiated and the undifferentiated, of identity and non-identity. All other determinations are but richer definitions and concretizations of this 'absolute' of the capitalist society. The dialectics of the exposition or of the explication may not overshadow the central problem: how does science arrive at the *necessary origin of the presentation*....*Dialectics is not a method of reduction, but the method of spiritual and intellectual reproduction of society*" [*Dialectics of the Concrete*, pp. 16-17]. See also Ch. 2, "Marx's Historical Materialism," esp. pp. 76-94, in *Philosophy and Revolution*.—RD

The urgent need for new beginnings

called "Meditations on Metaphysics." Rather, I mean it is wrong. That is to say, it is totally illogical and non-dialectical, considering that Adorno devoted an adult lifetime to fighting fascist ideology as the very opposite of Hegelian dialectics and had seen the very death of dialectics in Nazi Germany. Perhaps a better word than "wrong" would be Adorno's own curse-word "naive."

I mean that as late as 1957, in his *Aspects of the Hegelian Dialectic*, he almost defended a subject-object identity.

Subject-object cannot be dismissed as mere extravagance of logical absolutism....In seeing through the latter as mere subjectivity, we have already passed beyond the Speculative idealism....Cognition, if it is genuine, and more than simple duplication of the subjective, must be the subject's objectivity.³

And, indeed, in his *Negative Dialectics*, he reiterates the same idea when he writes that, despite the fact that Hegel "deifies" subjectivity, "he accomplishes the opposite as well: an insight into the subject as a self-manifesting objectivity" [p. 350].

WHY, THEN, SUCH A VULGAR REDUCTION of absolute negativity? Therein is the real tragedy of Adorno (and the Frankfurt School). It is the tragedy of a one-dimensionality of thought which results when you give up Subject, when one does not listen to the voices from below—and they were loud, clear, and demanding between the mid-1950s and mid-1960s. It is a tragedy once one returns to the ivory tower and reduces his purpose to "the purpose of discussing key concepts of philosophical disciplines and centrally intervening in those disciplines" (p. xx). The next step was irresistible, the substitution of a permanent critique not alone for absolute negativity, but also for "permanent revolution" itself.

Now, whether the enduring relevance of Hegel has stood the test of time because of the devotion and analytical rigor of Hegel scholars, or because a movement of freedom surged up from below and was followed by new cognition studies, there is no doubt that because Absolute Negativity signifies transformation of reality—the dialectic of contradiction and totality of crises, the dialectic of liberation—Hegel's thought comes to life at critical points of history, called by him "birth-times of history."

In addition, there were Marxist scholars, revolutionary dissidents, who built on new ground. While a scholar

3. Adorno, "Aspects of Hegel's Philosophy" (original German edition 1957), in *Hegel: Three Studies*, trans. Shierry Weber Nicholson (MIT Press, 1993), pp. 5-6.

from the West, like Reinhart Maurer, was preoccupied with Hegel's concept of where to end, the Czechoslovakian philosopher, Karel Kosik, was preoccupied with where to begin anew. Of the Eastern European studies that accompanied the revolts, and revolved around Marx's Humanism, especially Marx's "Critique of the Hegelian Dialectic," one of the most rigorous studies was Karel Kosik's *Dialectics of the Concrete*.

Nor were these serious studies limited to the "East." As Frantz Fanon saw it, the African struggle for freedom was "not a treatise on the universal, but the untidy affirmation of an original idea propounded as an absolute." There is no doubt, of course, that once action supersedes the subjectivity of purpose, the unity of theory and practice is the form of life out of which emerge totally new dimensions. To this writer, this is only the "proof" of the ending of the *Science of Logic*, the absolute as new beginning, the self-bringing forth of liberty....

IF PHILOSOPHERS LEARN TO ESCHEW ELITISMS, then the unity of theory and practice, of absolute as new beginning, will not remain an abstract desire, or mere will, but philosophy itself will become action.

In his *Hegel: A Reexamination*, Professor J.N. Findlay was right when he stated that Hegel's exegeses can seem "arid and false to those who see nothing mysterious and god-like in the facts of human thought." But is it not equally true that philosophers who stand only in terror before revolution not only do not "comprehend" it, they cannot fully comprehend the revolution *in thought*? And Hegel did revolutionize philosophy.

Absolute Idea as new beginning can become a new "subjectivity" for realizing Hegel's principle, that "the transcendence of the opposition between Notion and Reality, and that unity which is truth, rest upon this subjectivity alone." This is not exactly a summons to the barricades, but Hegel is asking us to have our ears as well as our categories so attuned to the "Spirit's urgency" that we rise to the challenge of working out, through "patience, seriousness, suffering and the labor of the negative" a totally new relationship of philosophy to actuality and action as befits a "birth-time of history." This is what makes Hegel a contemporary.



Karel Kosik

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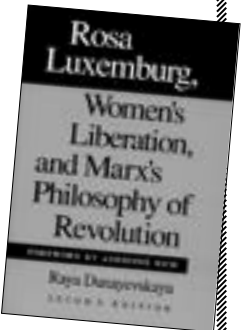
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To order, see page 9



Rally for Amazon workers' union drive

Oakland, Calif.—On Feb. 20, in front of an Amazon-owned Whole Foods store, several dozen activists gathered as part of a national day of solidarity to support Bessemer, Alabama, Amazon workers struggling for union recognition. If successful, the Bessemer facility would be the first Amazon location to become unionized in the U.S. At least 50 other similar protests took place around the country.

ECONOMIC INEQUALITY, DEADLY CONDITIONS

There were lots of speeches and chants. Many focused on an astronomical inequality: Jeff Bezos, Amazon’s founder, earns \$35 million *per hour*, while the workers get \$15 per hour for grueling, unsafe, stressful working conditions, forced to risk their lives during the pandemic.

Current and former Amazon workers who spoke condemned Amazon’s non-response to COVID-19. We heard that the San Leandro warehouse (just south of Oakland) was shut down by workers for a time because of the unsafe condi-

Latin America Notes

by Eugene Walker

Coal mine casualties

Mexico City—Christina Auerbach, an activist from the Pasta de Conchos Family organization which brings together the relatives of the 65 workers who died in February 2006, said: “Fifteen years after the explosion in the Pasta de Conchos coal mine, the labor situation for the miners has not changed, as the conditions of insecurity and the contracts that favor businessmen remain intact.

“If I compare a photo of a coal mine from yesterday, to one from two, eight or 15 years ago, the truth is that there is no difference as to which corresponds to [the presidential administration] of the 4th Transition [Lopez Obrador], Peña [Nieto] or [Felipe de Jesús] Calderón. They are all the same. There is an inertia in the region because there is a strong contempt for the lives of the miners.”

Obrador had promised upon taking office that his government would recover the 63 bodies still entombed in Pasta de Conchos since Grupo México, the mining company responsible for the miners’ deaths, has consistently refused to do so. But little to nothing has been done.

Now, with Obrador’s concept of energy independence and “developmentalism,” there are new plans for more coal mining financed by government buying, and for reactivating a pair of coal-fired plants on the Texas border. His “state-ism” will mean that the government oil company Pemex and the Federal Electricity Commission (CFE) will be pumping petroleum and generating electricity with little emphasis on renewable sources of energy.

This past February, two miners in the state of Coahuila, Cristóbal Ramírez and Macedonio Huerta, lost their lives. Auerbach commented: “The coal entrepreneurs say: we can supply more coal so that we can generate more jobs. Yes, but they generate very precarious jobs, in subhuman working conditions.”

La Minería Mata! Mining Kills! No Más Muertes! No More Deaths!



Mapuche resistance

In Chile, the government of President Sebastián Piñera is playing a double game with the Mapuche nation in the Araucanía region. On the one hand, the government said it would negotiate—and is organizing a constituent process that guarantees Indigenous representation in Congress. On the other hand, it announced that the army will carry out joint patrols with the police, and integrate command posts in the south—a territory of over 27,000 square miles.

In that region Mapuche resistance actions have been taking place, mainly aimed at combating and expelling the presence of logging companies that control over 15,000 square miles of native forests that have been replaced by pine plantations and eucalyptus.

In response to the deployment of the armed forces, Héctor Llailit Carrillanca, spokesman and co-founder of the Coordinator of Communities in Conflict Arauco-Malleco (CAM), a Mapuche insurgent organization, stated: “If they come to attack us, we will have to defend ourselves and resist in some way. That has been a characteristic of our people. It is a situation that we analyze among the communities. We are getting together, doing a lot of trawün (meetings), calling for unity and resistance.”

Mapuche political prisoners issued a statement: “We call on our nation to give continuity to the autonomist and revolutionary struggle, strengthening resistance to capitalism, exercising true territorial control, disputing and fighting against our real enemies. This is the only way to rebuild our nation including its cultural matrix sustained by our territorial and political spaces, once they are liberated.”

While the Mapuche are willing to discuss with the government, militant organizations such as CAM regard reserved seats as a quota of indigenous participation that the Chilean State offers for the management of capitalism. CAM insists on the need to confront the government’s repressive forces within a consolidation of the Mapuche revolutionary struggle, including of resistance and defense of their ancestral territory.

tions, one of the many work actions on the shop floor demanding better safety on the job including COVID precautions.

Amazon’s hiring and profits exploded during the pandemic, as many shoppers stayed home for safety. Amazon had to take on a huge number of new-hires, yet their primary focus to meet the increased demand is through speed-ups, which break workers’ bodies through heavy, repetitive motions.

AMAZON’S EXPLOITATION IS WORLDWIDE

Rank-and-file workers have been self-organizing and initiating workplace actions through internet groups in a



Some of the demonstrators in front of an Amazon-owned Whole Foods store in Oakland on Feb. 20, part of a national day of solidarity to support Amazon workers struggling for union recognition in Bessemer, Alabama.

nationwide ferment caused by horrid working conditions. At issue worldwide is Amazon’s ongoing mental and physical brutalization of workers being forced to work alongside robots and meet their pace. They either meet the ever-increasing speed-up or lose their job (see “[Amazon workers organize cross-border solidarity](#),” *News & Letters*, July-August 2019).

Workers are fired for the flimsiest excuses, especially to ward off unionization. One worker/union organizer told us that when his friend asked for parental leave, his request was denied because he was one week short of completing his probationary period. He appealed, and the leave was granted. After he took the leave and he returned to work, his leave was rescinded and he was fired for absenteeism. There was no doubt in his mind, however, that he was fired for befriending a union organizer.

The Bessemer facility, just outside of Birmingham, has a primarily Black population in an industrial area where Black workers have a long history of struggling for human dignity in life and in the workplace. The Amazon workers contacted the Retail, Wholesale, Department Store Union over the brutal pace of work and stress on their job.

Stuart Appelbaum, the union’s president, said that Black Lives Matter also influenced the union drive, saying, “They were fed up with how they were being treated, their basic humanity” (see “[Amazon’s Great Labor Awakening](#),” *The New York Times*, Feb. 18, 2021).

At our protest Nube Brown, a prisoner human rights activist and co-editor of the *San Francisco Bay View*, saw cheap labor as a continuity with slavery and the struggle for human dignity. A News and Letters Committees speaker also pointed to this human content in the unionization struggle and in the multiple actions against Amazon’s roboticized anti-human workplace.

—Bay Area Marxist-Humanists



by Suzanne Rose

An autistic man in the UK spent two years teaching himself law before winning an apology in a discrimination case against Virgin Active after an instructor in a spin class called him stupid. The court agreed that he was discriminated against, and also awarded him damages.

* * *

A professor at Oxnard College in California has been put on paid administrative leave after a video showed him berating a hard-of-hearing student, accusing her of not listening properly and saying she “was not paying attention.” A student who stood up for her was ignored.

* * *

A “little person” was banned from a cooking class at Heart of Worcestershire College in the UK after administrators decided that his participation would be a “health and safety risk.” He said, “They are simply not prepared to make the adjustments to accommodate me.” He was told that he would never work in a commercial kitchen.

* * *

A woman with “invisible” disabilities said that she was humiliated at London Stansted Airport when they took back the wheelchair she had booked and refused to help her carry her luggage because she “didn’t look ill.” But when she asked for the special assistance she had arranged, they told her she would have to pay for it.

Biking Diaries

Mexico's pandemicide

Xico, Veracruz—Almost one year after the declaration of the COVID-19 alert in Mexico, the way the government has been “managing” the situation is genocidal. At the beginning, the government kept workers in factories and offices but forced workers off the streets. It closed parks, but it protected banks and supermarkets with police.

By mid-summer, without substantial change in the rate of infections or deaths, we were suddenly allowed “out of quarantine.” Now that the vaccine is available, the administration allows access primarily to the elite.

A couple weeks ago, I registered my grandmother on the government’s website to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. It was a mess. I spent more than an hour refreshing the page, checking “I am not a robot” 1,000 times, getting notifications—in English!—about issues with the server, etc. How was my grandmother supposed to do this? How are other elders going to do it?

In Mexico, people 60 and over are the second population group, after health workers directly involved with COVID-19 patients, who would receive a free vaccine. Two weeks after subscribing to the list, my grandmother hasn’t received the dose. She lives in a small town in Veracruz, probably one of the last places that will get a shipment. And all this is just for the first of two doses!

We are in a deathtrap! Unemployment and misery have led to poor health conditions, which are the main cause for our vulnerability to the virus. They stop us from getting decent medical attention, which has been slowly turned into a commodity, while the public health system was left to die decades ago.

Now the purchase of millions of doses goes to multinational pharmaceutical corporations—hail to the free market! That will unavoidably lead to more public debt, more poverty, and then the circle starts again!

That is why we have to break it! A difficult task, for we are fighting now for our mere survival. What do we need to substantially change our life conditions? Is it an individual or social transformation? Is it something that is just happening in Mexico or in the whole world?

—Biking Snail

QUEERNOTES

by Ellse

When Ohio refused to change the birth certificate of Transgender man Jack Henning-Sepkoski to recognize his gender identity, he created a Change.org petition to change Ohio’s law. More than 136,000 individuals have signed. Until Ohio resumes honoring gender marker changes on birth certificates, as it had done until 2016, it is not complying with a federal judge’s ruling that Ohio’s law banning such changes is unconstitutional.

* * *

Chicago’s famous Boystown neighborhood has been struggling with racism for a long time. In a summer 2020 virtual town hall, the Chicago Black Drag Council made sure performers of color voices were heard, confronting the white performers, show runners and bar owners for their racist actions that made it difficult for their colleagues of color to perform. The town hall happened after protests objected to the racism performers and their audiences faced from business owners and customers, who were afraid of the crowds that rap and hip hop performers would attract. Performers of color are now finally allowed to entertain in Boystown bars.

* * *

Three countries are denying Baby S a passport. Her Spanish birth certificate lists her two married mothers, but neither are Spanish citizens, and Spain does not grant birthright citizenship. Gibraltar, British Overseas Territory, doesn’t recognize Baby S as a citizen, ruling that her Gibraltarian mother can’t pass her citizenship on to any children not born in the UK. Because Bulgaria recognizes marriages only between one woman and one man, and does not grant passports to children from same-sex marriages, her Bulgarian mother is suing Bulgaria in the European Union Court of Justice. The Court is hearing a similar case brought by married mothers from Poland and Ireland. The judgments in the two cases will be far-reaching, because many same-sex couples have stateless children. Such children can have difficulty enrolling in school, gaining employment and accessing healthcare. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said she will work to strengthen the rights of LGBTQ families.

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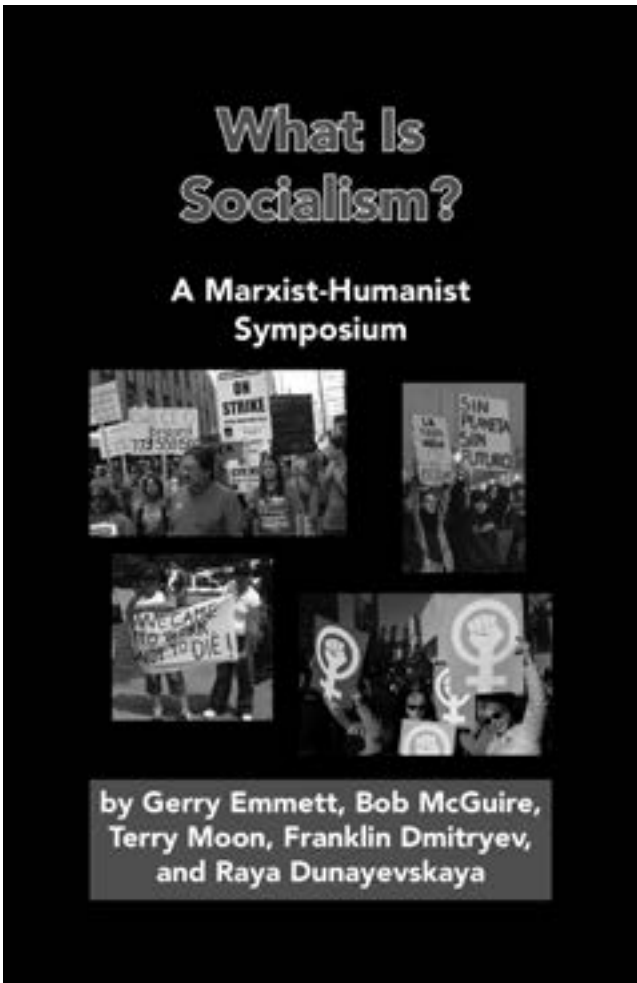


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From chapter 1:
The “freely associated labor” that strips away the commodity form is inextricable from the Absolute General Law of accumulation of capital, as well as from the “so-called ‘primitive accumulation’” of slavery and genocide. That inextricability is a philosophic projection of humanism. It is the absolute embodied in the social being.



From chapter 2:
The Marx that put labor at the center of resistance to capitalism and central to revolution intertwined labor in the U.S. with the Black dimension and in England with the Irish.



From chapter 3:
How do women fare under socialism? To address that, we cannot look at Russia, China, Cuba, etc. These countries are state-capitalist societies, mostly totalitarian, and the needs of capital rule them. Women in these countries do not do better than women in the U.S. and often fare worse. To see the promise of socialism, we must look at the few times where women have created the freedom to carve out their vision of a free society. Those moments occur during and after revolutions.



From chapter 4:
There is no path to a new society or away from climate chaos as long as counter-ing climate change is planned at the expense of working people, such as through taxes on consumption, instead of posing the liberation of working people from capitalist exploitation and the release of full human development as the way to break the anti-environmental direction of modern society. And more than “not at the expense” of workers but with workers as thinking and acting subjects of revolt.



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Excerpts from the Introduction to the new pamphlet on What Is Socialism

Marx's Humanism, Marxist-Humanism and Socialism

Since 2008, capitalism's aura of permanence and stability has been rocked—first by the deepest global economic crisis since the Great Depression of the 1930s, followed by a recovery that did not feel like a recovery for the millions who could not recoup what they had lost, then by the worsening disasters wrought by the climate crisis. Then the totality of crises in the year 2020 shook it to its foundations, with its inability to contain a pandemic long predicted that should have been technically manageable, intertwined with a deeper economic crisis, punctuated by a spontaneous Black revolt against racist police violence that spread across the U.S. and the world, all while Donald Trump's schemes to hold onto power put the threadbare democracy of the world superpower into question.

After these intersecting crises, things are not going back to normal. Even before the revolts, each aspect of the fumbled reaction to the deadly disease reflected how global capitalism had already been cannibalizing the social and environmental conditions for its own continuation. This is only the tip of the iceberg, as the climate crisis brings more and more destruction every year, while the economic crisis that the pandemic sharply deepened has no end in sight.

Just as importantly, if we look and listen closely, we can discern the beginnings and the potential for the creation of a new, human society. What would characterize that new society, how it would have to differ from capitalism to pull the world away from calamity, and how to get there, those questions are a matter not only of debate but of struggle. They are what this pamphlet addresses.

Growing alarm at the failing status quo led to the surging popularity of socialism and of openly naming capitalism as the enemy. The media finally noticed with the 2016 Bernie Sanders campaign. It is the masses of youth reaching for socialism that made possible the popularity of that campaign as well as of the handful of self-declared socialists elected to Congress in 2018, and of the call for a Green New Deal. The driving force is a generation that sees its future being sacrificed on the altar of profits and political expediency by the same system that shows no great concern for their present either, and that is confronted with the lethal, sadistic brutality of the armed enforcers of that system's law in all its racist, sexist, heterosexist, class-slanted oppressiveness.

This makes it all the more important to deepen the discussion of what capitalism and socialism are. This is not a scholastic question separate from momentous consequences in life. Two whole periods of development of Marxist and revolutionary movements suffered transformations into opposite that clouded generations' concepts of socialism.

The rot in the socialist Second International culminated in its collapse at the outbreak of World War I, when most of the national parties that belonged to it abandoned their anti-war stance and lined up behind "their" warring nation-state. The Russian Revolution repudiated that kind of chauvinism, unfurled a new banner of liberation, and opened a new period in international Marxist socialism. Within several years, a counter-revolution emerged from within it, transforming the beginnings of workers' rule into a state-capitalist totalitarianism—and yet Stalinism presented itself as revolutionary Marxism and too much of the revolutionary movement accepted it as if it were some kind of socialism, or at least a movement toward socialism. These transformations into opposite show the need to be rooted in history and in a dialectical philosophy of revolution that articulates the *essential* differences between capitalism and socialism and can anticipate and comprehend such transformations.

It shows the need for a philosophical-political as well as economic understanding of what happens after revolutions. Old mistakes are resurfacing and lessons of history are missed....

Quite often it is taken for granted that capitalism means free markets and socialism means some combination of government intervention, nationalization, planning, and "democratization" of the state.

That kind of statism is in a different world from the revolts now raging. They reveal the state as a direct enemy and make demands that can only be met by tearing up present society by the roots and reconstructing it on new foundations. The demand to abolish or defund the police and prisons calls into question the class structure of society that necessitates a state that has a monopoly of violence and uses it to maintain exploitative relationships and the social hierarchy in which they are crystallized.

Many voices in the youth climate strikes explicitly called for a fundamental political and economic trans-

formation, without which sufficient climate action will not happen. In resistance camps like those at Standing Rock in North Dakota, it was not only the Dakota Access Pipeline but ongoing settler colonialism and capitalism that were identified as the enemy. Women in worldwide marches and demonstrations demand to be comprehended as full human beings who have the right to control their own bodies, be free to walk all streets day or night, and be free of harassment, rape, discrimination and abuse.

The whole history of the 20th century reveals statist socialism to be a dead end. It is a substitute for the self-activity of the Subject, of masses in motion, which is the only basis for workers' control of production and the labor process.... Socialism must be rooted in the self-activity of masses in motion, new human relations, revolution, and philosophy of revolution, or it is nothing.

MARX'S HUMANISM

That is why Karl Marx's philosophy of revolution is so crucial. From the beginning, he separated himself from what he called "vulgar communism," whose adherents believed the abolition of private property was enough to solve humanity's problems.

He wrote that a focus on private property lends the appearance of a problem lying outside of the human being, whereas "in speaking of labor, one deals directly with humanity itself." In speaking of labor, one deals with the alienation of human beings from their own activity, and therefore alienation from themselves, from each other, from nature. Through this contradiction within labor, and therefore within human beings who labor, they develop in the direction of overcoming the contradiction. Their own living labor, extracted from them in the capitalistic labor process, is turned into dead labor, that is, capital, an accumulated dead weight embodied in machines and the other material elements of production, acting as an alien power that oppresses the worker. In capitalism, dead labor dominates living labor—the total opposite of freedom and self-activity. Marx called this a dialectical inversion of subject and object.

Marx spent decades clarifying the character of this alienation and its ramifications, as well as the whole economic structure and the human relations and ideology formed around it. That process of clarification leaped ahead through his work in solidarity with those fighting against slavery in the U.S. Civil War and solidarity with the 1871 revolution in France known as the Paris Commune—solidarity unseparated from careful observation and analysis. It deepened and made more concrete what had been developing in his thought since his philosophy was born....

It was the continuation of alienated labor and capitalist exploitation under the guise of socialism in the USSR that compelled Raya Dunayevskaya to develop the ideas of Marxist-Humanism, to establish a new beginning in Marxism.

Doing so required not only a precise economic analysis of state-capitalism and a sharp political analysis and critique but a return to Marx's philosophical roots in G.W.F. Hegel's dialectical philosophy. The first chapter of this pamphlet, "Socialism and a Philosophy of Revolution," takes up how our age has proved the necessity of humanist philosophical mediation, if socialism is not to collapse into one more form of human self-alienation. That dialectic of negativity involves the comprehension of transformation into opposite, as in socialist revolution ending up with state-capitalist tyranny, but does not end there. Central to it is the dual rhythm of revolution as the destruction of the old and creation of the new, which is inseparable from, indeed dependent upon, the revolutionary release of the creativity of Subjects of revolution.

Marx's singling out of the workers' struggles for freedom and self-determination, their "quest for universality" in his words, as against the condition of being reduced to an appendage to the machine, did not exclude an openness to what Marxist-Humanism would later make explicit as Subjects of revolution, from women and youth to Black Americans and oppressed nationalities, from Indigenous peoples and people with disabilities to peasants in non-capitalist or partly capitalist lands. This question is elaborated in the second and third chapters of this pamphlet. "Socialism, Labor, and the Black Dimension" takes up the Marxist-Humanist concept that Black masses in motion act as the vanguard of revolution at turning points in U.S. history. "Socialism and Women's Liberation" shows what women as Reason achieved in revolutions, deepening

what socialism means, and lost with the consolidation of state-capitalism calling itself Communism. Right within his critique of vulgar communism, Marx revealed another dimension of the needed new human relations by criticizing the alienated conception of relations between men and women, not only in prevailing society but in the ideas of the communists—and viewing that relationship as the most basic one of all that needed total reorganization.

Without these Subjects of revolution self-organizing and self-developing into masses in motion, socialism cannot escape from the bounds of capitalism; at the same time, without revolutionary humanist philosophical mediation those bounds will reconstitute around us and block the total reorganization of society. Spontaneity, resistance, revolt, and revolution are absolutely necessary—and at the same time the upsurge from below seeks out both self-organization of people and the kind of organization of thought that can unite theory and practice, philosophy and revolution, in a new relationship.

Activity alone does not release "the reunification of mental and manual abilities in the individual himself, the 'all-rounded' individual who is the body and soul of Marx's humanism." Emancipatory philosophic probing and projection—living the dialectic—is itself a force of social transformation.

The age of state-capitalism brings with it such an administrative mentality that it pollutes the thinking even of those trying to end capitalism. It exacerbated a tendency already seen in the socialist Second International, and anticipated by Marx in his critique of "quite vulgar and unthinking communism [that] completely negates the *personality* of" human beings: counterposing the collective to the individual. He continued: "We should especially avoid re-establishing society, as an abstraction, opposed to the individual. The individual *is the social entity*."...

MARXIST-HUMANISM AND SOCIALISM

Marxist-Humanism arose to face that challenge in a new era: a new stage of revolt and of cognition that burst out after World War II, along with a new stage of automated production. Coal miners in West Virginia were the first to battle automation in their 1949-50 general strike against the operation of the continuous miner. In the process they raised new questions that showed the today-ness of Marx's humanist socialism: what *kind* of labor human beings should do, and why there is this gulf between thinking and doing, seen in the workplace and in the workers' organization, the union.

The 1950s revolts against Communism in Eastern Europe consciously linked back to Marx's humanism, bringing out his 1844 Humanist Essays with their critique of vulgar communism right in the midst of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution, for one. Their experiences brought to life again Marx's point:

Communism is the necessary form and the energizing principle of the immediate future. But communism, as such, is not the goal of human development, the form of human society. . . . [C]ommunism is humanism mediated by the transcendence of private property. Only by the transcendence of this mediation, which is nevertheless a necessary presupposition, does there arise *positive* Humanism, beginning from itself.

Because the Humanist Essays pointed beyond communism and addressed the question of what happens after revolution, their rediscovery in the 1950s laid the foundation for Marxist humanism from East Europe to Africa to the U.S. **What became paramount to the Marxist-Humanism of Dunayevskaya and her organization, News and Letters Committees, is the whole question of new human relations and full human development that would rise to the level of what Marx called "the absolute movement of becoming."**

A new encounter with Marx's roots in Hegel's dialectic of negativity was crucial. It has always been easier to focus on the first negation—opposition to and overthrow of the existing system—than on the negation of that negation, the second negation, the construction of the new, moving toward full liberation, which can only emerge out of the first negation. What the new stage of cognition revealed was that a totally new relationship of theory to practice was called for. The movement from below had been working towards this with what Dunayevskaya, through her fresh encounter with Hegel's absolutes, recognized as the movement from practice that is itself a form of theory—the liberation struggles of workers and other Subjects of revolution are not just a source of theory but a form of theory itself. And to become reality in our day, socialism needs to *begin* from the totality of theory and practice, of mental and manual activity, of Subjects of revolution and philosophy.

This meant a new emphasis on socialism as not alone a change in property forms, planning, and a redistribution of material wealth, and not alone a question of new forms of organization for workers like workers' councils, but *freedom*, the self-activity of the masses....

—Franklin Dmitryev for The National Editorial Board of News and Letters Committees
November 2020



July 31, 2015 march in Minneapolis to honor Sandra Bland and protest deaths of Black women in police custody.



A worker in an automated factory in China, 2010.

TRUMPISM, RACISM AND THE SPECTER OF FASCISM

[“Trump’s election obsession shreds a flawed democracy”](#) (web article, Jan. 10) reveals extensive suppression of Black and Brown votes and the many ways, overt and covert, that this is carried out. It also shows us how resistance to voter suppression was led by Stacey Abrams’s Fair Fight movement in Georgia, which made a difference in the election outcomes. Similar resistance, small and large scale, also flipped swing states Pennsylvania, Michigan, and Wisconsin. It was not just young voters galvanized by the Black Lives Matter movement but long-time voters learned concretely that we not only have to get out the vote; we have to protect it afterwards. They are also seeing how limited elections are for real change; how “going back to normal” will not answer their quest for new human relations, a new society.

Community activist
Detroit

The impeachment trial is very dangerous because non-revolutionaries will say, “It’s over; Trumpism is not the issue.” But it’s clear that all the politicians who created Trump’s power are still there. Nobody in mainstream media talks about their responsibility. I am disgusted that there are no recall efforts. Pence is being rehabilitated as the great hero because he did his job after four years of being up Trump’s butt and building his road. Can’t have unity based only on hope.

Observer
Michigan

The attack on the Capitol is being used as an excuse for a new law to increase powers of the FBI and other law enforcement to target “domestic terrorism.” Joe Biden, who strongly supported the PATRIOT Act after 9/11/2001, is expected to push it. But these agencies don’t need more power, they just need to act against right-wing terrorists instead of Black Lives Matter, climate justice, immigrants’ rights, feminist, Queer, disability rights and other left-leaning protesters who are overwhelmingly nonviolent. The problem is that law enforcement sees the right-wingers as their people and most of the rest of us as the enemy. More powers will be used in the same biased, repressive way.

Environmentalist
Southern California

Many points made in [“Trumpist coup reveals fascist threat and Left’s philosophic void”](#) (web article, Jan. 10) help explain the grim context which led up to the Jan. 6 coup attempt, such as the destruction of working-class organizations and the Left’s failure to raise a vision of a totally new, non-capitalist society which the mass freedom struggles are seeking. Still, some unions like UNITE HERE sent laid-off hospitality workers to canvass in Black

READERS' VIEWS

and Latinx neighborhoods, as did Wisconsin’s worker center Voces de la Frontera (*Labor Notes*, December 2020). Their efforts helped defeat Trump.

The election, important for fighting fascism, does not reach for a new society, which is why Marxist-Humanism concentrates on supporting mass freedom struggles with a philosophy of liberation. Since then, Republican legislators have not only back-pedaled their condemnation of Trump’s attempted coup but strengthened their attachment to fascism. Even someone who called for the execution of Nancy Pelosi, Georgia Republican Congresswoman Marjorie Taylor Greene, shows no remorse and fears no retribution. She won’t be recalled; she won her district with 75% of the vote.

Susan Van Gelder
Detroit

VACCINE INEQUALITY AND INJUSTICE

It is enraging to hear one story after another of the rich and well-connected jumping the line for COVID-19 vaccine ahead of first responders and the elderly. Gov. DeSantis set up one distribution point accessible

only to an enclave of the super-rich in Florida, while there have been multiple cases of suburban whites with superior internet skills showing up in South Side Chicago neighborhoods they would normally avoid like the plague. Officials across the country have blamed shockingly low rates of vaccination among Blacks on their resistance to the science rather than on the roadblocks preventing delivery to them. It is a majority of Trump supporters that polls indicate intend to avoid being vaccinated for a “hoax” disease that has struck down half a million people.

Waiting for vaccine
Chicago

Governments across the world have shown a marked preference to respond to the pandemic by imposing social controls without enforcing public health measures like making workplaces and housing safer and providing the materials people need to protect themselves. New figures show a growing gap between Black and white life expectancy in the U.S.—in one year of pandemic, Black life expectancy fell by three years! This parallels the new but

same old twist of skewed access to vaccines. The same type of phenomenon is also seen in the total lack of measures to protect women from increased domestic violence or to make shelters safer from contagion.

Subscriber
Midwest

In New York people age 50 and up are eligible for a vaccine, but there is not enough vaccine to go around. In Connecticut it’s 65 and up. This causes strife within the population, acting out the capitalistic ethos of competition—not a question of sharing our gifts. My education helps me do better in society, not to broaden my mind. The values are to be competitive in accumulation of things—it’s not what you are but what you have. Beyond capitalism, our knowledge is for enriching our lives and understandings.

Paul
New York

Women and men, please beware that a possible side effect of the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines for COVID-19 is swelling of the lymph nodes. That swelling is often a sign of breast cancer, BUT as a side effect of the vaccine, it is NOT a sign of breast cancer. The Society of Breast Imaging recommends waiting four weeks after you’re vaccinated to get a mammogram. For more information, go to <https://www.webmd.com/vaccines/covid-19-vaccine/news/20210211/covid-vaccine-reaction-can-mimic-breast-cancer-symptoms>.

Breast cancer survivor
Chicago

[“Vaccine Rollout Inflames Global Inequalities”](#) (Jan.-Feb. 2021 *N&L*) made me think: “to have one basis for healthcare and another for life is a priori a lie.”

Steve
Detroit

ORGANIZING AMAZON

On the eve of Amazon warehouse workers in Bessemer, Alabama, beginning a month-long mail balloting unionization election, President Biden made news by recommending that workers vote YES to affiliate with the RWDSU. I hope that means that, despite Union membership in the private work force dropping from 38% to 6% over the last 70 years, Biden sees a political advantage now in being publicly pro-union. More likely Biden knew he would fail to enact the highly popular raise in the minimum wage to \$15 an hour (by 2025) and positioned himself as pro-worker in word if not in deed.

Retired Teamster
Chicago

CAN HUMANITY SURVIVE?

I continue to be stunned by governors like those in Texas who lift mask mandates or refuse to call for them in the first place. The U.S. had several opportunities to flatten the curve of COVID-19 cases but couldn’t do it because people in and out of government refused to wear or mandate the wearing of masks. It’s hard to believe that humanity can survive the pandemic or the coming global warming catastrophe that is just around the corner when science is ignored and the deaths of hundreds of thousands seem meaningless to millions.

Deeply disillusioned
Chicago

CRIMINAL INJUSTICE

Current prosecutors determined that Lamar Johnson was wrongly convicted in 1995 based on prosecutorial misconduct and fabricated police evidence. Two other men confessed that they are the ones who

committed the murder. But the Missouri Supreme Court says local prosecutors have no right to file a motion for a new trial this long after the corrupt conviction. The state Attorney General could do it but refuses. You call that justice?

Angry
Memphis

TRUST WOMEN

A disgusting professor at Harvard, no less, is promoting the lie that the Korean “comfort women” were actually paid prostitutes who had contracts with the Japanese government. In arguing against him, other professors rightly say he is ignoring 30 years of study and scholarship. He is also ignoring what the women themselves *actually have said* and *the movement they started* in order to say it. It would have been nice to have one of those academics say that the women testified numerous times that they were raped and prostituted against their will. Then 92-year-old Lee Yong-soo, who was kidnapped by Japanese soldiers during World War II and raped repeatedly, spoke up. When will we learn to TRUST WOMEN?

Women’s Liberationist
Chicago

MARX’S HUMANISM AND LOVE

Urszula’s perspective on “Marx’s Humanist Essays” ([Nov.-Dec. 2020 *N&L*](#)) brings to mind *The Communism of Love* by Richard Gilman-Opalsky. Both show Marx’s concern was not how changes in capitalism’s “relationality” (commodification) could be achieved. His concern was relationality (society) itself. Love is a transformative, humanizing catalyst. A relationality based on love takes us from “beloved object” to a revolutionary “beloved person.” There is nothing more human and Marxist. Glad *N&L* is back!

Prisoner
Sterling, Colo.

WHY READ N&L?

I like *N&L* just like it is, and share it with anyone who is interested. Sometimes it’s great for pissing off the brainwashed Trump-holes too! (If I ever do get my stimulus money, I WILL donate some! Until then, I’m broke.)

Prisoner
Mansfield, Ohio

CNN has been driving me crazy; we use *The New York Times* to start our wood stove. They leave out things I see in *N&L*. It’s a feast, the nuts and bolts that the authors bring in. I’m reading a paper that tells me something and gives me purpose.

Subscriber
New York

To our incarcerated readers

Prisoncrats sometimes choose to return an issue to us undelivered, but if you have been moved—to another prison, or within the same prison—the USPS will *not* forward newspapers. Help us keep *N&L* in your hands by letting us know your change of address, including when you are released. When you leave prison your donor subscription can continue to your new address for one additional year.

We welcome your contributions to *N&L* and for our website. There are some things we cannot provide. We do not match up pen pals. *N&L* cannot help prisoners with individual legal cases, and we cannot offer legal advice or access to attorneys. This paper is a place where the voices of people engaged in struggles inside and outside prison walls can be heard speaking for themselves.

Karen Lewis, 1953-2021

The City of Chicago lost a powerful voice for teachers, and for workers in general, with the death of Karen Lewis, former President of the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU). She was the face of militant opposition to the welcoming of corporate profiteering at the expense of education, students and teachers.

The opposition within the CTU called CORE (Caucus of Rank-and-File Educators) defeated a union leadership in 2010 that had not pushed back against the “education reform” of Mayor Richard M. Daley. He had opened the door to private charter schools by shuttering dozens of high schools and elementary schools in Black and Latinx neighborhoods. He then scapegoated the teachers in those schools, firing them all.

Just two years later in 2012, Lewis led the seven-day CTU strike to victory with enthusiastic participation from parents and students that obstructed then-



Mayor Rahm Emanuel’s plans to rapidly privatize the public schools. There were rallies of thousands of teachers and supporters every day of the strike. That strike built on the momentum of renewed militancy in defense of union rights in 2011 against attacks by Tea Party legislators—thousands of unionists had gathered to commemorate Haymarket martyrs 125 years later, 20 times the number present 25 years earlier.

When Karen Lewis got a diagnosis of brain cancer just as she was expected to run for Mayor in 2015, Chicago lost out.

For four more years Emanuel was able to treat the schools and the city with the same open contempt he displayed toward Lewis. Karen Lewis was loved, partly because Emanuel hated her, but primarily because she represented the power of rank-and-file unionists standing up.

—Bob McGuire

THE OBJECTIVE MOVEMENT OF HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY OF EMANCIPATION

“[Uncivilized U.S.: Murder of Rev. King](#)” by Raya Dunayevskaya (Jan.-Feb. 2021 *N&L*) speaks to aspects of today’s reality: the threat of right-wing extremists to the Black Lives Matter movement and the rewriting of King’s legacy to downplay his revolutionary commitment to full Black liberation that is so prevalent now, to name two. I especially appreciated her summation of King’s greatness: “Dr. King had developed to the point where he let nothing stand in the way of the struggle for freedom....His greatness lay in recognizing the objective movement of history and aligning himself with it.”

This speaks to the challenge faced by Black Lives Matter today, not alone the deadly danger from the Right, but the need to fully align with the objective movement of history, and not be diverted into so-called progressive politics. The need is for total social revolution. A new stage of revolt, of which BLM is surely a manifestation, is not in itself a new beginning. A new beginning signifies not only a new moment of practice emerging from below, but as well new categories of thought, new moments in developing a philosophy of emancipation. Seeds for that are being planted, especially by the actions and thought of Black women, feminists, Queer, Trans and straight. How can those seeds be cultivated? Their connection to the great river of Black liberation is one important determinant. As well, I would argue, is the need to forge a living connection with the fullness of Marx’s philosophy of permanent revolution. Here Dunayevskaya’s reading the revolution of Marx’s Marxism can enter.

Eugene Gogol
Mexico



ELECTRIC CARS ARE NO PANACEA

So many of us want to believe that we can significantly reduce carbon and methane emissions without significantly changing our lifestyle. In my view, the goal

should be to reduce total vehicle miles traveled (regardless of fuel). It is simple algebra. Reducing vehicle miles travelled reduces emissions from all energy sources in the transportation chain—from energy production through all types of manufacturing, to actual vehicle emissions. That is why land use planning is a key element. We need to redesign our living spaces to reduce the amount of miles we must travel in our day-to-day living. I am not optimistic.

Terry D.
Santa Barbara, Calif.



PRICING NATURE AND LIVES

Reducing nature to a monetary price is no solution. If we live in a system that makes decisions primarily on monetary value, then the solution is not to rejigger the appraised values but rather to reorganize society so that decisions are made in a really rational way that takes into account the current and future well-being of human beings, nature, and society as a whole. How much is a human life worth? Economic models do put a price on individual human lives that is shockingly low. And what about the “discount rate” applied to the well-being of future generations? The implausible assumption is that the further you look into the future, the richer society will be, so the shortening of many lives a hundred years from now is offset by not spending \$1,000 today. So the life of your grandchild is worth a fraction of your own life, and the destruction of the ecological basis of all life seven generations from now is a justifiable price to pay for the obscene profits of today’s oil and coal companies. These economic cost-benefit calculations try hard not to look at *who* pays the costs (most of us, but especially burdened are those who are already marginalized) and *who* gets the benefits (mostly the richest and most powerful).

Franklin Dmitryev
Chicago



RACISM AND ANTI-RACISM IN THE QUEER COMMUNITY

For the foreseeable future, my column, “[Queer Notes](#)” will include at least one piece on racism in the Queer community

QUEER
NOTES

in the U.S. The re-energized movements against racism demand this. Where is racism being ignored? Where is it being faced and dealt with? Who inspires us to beat down racism?

Elise
Chicago



COVID-19 IN PRISON

I am more than certain that this movement, Karl Marx, Raya Dunayevskaya, News and Letters Committees, have brought a massive amount of change to people’s lives, mine included. I’ve been reading each issue, and I still have the very first issues that were sent to me. I have to give much thanks to this committee, because it has kept me in tune with worldly affairs, even when I’m sitting for long periods of segregation time for political and protective conduct, where prisoncrats feel the rights of those incarcerated are void. I am looking for ways to help others, and you provide many ideas, and knowledge, which again help educate those who are not aware of circumstances. This committee has helped tremendously because I am an inspired political activist and paralegal in training to productively enforce the rights of people around me.

So how has this paper helped? Simply put, it has taken the narrow-minded views I once had and now helped me to make wiser choices that will effectively change lives. I’m encouraged by the positivity that this committee created. And what I am learning, I add to what I have learned. I appreciate it again, and I know some time in the near future, I’ll be able to make a donation. Yes, the pandemic is playing its part on us, but it won’t stop us.

Political activist prisoner
Oglethorpe, Ga.

I’d like to express my gratitude for *N&L* being considerate enough to continue my subscription after the pandemic made this not possible for a while. I also appreciate all of you who are donors for prisoners like me who find it imperative to be informed as well as be exposed to new ways of thinking. Seldom is there a day that goes by that I don’t think of how I can put thought into action. Just the other day I was contemplating the balance in exerted energy in my “pro-action” as op-

posed to “reaction.” *N&L* contains jewels throughout the whole paper. Even parts that seemingly might not be akin to my struggle. I use these jewels to take a more proactive stance in prison and also to get an understanding of where the roots of my reactions stem from.

Misinformation is rampant in here. You got prisoners (both white AND other—shaking my head!) who support Trump and his cronies because they’re “gangsters.”



I believe it’s nothing for the so-called Left to be manipulated by plutocrats and that capitalism and top-down government

is the real root of America’s problem. There needs to be a third party representing the Other and Stacey Abrams’s grass-roots work ion Georgia may provide some insight into how to get this done on a national level. Let’s Get It Done!!

Prisoner
Ohio

I really appreciate receiving *N&L*, and am thankful for you finding a donor to pay the subscription fee for me! I am an inmate at Fort Dix in New Jersey. We have been hit hard with the COVID pandemic. We are staying strong, though: 90% of my building tested positive nearly two months ago. They brought inmates in from FCI Elkton and suddenly the virus was everywhere! Our warden just got re-assigned last week.

Prisoner
Fort Dix, N.J.

TO OUR READERS: Can you donate \$5 for a prisoner who cannot pay for a subscription to *N&L*? It will be shared with many others. A donation of \$8 pays for a subscription plus the *Pelican Bay Hunger Strikers* pamphlet to be sent to a prisoner. Prisoners are eligible to continue their free subscriptions when they first get released, a time when the system tries to make them forget the struggle.

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3-4/21

From India to the U.S.A. women fight violence

continued from p. 1
assault.

The military is to blame for the murders, harassment and rapes they studiously ignored for decades. And it is our rape culture, the concept that women are less than, not fully human, are asking for it, deserve it, etc., etc., that is the current fueling the tidal wave of never-ending rape and abuse. Together it means that the struggle is not just about legislative stopgaps, it's about the needed deep changes to society as a whole—it means a revolution thorough enough to transform human relationships.

INDIA: OFTEN RAPE MEANS DEATH

In 2013 Jyoti Singh Pandey, a 23-year-old medical student in India, was brutally raped. A metal rod was jammed with such force into her vagina that it reached to her diaphragm, destroyed her intestines and ultimately killed her. The demonstrations that followed were massive and even spread beyond India to Nepal. It isn't that Indian women haven't been brutally raped before, but *this rape at that time* and the demonstrations that followed were thought to portend change. They have not.

On Sept. 14, 2020, a 19-year-old Dalit woman working in her family's field in Hathras was kidnapped by a group of upper-caste men. In unfathomable brutality they cut out her tongue, severed her spinal cord, put a rope around her neck and dragged her. The brutality didn't end even after she died on Sept. 29. When her body arrived at Uttar Pradesh the next day, the police seized it from the family by force and cremated it at 3:00 A.M. without allowing them to be present and then denied to the media that she had suffered multiple rapes.

Again, huge demonstrations of Dalits and others followed. But then, On Sept. 30 in Balrampur, a 22-year-old woman—also Dalit—was raped by two men and died of her injuries; and four more rapes were documented in the next 60 days. In fact, at least 10 Dalit women a day are raped in India, a part of the 90+ rapes reported each day. In February 2021, a 20-year-old woman patient in a Manjhanpur hospital, also in Uttar Pradesh, was gang-raped by her doctor and others, and then, after she reported it to her parents, murdered. It turns out that the rape of women in their hospital beds is not a rare occurrence.

For years now, demonstrations against rape in India have drawn hundreds of thousands of people and they have been frequent. And yet rapes continue in huge numbers and hideous brutality. They continue because sexism and misogyny are ingrained in every aspect of society—the police, the village councils, the family unit, the schools, the government.

There are plenty of laws in India that, if enforced, could at least put a dent in the out of control rate of rapes. They are not. In this so-called “biggest democracy,” women are second-class citizens and Dalit women are on the bottom rung. After these highly publicized rapes, the Dalit Human Rights Defenders Network wrote a passionate letter to Uttar Pradesh's Chief Minister. Most of their seven suggestions for how things must change were to implement laws that already exist.

NOTHING WILL STOP WOMEN FROM FIGHTING BACK

More and more women have been fighting this violence in ever more creative ways. The worldwide Women's Marches that started after Donald Trump's inauguration in 2017 involved millions and have continued. Since 2017, in a country where honor killings are rife, the Aurat (Woman) March in Pakistan annually raises the issue of ending violence against women. Its manifesto issued in 2019 began by demanding “the right to autonomy and decision-making over our bodies.”

Ni Una Menos (“Not one [woman] less”) has spread across Latin America. It has a huge membership and played a major role in winning abortion rights in Argentina, where it was founded. Ni Una Menos states they were “born out of being fed up with sexist violence, which has its cruelest moment in femicide.” #MeToo, started by Tarana Burke, a Black woman in the U.S., has spread across the globe because ending sexist abuse is a worldwide demand. These movements are international, are many and are huge. This is new.

It is not only international organizations that show women's creativity and determination to create a world where violence against women is a thing of the past. A few examples—and there are thousands—will have to suffice.

Women are becoming fed up with the do-nothing obstructionist policies of Mexican president Andrés Manuel López Obrador, who sees feminism as his enemy, denies the high rate of femicide, and recently backed Félix Salgado as governor for the Mexican state of Guerrero. Salgado raped at least two young women in the style of Harvey Weinstein. As feminist Viridiana Rios wrote in an op-ed for *The New York Times*: “I am a Mexican woman, and I agree with Mr. López Obrador, on many

points. Like him, I believe that predatory political and economic elites have enriched themselves at the expense of the rest of us. But unlike Mr. López Obrador, I know that even if wealth is redistributed, the abuse and inequalities suffered by women will remain. Women should not tolerate this lie the president continues to espouse.”

Even before that, since women knew that they can no longer turn to the government for help, they took over the building housing the National Commission of Human



Women performing “A Rapist in Your Path” in the Alameda Central Square in Mexico City in protest of the high number of women murdered. The words in part are: “The fault wasn’t mine, not where I was, not how I dressed. The rapist is you. It’s the cops. The judges. The state. The president. The oppressive state is a rapist. The rapist is you!”

Rights. They replaced the name on the building with a banner reading “Occupy! House of refuge. Ni Una Menos, Mexico. Black Bloc.” They transformed the huge building into a shelter for women fleeing violence, covering the walls with the names of victims.

In the Gaza Strip, where violence against women is increasing and 11 women have been murdered since the year began, women created five media campaigns in two months aimed at fighting that violence. Not only do women tell their story of abuse online, which in itself is powerful and can shame an abuser and warn others against him, but they go further: the batterer is contacted, as are legal authorities. The women are followed up by the Women's Affairs Center, which gives them legal and psychological support.

On Feb. 12, in Kathmandu, Nepal, hundreds of women protested against a proposed law that would require women to get permission from their “families” (read “men”) to travel to Africa or the Middle East. Not coincidentally, the demonstration was part of a women's march against rape and other violence. The executive director of Women Lead Nepal spoke to the marchers about the thingification of women: “What is extremely dangerous is the thought process behind it. The very fact that a policymaker is thinking about drafting this law restricting the movement of adult girls and women tells us how deep-rooted the patriarchal mindset is.”

This is only a snapshot of women's creative activism. More can be seen on page 2 in “Women WorldWide”; on page 1 as Burmese women's novel response to state repression is expressed in the Editorial “Masses resist Burma's murderous coup”; or in a young working woman's response to the pandemic on page 3. Women's revolt is endless.

REVOLT REACHES FOR A REVOLUTION IN PERMANENCE

Since the revolt is ceaseless, and since women's struggle for full freedom has advanced to the stage where we now have huge international organizations as well as continuous local uprisings, why is it that rape and violence against women not only persist but seem to get worse, and how can we change that reality?

The history of revolutions points a direction. We can go back to the Paris Commune and see how during the revolt itself reality was transformed so that women not only were equals in almost every aspect of that revolution, working the barricades with the men, they also transformed aspects of society like education and production.

But we don't have to go back to 1871 for examples. It's the ten-year anniversary of the Arab Spring, which showed us how age-old misogynist relationships between men, women, and children could change in an instant. Be it Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen or Syria, women made sure they were speakers and leaders. They transformed human relationships by creating new ones on the spot: in Egypt's Tahrir Square; in Yemen's Change Square and by coming out in the thousands when Yemen's President Saleh accused women protesters of being against Islam. In Syria, despite Bashar al-Assad's willingness to murder thousands in the street, 2,000 women and children blocked roads, shouting, “We will not be humiliated.”

Real democracy, equality and new human relations were created in the squares. As Salma El Tarzi, a 33-year-old Egyptian filmmaker, said at the time: “When the men saw that women were fighting in the front line, that changed their perception of us and we were all united. We were all Egyptians now. The general view of women changed for many. Not a single case of sexual harassment

happened during the protests up until the last day when Mubarak stepped down. That is a big change for Egypt.”

It may seem in moments of revolution that these fundamental changes happen in the blink of an eye, but always they have been preceded by decades of struggle. We have had those decades, we need to consider that to change systematic sexism, racism, and a capitalism that consigns workers to poverty and desperation, a revolution is a necessity. No one knows better than women that it would have to be what Karl Marx called for, a “revolution in permanence,” because women have never become free from only the first act of revolution. Revolution in permanence needs to become our goal.

This year's International Women's Day will show that even in the midst of a deadly pandemic, women will continue to deepen our fight for full freedom and new human relationships.

VOICES FROM THE INSIDE OUT

continued from p. 1

virus protocol was managed. For instance, in one unit of 46 prisoners, only six prisoners had positive tests in mid-December, and the vector of how the virus caused those positives could be identified. At the time this was 13% of that particular unit.

The facility was put on a lockdown where both positive and negative prisoners were quarantined together, some in the same room! The result was that in this one unit alone the positivity rate jumped from six to a total of 40 positive cases, or 87% of the unit's population over a 12-day period. Fortunately, everyone recovered in this unit, though at least two COVID-19-related deaths have occurred at the facility during the same time.

As in most Wisconsin prisons, overcrowding and mismanagement of the COVID-19 crisis resulted in otherwise healthy people being placed in a situation to get sick. This goes for staff as well and is not just restricted to Wisconsin; as the numbers in the PPI report note, this is a nationwide failure.

WISCONSIN HAS NO VIABLE COVID-19 PLAN

The CDC has made recommendations about who should be in phases 1A, 1B, and 1C for the vaccines, which includes recommendations on how to vaccinate both prison staff and prisoners. According to the PPI, about 40 states have plans in place for those vaccinations; Wisconsin is one of the 10 states that, according to that report, have no viable plans in place, a fact confirmed by the *Wisconsin State Journal* article.

In fact, the only comprehensive plan that is consistently applied in Wisconsin prisons is imposing mass quarantines that have gotten more people infected inside, which threatens the community. It stands to reason that if prisoners are testing positive due to how this crisis is being handled, this also creates a risk for staff, their families, and the community at large.

Of course, that all goes along with the national failures, when it comes to dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic both in and out of prison. This is reprehensible on the part of the leadership of this and other states and the nation as a whole, regardless of the party.

It is time that those in charge assume some level of accountability in the way the COVID-19 crisis in prisons has been mishandled, even if it amounts to civil and criminal charges being filed by family members in the case of prisoner deaths caused by the way the states chose to address COVID-19 for confined persons in their care.

Author's note: On Dec. 17, 2020, I tested negative for COVID-19; 12 days later after being retested, I had a positive result after the facility I am located in was placed on quarantine. I have since recovered.

Now in affordable paperback: **Russia: From Proletarian Revolution to State-Capitalist Counter-Revolution**
Selected writings of Raya Dunayevskaya
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Learning from protest

Pensacola, Fla.—An Amazon protest on Feb. 20 was part of a national day of solidarity with Amazon workers, especially those conducting a union drive in Bessemer, Alabama. As this was my first protest, I found it remarkable. It was a small protest and included some members from the Workers’ World Party. We heard a speech about what is going on and information about other events supporting workers’ struggles.

After the protest, I talked with a few people. A man who recently moved here expressed how revolution is necessary for socialism but reforms are not a bad thing. He spoke of a need for a mix of both reform and revolution. I told him reform should come out of workers’ self-organizing and taking control of their own lives rather than something that is a principle or program of an organization.

I brought up my affiliation with News and Letters Committees. He looked up News and Letters on Wikipedia on his phone and saw Raya Dunayevskaya and C.L.R. James mentioned. He said he knew of them and he likes them. He has Dunayevskaya’s book *Philosophy and Revolution*.

A DEBATE ON THE IMPORTANCE OF THEORY

He claimed that Dunayevskaya argued that “In order to understand Marx, you must understand Hegel” and he has an issue with devoting a lot of time to theory. I explained the Marxist-Humanist position which stresses that the workers need to have a way to comprehend the new society, what would make it new. We need a philosophy to help us understand the world around us. Without it we will be left at the mercy of intellectuals and those who seek to assert themselves above the movement.

I also expressed how workers, from their own personal experiences, understand capitalism and its contradiction. I tried to say that it is practice from which we derive effective theory and it is theory from which effective practice derives. Practice to theory and theory to practice. He finished my thought by saying “Praxis.” I agreed and replied “Yes. The unity between theory and practice.” I concluded that this means “I’m fighting not only for my liberation but your liberation and the liberation of everyone.”

Even though the protest was small and short, it was worth coming to in order to learn of the people there and know who cares enough to come out against the degradation of workers by Amazon. My advice to anyone who ends up in a similar situation is to use such times to communicate with people and establish contact with them.


What matters as communists is using those moments to support struggles against capital. The first part in building a movement is becoming aware of what it wants and what is necessary to fulfill those wants, to talk with fellow workers and learn of their struggles.

I want to thank every single protester who participates and organizes solidarity protests. Such events help us as workers to develop and connect with one another, and realize our strength.

—Jackie Roving

“A caged man is a spirit trapped in steel—leave him alone and his spirit becomes one with his cage—it’s all he knows. Motivate him, nurture and socialize him, and his spirit soars. It is only then that the man realizes the difference between him and his cage—the reason for it. Thus allowing him to finally be free from it.”

\$5 for one pamphlet, \$10 allows us to send one to a prisoner for free. To order, see p. 9.



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Climate obstruction unplugs Texas

by Franklin Dmitryev

In mid-February, the north polar jet stream strayed far to the south, covering much of the U.S. with frigid air. This type of event is made more likely by climate change. By Feb. 19, 58 people in the U.S. and 12 in Mexico died as a result of Winter Storm Uri. Some 32 of them were in Texas, including 11-year-old Cristian Yafeth Pavon Pineda, who froze to death in his mobile home, and 75-year-old Carrol Anderson, who froze trying to retrieve a spare oxygen tank from his truck.

WHO SUFFERED MORE?

In Texas alone, over 5 million people lost power, some for more than three days. Lower-income, Black and Latinx areas in general lost power the longest. In cities like Austin and Houston they could gaze through the darkness at the lights gleaming in the rich downtown areas.

Refineries and chemical plants spewed an extra 3.5 million pounds of toxic pollutants into the air over five days. The people suffering the most exposure—the same ones who always do because the



In the background, the gleaming skyscrapers of downtown Austin, Texas, still lit up in the midst of the power outage. In the foreground, no electricity for the East Side, where Blacks and other people of color are concentrated after decades of racist redlining.

YOUTH IN ACTION

by Buddy Bell

Every day since mid-January, young people have filled the streets of Tunisia calling for jobs and relief from rising food prices. The marches are taking place 10 years after protests forced the ouster of former President Ben Ali. As a marker for the start of Arab Spring, those protests spread a global rallying cry for “employment, freedom and dignity.” A frazzled government administration soon resorted to deploying the army, filling the streets with tear gas. Banners now bear the motto: “Police everywhere. Justice nowhere.”

On Feb. 6, the government attempted to enact a supposed COVID-19 lockdown, but protests continued. As police and soldiers beat protesters and more than 1,000 people have been summarily detained, the protesters are also decrying police brutality and human rights violations. In Tunis, 24-year-old Haytem Ouslati told *Al Jazeera*: “I lived 10 years in freedom...I am not ready to lose it.”

* * *

Kavi Vu, a young Vietnamese American poet and videographer from Atlanta, organized with some friends to make a YouTube show in Vietnamese that could challenge rampant disinformation found on Vietnamese language Facebook pages. They met while doing voter registration and education, and were floored to realize how blatant lies were widely believed. “We would go into Boba tea shops and ask folks, What do you know? What do you not know? What do you want to know?... Through that, I got a lot more connected with the Asian American community here and just learned what was missing.”

One commonly-held belief propagated by Trump sycophants was that Biden and the Democrats voted against admitting Vietnamese refugees, whereas the only votes against a 1975 bill to do just that were cast by Republicans. After the Senate runoff victory for Democratic candidates in Georgia, angry right-wing authors harangued Facebook to remove the page of Vu’s show, and the personal pages of every admin of the page, pending verification. “It makes me a little proud knowing we were doing something right, or they wouldn’t have gone through all that effort.”

* * *

More than 1,000 students at Columbia University are withholding tuition in order to demand a 10% reduction in tuition rates, a reduction in campus police, and divestment from fossil fuels. At least 600 more at the University of Chicago are withholding the student services fees portion of their tuition, saying that there is reduced services and little or no student programming during the pandemic. Columbia has gone ahead and charged each of the strikers a late fee of \$150. In reply, student Becca Roskill said to *The Guardian*: “Our best safeguard against these sorts of measures is our collective strength. There’s been a really impressive will among strikers to continue striking through this.”

plants are near where they live—were again mostly Black and Latinx.

More than 12 million people lost water service, many for over a week. Burst pipes damaged thousands of homes. Women prisoners at Federal Medical Center Carswell in Fort Worth reported that they had to hand-scoop feces

out of toilets overflowing due to the lengthy water outage. Food shortages were widespread.

This debacle gives us another taste of what to expect from future disasters, if we do not uproot the system that keeps sacrificing people for the sake of its continuation—just as Hurricane Harvey gave us a taste in Houston in September 2017, Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico in the same month, Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans in 2005, Cyclone Idai in Mozambique in 2019, not to mention the COVID-19 pandemic.

The way business and government prepared—or failed to prepare—for the disaster and the way they responded to it tell a bloody tale of climate obstruction, greed, indifference and cruelty. The feeble attempts to blame windmills or the Green New Deal, which is only a proposal, distract attention from the fact that we are only seeing the tip of the climate catastrophe iceberg to come, if society does not make a radical change.

Oddly, some on the Left piled onto the attack on wind power, when the bulk of electricity supply loss came from thermal plants fueled by natural gas, coal or nuclear fission. The “socialist” magazine *Jacobin* even featured an article that argued, “We should be fighting like hell to protect America’s fleet of 56 nuclear power plants,” as if that could be part of the transition to a new society centered on human needs, human self-development, and a rational relationship to nature!

‘GOOD DAY’ FOR SOME = TRAGEDY FOR MANY

Not everyone suffered. While some people were hit with electric bills in the thousands of dollars as prices skyrocketed, Roland Burns, head of shale drilling company Comstock Resources, crowed, “Obviously, this week is like hitting the jackpot.” Interviewed in December, Bill Magness, the President and CEO of Electric Reliability Council of Texas, explained:

“So, having a market structure that can have very bracing outcomes but also very profitable outcomes for those who are there and providing services for those times when you have scarcity pricing and prices go quite high, that can be a really good day.”

Obviously, some private interests are quite happy with the way things are. So it is not hard to understand why, after being warned ten years ago that a failure like this year’s could happen, regulators, utilities and suppliers fought to prevent preventive measures. They would cut into profits. Those same interests are deeply engaged in climate obstruction, a key part of which is denial.

In those ten years, Texas has put far more energy into devastating communities and the environment by building Trump’s border wall, closing women’s health clinics, and obstructing any climate action, than it has into slowing down climate change, adapting to it, and building resilience into the power, water, food systems and so on.

Those in charge were unconcerned that too many people had already suffered water and food shortages. And this disaster shows how quickly abundance of food, water, heat and electricity can turn into opposite when social-economic systems are disrupted by situations that were warned about but not prepared for.

SHORT-TERM PROFITS TRUMP PEOPLE’S LIVES

While a number of leftist commentators blamed deregulation of electricity production and distribution, that is an epiphenomenon of the current stage of capitalism, which for a half century has gone into overdrive on cost-cutting in the face of low rates of profit. Engineers know well the importance of resilience through such techniques as redundancy and winterizing, but in that period what has prevailed is the mania for “rationalization” that cannibalizes resilience in the pursuit of maximizing short-term profit.

As Karl Marx put it, capital “allows its actual movement to be determined as much and as little by the sight of the coming degradation and final depopulation of the human race, as by the probable fall of the earth into the sun....‘Après moi le déluge!’ (After me, the flood!) is the watchword of every capitalist and of every capitalist nation.”

What we need is a totally new, human direction of society that sees and acts on the value of preparing for the future as if human beings matter more than capital.

Worldwide attacks on free thought

France’s generals of culture sounded the alarm: the country is being invaded by Americans! “American ideas,” that is—“critical race theory”! No less than President Macron himself ordered an inquisition into academics who dare to associate themselves with radical theories. In its leap to the Right, Macron’s government adopted fascist Right terms: “Islamism” as a slander of academics, as well as “*ensauvagement*,” as a way to apply the racist epithet of “savage” to people of African and Middle Eastern descent. He went on to blame the corrupting influence of America’s Black liberation movement and all the other social movements.

CRITICAL RACE THEORY ATTACKED

Critical race theory has also been subjected to legal attacks in the UK and U.S. While President Joseph Biden lifted Trump’s ban of racial sensitivity training, state legislators in Arkansas, New Hampshire, West Virginia and Oklahoma proposed bills to ban teaching of critical race theory, the 1619 Project and in one case “social justice.”

How serious this assault on the freedom of thought can get is illustrated by Florida’s arrest of Rebekah Jones, a scientist whose crime was telling the truth about the toll of the pandemic. Previously she had been fired by the state Department of Health after making public what the state tried to hide. Months later, her home was raided by the police, who confiscated her phone and computer.

In Alberta, Canada, the provincial government is

Anti-abortion violence

Whenever a women’s bodily integrity is violated, that is violence. Forced pregnancy is nine months to a lifetime of violence and often includes women dying.

WHEN ABORTION IS ILLEGAL, WOMEN DIE

In Malawi, where abortion is only legal to save a woman’s life, over 141,000 self-induced or back-alley abortions are taken by desperate women every year. Over 12,000 of them die. The toll of forced pregnancy is also seen as Malawi has one of the highest maternal mortality rates in the world. In Venezuela it is not laws that lead to back-alley or self-induced abortions and the thousands of deaths that follow, it is poverty and how in this failed state run by a dictator, affordable birth control has disappeared.

In the U.S. the violence is seen at clinic doors with fanatics screaming “murder” in desperate women’s faces or in legislation like the proposed law in Tennessee that wants to give the man who impregnates a woman—even if by rape—the right to stop her from getting an abortion. Or the one in South Carolina that would require health-care providers to report the name of the raped woman or the girl who was impregnated by incest to the police if she wanted an abortion. Or the one in Ohio forcing a woman to choose burial or cremation of the aborted fetal tissue.

There are more, all of them outrageous, demeaning, shaming and completely unnecessary for a woman’s health. In fact, they make women’s health much worse, as did the Supreme Court’s recent decision forcing women to go in person to get the pills that will induce an abortion, rather than via telemedicine. The pills are extremely safe. Getting them in person in the middle of a pandemic is not. The ruling is right-wing fascist policy, not medicine.

The successful fightback against forced pregnancy is seen in Poland and Argentina. Women in Honduras have only been made more militant by the country’s enshrining a total abortion ban in their constitution that has no exceptions even to save the woman’s life. Countries that are abandoning anti-abortion laws are doing so because for decades they have seen the countless deaths, the destruction of families, the misery and increased poverty that forced pregnancy causes. It has to stop. —T.M.

carrying on a fake “inquiry” of “anti-energy, anti-Alberta” groups, meaning First Nations, environmentalists, and journalists who oppose or just report on the damage caused by the oil industry. States in the U.S. have been criminalizing anti-fossil fuel protests. In states and provinces like the Dakotas and Alberta, the Indigenous are prime targets of these laws, which spread across the U.S. in the wake of the Indigenous-led actions at Standing Rock resisting the Dakota Access Pipeline.

The global wave of totalitarian attempts at thought control advanced in Poland’s turning of Holocaust denial into a legal weapon. Courts packed by the ruling party wielded the law against historians whose crime was telling the truth about what happened in Poland during the Holocaust. Poland, which suffered under “Communist” totalitarianism, is backsliding—this time with an ultranationalistic stench. Meanwhile, China’s repression and genocidal “re-education” camps for Uyghurs are the latest incarnation of Maoist brainwashing.

The interconnected climate, ecological and economic crises destabilize the status quo and generate revolt as well as anxiety. The battle of ideas and lies is one expression of the rulers’ fear. —F.D.

Hong Kong arrests

Alexandra Wong was among hundreds of supporters of the democracy movement in Hong Kong lined up on March 1 to observe court proceedings at bail hearings for 47 opposition politicians and to lend their support. She had been a regular participant in marches beginning June 9, 2019, originally to object to an extradition law that would transport Hong Kong residents to the certain injustice of China’s court system despite the nominal autonomy of Hong Kong until 2047.

The massive marches and demonstrations that followed peaked in size at two million of the seven



Huge demonstration in Hong Kong for freedom on May 24, 2020.

million residents. They continued until COVID-19 crowd restrictions and the National Security Law that China imposed on Hong Kong last July 1, combined with more violent arrests, drove protests underground.

The 47 opposition politicians had been hauled in on charges of conspiracy to win an election by legal means. With many seats on the Legislative Council reserved for business constituencies tied to the pro-Beijing Chief Executive Carrie Lam, the odds were against success, but the attempt to turn broad popular support into a majority on the Legislative Council led to their incarceration. They are now awaiting trial. The National Security Law has been used to dismantle student organizations at universities in Hong Kong that have a tradition of autonomy, first breached by police forces during demonstrations beginning in 2019.

Alexandra Wong, sometimes called Grandma Wong, proved the wisdom of opposing the extradition law when, while visiting Shenzhen just across the Hong Kong border, she was detained on the all-purpose charge of “picking fights” and could not return for 14 months. Her return to public protest despite being detained and harassed shows much about the strength of opposition to Xi Jinping and to Carrie Lam. —Bob McGuire

Battle for living wage

There was an amendment to add a \$15 minimum wage provision in the 2021 Covid-19 relief bill, but it only managed to garner 42 votes out of the needed 60. On March 7, all Senate Republicans and eight Democrats



Workers across the nation take to the picket line in 2018 against McDonald’s to fight for \$15 and against sexual harassment.

voted no. The current federal minimum wage is \$7.25/hour, which translates to about \$15,000/year before taxes.

A large majority of Democratic voters and slightly less than half of Republican voters support raising the minimum wage to \$15. However, the popularity of the Trump campaign suggests many white people are firmly conditioned in a false and racist presumption that most of post-1960s liberal economic policy has benefitted mainly immigrants and people of color. This might explain why five of the eight Democratic-caucus Senators who felt electorally comfortable to oppose the minimum wage hike were from four states where the population is more than 80% white—Maine, New Hampshire, West Virginia, and Montana.

West Virginia Senator Joe Manchin is a 50% owner of a retail chain called Wholesale Carpet Outlet, among many other investments. In expressing his opposition to \$15, he countered with an \$11/hour minimum wage. An analysis by *The Young Turks* looked at public information available through the Payroll Protection Loan Program to determine that the average pay of workers at Wholesale Carpet Outlet also happens to be \$11/hour.

In addition to the naysayers, most or all Senators are reliant on large corporate cash infusions and may have been happy to vote yes on something they knew wouldn’t pass anyway. There was much ado about president of the Senate Kamala Harris’s reluctance to overrule the Senate parliamentarian and pass the amendment with 50 votes, herself breaking the tie. But her actions are effectively indistinguishable from those of Majority Leader Chuck Schumer and any other senator who prevents the caucus from eliminating the filibuster (60-vote rule) altogether.

Within this or any other capitalist political system, workers can never be paid equal to the value created by their own labor power. Back in 1867, Karl Marx outlined in *Capital* how the consumer market alone is not enough to yield a continuously growing rate of profit. The shortfall must be made up by the capital market, such as in the form of machines and infrastructure. These are what Marx called *dead labor*, which in turn increases the productivity of human workers, the *living labor* who create (new) value.

One hundred years later, the federal minimum wage in the U.S. was \$1.60/hour. If it kept pace with average gains in productivity, this year it would be more than \$24/hour, according to the *Center for Economic and Policy Research*. Even that is not equal to the value now being created per hour by the average worker. —B.B.

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.

The articulation of the relationship between 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) explores

Marx’s body of ideas from his discovery 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.

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