

# NEWS & LETTERS

“Human power is its own end”—Karl Marx

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## Earthquake deaths are not a natural disaster

Twin earthquakes on Feb. 6, magnitude 7.8 and 7.5, decimated a vast area of south-central Turkey and northwest Syria. They produced a catastrophe with human tragedies over hundreds of square miles. But it was the man-made disaster on top of the natural one that killed more than half of the over 50,000 victims

### EDITORIAL

accounted for so far. In the words of writer [Amanda Taub](#): “Whether an earthquake occurs is a question of geology.

But surviving one is a question of human decision-making—and often of politics.”

### QUAKES REVEAL ERDOĞAN'S CORRUPTION

On the Turkish side, specialized equipment and supplies, even trained sniffing dogs, arriving almost immediately from multiple donor countries, helped find and extract thousands of survivors from the rubble. Within a week, most of the world's countries had sent rescue teams or other aid.

Despite the Turkish government's repeated chauvinist campaigns and state terrorism against Kurdish and Armenian populations within Turkey and abroad, even Kurdistan (in Iraq) and Armenia [sent aid](#). In Armenia's case, this opened diplomatic ties with Turkey for the first time since 1993.

But the rubble was overwhelmingly from buildings constructed since the great earthquake of 1999—buildings subject to supposedly rigorous construction standards intended to make sure they withstood the next earthquake.

Collapsed buildings exposed that the government of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, whose party ascended to power partly by criticizing the previous government's response

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## Propping up fascists

by Bob McGuire

After the first year of Ukrainian resistance to Russia's all-out invasion, Vladimir Putin has exhausted the military resources he dedicated to what was supposed to be a triumphant three-day march on Kyiv. Losses of tanks and armored personnel carriers have been so severe that Russia clawed back a few hundred yards of territory around Bakhmut recently using only human waves of foot soldiers.

### RUSSIAN SOLDIERS: PUTIN'S CANNON FODDER

Prisoners recruited out of jails and conscripts from minority regions under Russian control—who had been more shanghaied than drafted—were treated as cannon fodder. Soon NATO-supplied weapons, including German-built Leopard tanks and U.S.-built Abrams tanks, will be deployed. The toll of Russian soldiers killed has risen, at times exceeding 1,000 a day. After a year of fighting, more than 144,000 of them have died.

To avoid outright defeat, the alliance of nations that for 12 years has united to suppress the Syrian Revolution seems to be firming up again. The veto power of China and Russia stifled UN intervention against the bloody military attacks on peaceful demonstrations beginning in 2011 as Arab Spring spread. China, Russia and Iran—and in 2015 Russian air power alongside Iranian ground troops—were central to Syria's Bashar al-Assad evading sanctions. Their scorched earth attacks on one lightly-armed rebel stronghold after another, beginning with Aleppo, kept the Free Syrian Army from toppling Assad. Yet resistance still continues in Idlib province.

Already in Ukraine drones supplied by Iran have supplemented Russia's depleted stock of missiles in Putin's campaign to freeze and starve the civilian population by destroying the electrical infrastructure.

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## Police murder of Tyre Nichols puts U.S. civilization on trial yet again

by Buddy Bell

On the night of Jan. 7, Tyre Nichols waited at a stoplight while men in black hoodies and ski masks came out of an unmarked car and approached him. He had no way to know it, but they were police in a special operations unit called SCORPION. They forced Nichols out of his car, then pepper sprayed him in the eyes while holding him down on the ground. Believing the foul-mouthed police would wound or kill him, Nichols found a chance to get up and run. The police shot at him with a taser, then caught him a few blocks away. He was kicked in the chest and face, punched and hit with a baton. As Nichols, the father of a four-year-old son, lay unconscious on the ground, one cop [took a picture](#) of him and sent it to a friend. An ambulance did not arrive for about 20 minutes. Nichols died in the hospital three days later.

It wasn't until Jan. 27 that footage of his murder was released, and then only because of the outcry of the Nichols family and the Memphis accountability movement. A nationwide fury over yet another grisly murder at the hands of the police would spur [protests](#), from Philadelphia to Los Angeles, from Atlanta to Washington, D.C., to New York, where demonstrators blocked the entrance to Grand Central Station. “Why did it happen again? Why is it still happening? Why is it happening again? Why is it happening now?” a protester in Portland, Oregon, asked the question so many have.

### THE PERSISTENCE OF RACISM IN THE U.S.

The character of U.S. “civilization” surfaced once again, seen in the inhumanity of Nichols's murder and the immediate attempt to cover it up, but also in the outrage and protests. It has brought back to the forefront the systemic nature of not only police killings but the ingrained racism of this society.

At the headquarters of the Chicago Police Department, Black Rabbi Michael Ben Yosef spoke: “We're tired of being murdered, tired of being beaten, tired of being chased.” In Detroit, a protester said, “The fact that this is happening again and again and again, continuously, is traumatic. It's devastating. It makes me angry. I feel frustrated, but I still feel optimistic to keep

## The revolution in Iran continues to develop

The ongoing revolution in Iran has [been continuous](#) since the funeral of Jina (Mahsa) Amini on Sept. 17, 2022. She was beaten to death by Iranian morality police on Sept. 16 for supposedly wearing hijab “incorrectly.” Since then the Iranian thug regime has killed over 500 people, including teenagers and children. Over 20,000 have been arrested. This does not count the thousands of teenagers, mostly girls, arrested and sent to so-called “psychiatric centers,” which are in reality concentration camps.

### REVOLUTION DEEPENS AS MORE TAKE PART

To the dismay of the Iranian rulers, new strata of the population keep joining the revolt, which was already tremendously diverse.

[The Washington Post](#) reports that protests, which originally began in the town of Saqqez in Iran's western Kurdish province that had been Amini's home, have now taken on a new militancy. The regime had brought more forces to Kurdish regions and viciously attacked demonstrators, arresting many, including doctors and nurses treating youths shot in the face and genitals with metal pellets, and in the eyes with rubber bullets. When security forces shot 17-year-old Daniyal Pabandi in the stomach, ambushing him from a car, youth took the protests directly to those who brutalize them.

One Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps member was attacked and killed. Kurds who worked with the government security forces were terrorized. As one 27-year-old activist said: “We burned their shops. We burned their cars. We harassed their wives and children.

fighting.”

The Interstate 55 bridge in Memphis has witnessed decades of rage and trauma experienced by Black Americans. Marching protesters [occupied the bridge](#) in 2016 after the killings of Philando Castile and Anton Sterling, in 2020 after the murders of Breonna Taylor and George Floyd.

The bridge was once again filled with people on Jan 27, 2023. [Nyliayh Stewart](#), whose cousin was shot by police in 2015, was there: “This should not have happened. This family should not have to bury him. My family should not have had to bury my cousin... We got to stand up for what's right...it's like our kids could be next.”

The next day, Memphis police announced they would dismantle SCORPION. It's not enough. [LJ Abraham](#), who has lived in Memphis since she was 12, was protesting outside City Hall. She called for the disbanding of other special units and more public access to the footage captured in police body cameras, such as of the four other people who had been killed by police in Memphis since November 2022. “Right now, when somebody is shot by police, we can't see that video... The only reason we got to see Tyre's footage was because of the

manner in which he died....In these traffic stops, people are fearful that either they are getting the shit beat out of them or they're going to die. That shouldn't be an expectation from people whose salaries we pay.”

The protesters at Memphis City Hall asked for an end to pretextual traffic stops, such as pulling people over for broken tail lights and loud music. If city workers without arrest authority could take care of such matters, maybe fewer violent altercations would result.

Another reform floated in media and on the streets is to do away with [qualified immunity](#), which prevents citizens from bringing city police officers directly to civil court to answer for misconduct. Paul Butler, author of *Chokehold: Policing Black Men*, has experienced police misconduct and harassment over the course of his own life.

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Jan. 28, 2023, rally for justice for Tyre Nichols at the Ohio Statehouse.

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They left the neighborhood and stopped their role in the crackdown.” Other activists tied wires across roads at the right height to knock police off motorcycles. This turn to active self-defense is new. Now youth there are stockpiling tires, bottles, gasoline, etc., to make more firebombs and block roads. “We're ready for the next clash,” one youth said, “All it needs is a spark.”

Feb. 16 showed the truth of his statement. Forty days after the regime executed two young men for protesting, [demonstrations broke out again](#) in the capital, Tehran, as well as in Arak, Isfahan, Izeh, Sanandaj, Khuzestan province, Karaj, and in the Sistan and Baluchistan province where people have been active in anti-regime protests there every Friday for months.

### MANY ISSUES SPUR PROTESTS

The calls of “Death to the dictator” and “Down with the regime” are not for one single issue, which is one reason the resistance is so deep.

Protests have also erupted over [soaring inflation of 47%](#), including food prices. The value of the rial has fallen by more than 15%. At the Grand Bazaar in Tehran and at the Alaeddin cell phone market on Feb. 22, protesters called for the downfall of the government. Women continue [“flaunting their hair”](#) and throwing off the veil. This form of protest is now so widespread that women's liberation activists there are saying that “the defiance remains too widespread to contain

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## WOMAN AS REASON

# Valenti's 'Abortion Every Day'

by Terry Moon

Regular readers know that this column often takes up the struggle for reproductive justice, and we now have a great new resource for information about abortion. [Jessica Valenti](#), whom you may remember from the blog she cofounded, [Feministing](#), or the many books she's authored, recently began another blog, "[Abortion Every Day](#) (AED)." It is a treasure.

### ROE'S END CREATED NEW DEADLY REALITY

So much is happening regarding abortion—since the reactionary U.S. Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*, trashing women's right to abortion, a human right we've had for 50 years—that it is almost impossible to keep track of. Not only does AED do a tremendous job of that, we also receive Valenti's valuable thoughts on the political and personal events let loose by this brutal attack on women's freedom.

**AED runs down what is happening in each state, and what is new in the nation. Valenti lists "Quick hits," a sentence each of different facts, like: Over 1,000 doctors in North Carolina are urging lawmakers not to enact more abortion restrictions, or Tennessee's governor is proposing sending \$100 million to fund so-called "crisis pregnancy centers." Everything has a link so the reader can dig deeper. "Quick hits" also takes up what articles appear in what media, again with links.**

She includes important charts, news clips, and Tik-



Thousands March for Women's Lives in Chicago on Oct 2, 2021.

Tok videos. Her segment "Listen up" takes up abortion news found on the radio and podcasts. Included is "A rant," which is often my favorite part, and she ends with "Keep an eye on," which often warns us about some new tactic that Republicans or anti-abortion fanatics have come up with. One of the latest that Valenti lets us know about, is the attempt to rename abortion bans as an "abortion window" as if they are doing us a favor by giving women a six-week "window" to get an abortion!

Terry Moon for News & Letters

### VALENTI'S INSIGHTS

AED is far more than lists, as Valenti gives us her insights. She is telling us, among other things, that the anti-abortionists are laying the ground to blame doctors when the first woman dies because of the bans and laws they have had decades to draft. Doctors rightly fear fines, imprisonment and losing their licenses if they perform an abortion because the so-called exceptions—if there is one for the life or health of the woman, and often there isn't!—are written in such a way as to give little or no guidance to a doctor. How sick does a woman have to be? What does it mean to be close to death? How much does she have to hemorrhage? How bad must the sepsis become? No one knows, but when—and it is *when*, not if—a woman dies, those who are actually responsible will blame the doctor.

**Valenti tells us that the "exceptions" for rape and incest as well as for health and saving a woman's life are a lie. They too are written in such a way as to make it difficult to impossible to access. She gets into the anti-abortion fanatics' mindset where they try to convince themselves that medically necessary abortions aren't abortions at all, and yet we know that from now on spontaneous abortions, that is, miscarriages, will now be treated as illegal abortions as they have already in several instances even before *Roe* was overturned.**

My one criticism is that, like much of the history of the struggle for reproductive justice, there is too much dependency on the Democratic Party. This is sad, because it is clear that not only is Valenti aware of the severe limitations of the Democratic Party in fighting for abortion rights, but so are many of those who participate in the comments section. And yet that seems to be the only alternative.

If the history of the Women's Liberation Movement shows us anything, it is that the way we progressed was by taking to the streets and the promise of a revolutionary movement—one so deep that all human relationships would be transformed. That was the only thing that spurred Democrats to move forward on so many of the demands that women were making, including the right to control our own bodies. What both Republicans and Democrats fear the most is a movement of the people that they can't control. Let's give it to them.

## Electra in Mexico strikes back

Electra, the character from the Greek tragedy, is the daughter of Agamemnon, who was murdered by his wife and her lover. Electra wants to avenge him, but she has no chance beating the new alpha in combat. She needs Orestes, her brother, but he hasn't returned from war, neither do we know whether he is alive. Chrysothemis, her sister, is at home, but lacking Electra's fierceness she can barely face her own mother, Clytemnestra, betrayer of the bloodline.

**Electra's anger grows impotently until one day Orestes comes back. She brings him up to date, he grabs the axe and kills Aegisthus, the enemy, and executes his own mother with the same weapon. Then he is persecuted for years by the Erinyes (Furies), the daughters of the Earth, for the unspeakable crime of matricide.**

Greek tragedies occur once again in our everyday lives, although with different forms and characters. In "[The hell of normalized domestic violence](#)" (see *N&L* July-Aug. 2022), I described my grandmother's situation, attacked at home by one of her "sons" and taken advantage of economically by another—a double aggression but not one perceived as so by her other two sons or the rest of the "family."

### LITTLE SISTER BECOMES ELECTRA

My mother, the first born and only daughter of my grandmother and grandfather, struck back. She has acquired the legal custody of my grandmother to protect her. My so-called "uncles," who have patronized my mother until this point, are now "dazed and confused." They never thought their "poor little sister" would pick up the gloves and fight back. Now she has, and the first hearing is scheduled on March 8—International Women's Day. Let all the vengeful goddesses be with us that day!

—Electra's son

## Review: Policing the Womb: Invisible Women

by Adele

*Policing the Womb: Invisible Women and the Criminalization of Motherhood*, by Michele Goodwin, written two years before the overturn of *Roe v. Wade*, remains relevant. Goodwin describes the increasing wave of legislation regulating pregnancy and criminalizing miscarriages, stillbirths and supposed "endangerment" of the fetus.

### THE AIM: DESTROY REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

One purpose of so-called "fetal protection laws" (FPLs) is to chip away at abortion rights, but they also have devastating effects on women with wanted pregnancies. They target poor women and women of color but will eventually affect all women. Goodwin, an ACLU lawyer, relates the history of numerous laws and the little-known stories of women impacted by them.

**State interference in reproduction has roots in slavery and the early 20th century eugenics movement. In 1927, the Supreme Court ruled it constitutional for the government to sterilize citizens considered "unfit" to parent. Goodwin shows this has no scientific merit and was often used to sterilize young, Black women. She also traces the justification for today's FPLs to the 1990s myth that babies "born addicted to crack cocaine" would form a "criminal underclass."**

In reality, babies born to mothers using crack have no symptoms or developmental issues. Yet today, they still might be placed in foster care. Mothers are still arrested, even when pregnancy prompts them to get prenatal care and help for addictions. Doctors and nurses began the previously unheard-of practice of turning over medical records to the police.

The 1990s organization paying Black women to be sterilized or use long-acting contraception is still in operation. In recent years, women are offered plea deals of shortened sentences for drug offenses if they agree to sterilization. Legislators generally ignore that affluent, pregnant, white women are more likely to use recreational or prescription drugs. They ignore the health risks and high miscarriage rate of assisted reproductive technology.

### JAILED FOR SELF-MANAGED ABORTION

FPLs were often originally intended to protect pregnant women from crime or domestic violence. But they are now used to arrest women who have accidents such as falling down stairs. Since embryos might now be viewed as equal to women, self-induced abortion is increasingly criminalized with prison sentences.

**Women have been court-ordered to have bed rest, civil confinements, and Caesarian sections. Over 30 states prohibit removing a brain-dead pregnant woman from life support, even if the fetus has no chance of survival.**

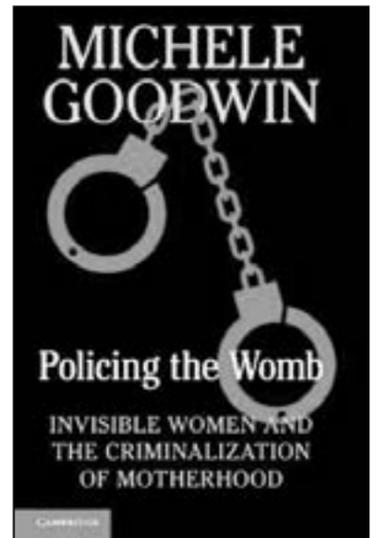
The mostly male, white legislators and prosecutors seem unaware that miscarriage and stillbirth are common outcomes of pregnancy, even under ideal conditions. There are also numerous health hazards out of pregnant women's control. Toxic waste processing centers and dumps are located in poor neighborhoods, often of people of color, causing clusters of serious illnesses.

**Goodwin reveals numerous ways FPLs do not, as claimed, protect women, children, or society but are counterproductive. Women are denied lifesaving healthcare like cancer treatments. They are drug tested at taxpayers' expense to receive state benefits but rarely test positive. Incarcerated women give birth shackled, in solitary confinement and unsanitary conditions.**

Arrest records can prevent mothers from getting jobs, housing, and higher education. Drug treatment has much better outcomes than incarceration, which has a negative psychological impact on mothers and children. The U.S. incarcerates more women than any other country and has the highest maternal mortality in the developed world, especially high for Black women.

Goodwin shows the importance of framing reproductive justice as more than abortion rights. She discusses how laws and those interpreting and enforcing them create cultures oppressing women and indoctrinating men into normalizing violence and domination. She proposes a Reproductive Justice Bill of Rights as a concept or actual federal document.

This book is important in exposing the harmfulness of scapegoating marginalized women and creating a way forward where everyone can thrive.



## WOMENWORLDWIDE

by Artemis

In February, the Center for Disease Control released its Youth Risk Behavior Survey conducted every two years with responses from 17,000 high school students. This 2021 data revealed "America's teen girls are engulfed in a growing wave of sadness, violence, and trauma," with one in three considering suicide, a 60% increase in the past decade. Nearly 15% experienced rape, and about six in ten stopped regular activities due to sadness or hopelessness. More girls (57%) reported depression than boys (29%) and were more likely to use alcohol and recreational drugs. Thirteen percent of girls attempted suicide in the past year compared with 7% of boys. The CDC recommended "school connectedness" by providing safe, caring adults, clubs and community outreach, mental health services, enforcement of anti-harassment policies, and inclusiveness for racial and ethnic minorities and LGBTQ+ students.

\* \* \*

In Japan in February, a package of reforms will form the basis for draft amendments to sex crime laws that could be enacted by parliament in 2023. This is the result of the Flower Demo, a countrywide movement of hundreds of people demonstrating and victims speaking out against rape on the 11th of every month. It began in August 2019, when feminist activist and author Minori Kitahara called for action on social media, responding to acquittals in several rape cases. The proposals include raising the age of consent from 13 to 16 and lengthening the statute of limitations for sexual violence against minors.

\* \* \*

Women throughout Iran are uncovering their hair and wearing regular clothes. Some let hair show or wear partial robes. Others continue wearing the hijab but support those who don't. A video of Zeinab Kazempour taking off her head scarf at a convention of Iran's professional association of engineers went viral. She denounced the group's support of compulsory hijab to cheers and applause from the audience. (See "The revolution in Iran continues to develop," page 1.) Spontaneous demonstrations break out daily. Authorities claim they disbanded the morality police but say they plan to deny services and freeze bank accounts of noncompliant women. Feminist activist Fatemeh Shams stated, "The core and heart of this movement is really the revolutionary act of these women turning their headscarves into the most effective and powerful weapon against religious dictatorship and deep layers of misogyny and patriarchy."

\* \* \*

In February, in Orlando, Fla., the World Cup champion U.S. Women's National Soccer Team played the SheBelieves Cup match against the Tokyo Olympic gold-winning Canadian Women's National Soccer Team. Before playing, they linked arms with the Canadian team in solidarity with their labor disputes, forming a heart on the field. The Canadians wore purple, the color of women's equality, over their uniforms with the words "Enough is Enough." The Canadian Soccer Association has planned cuts due to lack of funds, but only to the women's and youth programs.

## Drive for profit derails lives in Ohio

**Kansas City, Kans.**—The Norfolk Southern train that derailed on Feb. 3 in East Palestine, Ohio, threatening the health and lives of thousands of residents, can't be called an accident. Not when railroad workers were cut out of negotiating over safety, and not when decisions by the railroad made this and other ecological disasters predictable rather than surprising.

### STRIKE SQUASHED, SAFETY IGNORED

Contained in a glowing report to stockholders on maintaining and increasing the corporate profit margins was a side note that the safety record had dipped in each of the last four years, and another Norfolk Southern train derailed just four days later in Windsor, on the Canadian side of the Detroit River.

The 150-car train that derailed in East Palestine was hauling, among other toxic chemicals, five cars of vinyl chloride. Norfolk Southern made the catastrophe far more hazardous by choosing to vent and burn the vinyl chloride, even from three cars that had survived the derailment intact. They said it was for fear that the cars would explode. The products of combustion include not just hydrogen chloride, a skin irritant, but phosgene, a greater killer of soldiers in the trenches of World War I than mustard gas.

After World War II when my uncle worked as a car repairman in North Kansas City on the Wabash, one of the railroads swallowed up to create today's Norfolk Southern, rail craft union rules and federal regulations



NTSB

together would have prevented such an absurdly long train. Furthermore, the crew of that era included brakemen and a fireman who might have caught the sparking on the tracks that signaled imminent failure more than 20 miles before the derailment.

Railroad workers fought for and won federal safety regulations after shedding blood on the job or being killed on picket lines. But railroad owners' pressure for crew reductions and profits over safety led to waves of deregulation under Presidents Carter and Reagan. Just last December Congress forced a contract on workers at the nation's main freight carriers, giving them no voice on staffing, job conditions or safety.

### CITY IS STILL TOXIC

Residents who had been evacuated right after the toxic spill were told to return to their homes just two days later, with assurances that the air was safe to breathe and the tap water was okay to drink. Ohio Gov.

Mike DeWine came to East Palestine to drink a swallow of tap water to prove that residents could drink it all day, every day.

Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder had done the same after lead levels in Flint tap water skyrocketed in 2014. DeWine's photo op did not stop residents from wondering how soon their town would be the next Ohio Valley cancer hot spot.

DeWine at first turned down FEMA aid as unnecessary, then welcomed Trump claiming the feds had vowed to leave East Palestine residents stranded without a dime. Trump "forgot" to take credit for bowing to industry lobbyists in 2018 by withdrawing a key rule before it could be enforced. The rule would have required electronic air brake systems. The EPA order forcing Norfolk Southern to clean up the mess they made is too little, too late for those already poisoned.

—Teamster supporter

## Teachers Union on ballot in mayoral race

**Chicago**—The race for mayor of Chicago is now between Brandon Johnson, a teacher endorsed by the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU), and Paul Vallas, a former boss of the Chicago Public Schools who trashes the CTU at every opportunity. Thus the runoff election on April 4 will be in part a referendum on rank-and-file unionism. It will be a paler version of the showdown expected back in 2015 until cancer prevented the late Karen Lewis from running against Mayor Rahm Emanuel.

### CRIME TRUMPS EDUCATION

Lewis, as CTU President and leader of the Caucus of Rank-and-File Educators (CORE), had led the seven-day CTU strike in 2012 with the overwhelming support of the public, including parents, who identified strikers as fighting for students' needs alongside the demands of teachers. Emanuel had been dismissive of Lewis and mass marches of striking teachers and allies, but was humiliated himself by being forced to meet their demands.

But right-wingers and cops want the election to hinge on "crime is out of control" instead. They have enlisted Vallas to spew that message. As first CEO of Chicago Public Schools in 1995 after the School Board was dissolved, he decided his job would be to starve public schools and direct public money to privately run charter schools.

After running for Illinois offices in every election cycle, four years ago he garnered less than 6% of the vote for mayor. But as the endorsed candidate of the racist, MAGA police union leadership, and the only white guy, this perennial losing candidate leaped into the lead with 33% of the first-round vote.

It is akin to 40 years ago when, to try to block the election of Harold Washington after a movement in the Black community had given him the Democratic nomination, 80% of lifelong Democratic white voters marked their ballots for the unknown Republican. Mayors who came after Washington's election and re-election returned Chicago to governing for the benefit of insider contractors supping at the public trough, sort of like an oligarch-dominated Russia writ small. This will continue if the election is twisted into debating issues around crime.

—Harold Washington voter

## Iran revolt persists

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and too pervasive to reverse." (For more on this form of protest, see [Women WorldWide](#), page 2.)

On Feb. 23, a whole array of workers—including workers organized into unions independent of any phony regime-controlled unions—issued a "[Statement on the current demands of independent trade union and civil organisations in Iran](#)." Unions of teachers, students, human rights defenders, sugar cane company workers, oil and steel workers, and of course women's organizations and others signed on to the statement, which read in part:

"Today, these massive protests, the flag of which has been raised by women, students, teachers, workers, those seeking justice, artists, queers, writers, and all oppressed people of Iran in every part of the country from Kurdistan to Sistan and Baluchistan and has received unprecedented international support, is a protest against misogyny, gender discrimination, endless economic insecurity, labour slavery, poverty, misery, class oppression, as well as national and religious oppression. It is a revolution against any form of religious or non-religious tyranny that has been imposed on the Iranian people throughout the last century.... Thus, this movement aims to permanently end the formation of any power from above and to be the beginning of a modern, humane social revolution that frees people from all forms of oppression, discrimination, exploitation, tyranny, and dictatorship."

Their 12 demands, if met, would transform Iran into one of the freest, most humane countries in the world.

### REGIME'S REACTION REVEALS REVOLT'S REACH

Another measure of the depth and range of the revolt is the government's frantic tactics used to suppress it. We have [written elsewhere](#) of the many brutal acts that the government has employed. The regime's fear of the militancy of children is revealed by the arrest of "a dozen [children's rights activists](#), mainly women" on Feb. 1. The executive director of the Center for Human Rights in Iran, Hadi Ghaemi, said the regime is "deeply threatened by any independent organization or individual that provides support and hope for Iranian youth."

Even more revealing is the [poisoning of schoolgirls](#). The rulers claim they will "investigate," just as they supposedly "investigated" the murder of Amini. To date, there has been no conclusion to that sham "investigation."

The very language of the government spokesman is both so vague and so specific, it draws suspicion on the government itself. The deputy education minister magically knows the motive for the poisonings: "...it was found that some people wanted all schools, especially girls' schools, to be closed." It's the regime that wants girls' schools closed.

It's girls in grade school, high school, and college that began the uprising and who have refused to sing songs praising "Supreme Leader" Ali Khamenei and had their heads beaten in for it. The poison made the girls sick but it won't stop the revolution. It only reveals the desperation and deepening depravity of the regime.

The truth remains: The struggle continues!

—Terry Moon

## Prisoners against slavery and for compassion

**Tucson, Ariz.**—On Sept. 23, 2020, the attorney general of Kentucky says that a Black woman, Breonna Taylor, was murdered for nothing, but the policemen who rained bullets on her were justified. Even so, every bit of evidence implies that what the officers did was wrong. The officers get a gentle slap on the wrist—guilty, essentially, of disturbing the neighbors—while a Black woman is dead.

### COURAGE NEEDED FOR CHANGE

We are not evolving. In an age where the social injustices are increasing, we are seeing more of a paradox of guilt, rather than the necessity of mankind to clearly see what is wrong and summon the courage to fix it. The nation is searching for answers to a pattern that we have made complicated.

A Black woman was shot multiple times by police. She was killed by them. No officer is held accountable, regardless of all the evidence. Her life, apparently, didn't matter. The nation wonders if there is hope; if we have the ability to truly make change. It's not enough for one group to demand change if there is opposition. Protests, while important, only encourage and stimulate a temporary surge of sympathy.

But the barometer for change isn't on the streets, nor in the nation's capital. Our nation is a reflection of a collective belief, a majority collective belief. It is measured in how we treat the "least of the brethren." We must find the ability to have compassion for one another.

It starts in the prisons.

### UNKNOWN CARNAGE HAPPENING IN PRISONS

The nation knows well about the injustice to Breonna Taylor, but few know of the four inmates at Doggett County Jail, in Utah, who were tortured from 2015-2017. Officers forced them to be shocked and bitten by attack dogs.

Americans know well about George Floyd, but few know about Kevin Younger, who was beaten by guards at Maryland Classification Center in September 2013. They cuffed him, then beat him, and slammed his head on the toilet, leaving him bloody and with permanent injuries. They beat him because they thought he assaulted an officer. He was actually helping the officer. The prison covered it up for seven years.

Black and white Americans have learned of Eric Gardner, but few know of Dante Taylor, who, after being hog-tied, beaten, thrown face-first down the steps at a New York prison, took his own life, having suffered from a history of depression, attempted suicides and frequent suicidal ideation. Prison guards knew all this but refused to help him.

Prison guards and staff hold positions of authority, no different than police officers. If we ignore the sufferings and mistreatment of America's inmates, leaving them to

the dark corners of society, to be persecuted, beaten and tortured, we then give permission to those abusive men (and women) to leave those dark corners, to walk back into society's streets, with those same bloody hands and hatred in their hearts.

What will we pay—attention or lip service?

—Prisoner



### Making slaves of prisoners

**Trion, Ga.**—When the Dept. of Justice came to investigate Georgia's Forest Hays Jr. State Prison, it was mind-boggling and precautionary for the administration of this neo-slave plantation. What is interesting about the whole

ordeal was that inmates in administrative segregation—Tier 1 being deprived of "basic human needs" such as recreation outside their cells—finally got the opportunity to be on the yard only because the Civil Rights Division of the Dept. of Justice came to town! This deprivation of recreation has been going on for 12 months straight! And it will continue thereafter.

### IGNORED POLICIES LEAD TO PRISONER DEATHS

Another inmate committed suicide because the mental health dept. is a joke. Plus, the officers neglect the policy requiring prisoner checks every 30 minutes. Most of the time an officer will gather all the charts and go off somewhere and sign all of them instead of making rounds in the unit.

Administration here allows the prisoners who are orderlies into Administrative Segregation to fill our documentation, which only an officer is supposed to be doing. The officers let orderlies pass out the food trays. That is against policy. When this happens, prisoners on Tier 1 are deprived of fruits, beverages, and sometimes their entire meal! Sometimes the officers put a lock on the tray flap and deprive prisoners of their meals for several days.

I'm still being held in segregation without procedural due process and no penological reason. The struggle for justice, equality and dignity is still an everyday battle. But I will continue being an active radical reformist fighting for change, because Martin Luther King, Jr., once said: "The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy."

"All of us or none!" —Major A. Clark, Freedom Rider

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Humanist paper in the world!

## FROM THE WRITINGS OF RAYADUNAYEVSKAYA

*Editor's note: We are celebrating the 60th anniversary of the publication of the groundbreaking [American Civilization on Trial: Black Masses as Vanguard](#), at the very time when right-wing forces are trying to prevent the teaching and discussion of the true history of the U.S. and especially the freedom movements that run through that history. Below we present a section from the introduction to the pamphlet's first edition in May 1963. Written by Raya Dunayevskaya, the pamphlet was issued as a statement by the National Editorial Board of News and Letters Committees. Like the pamphlet as a whole, the section below speaks directly to the present situation. Some footnotes were added by the editors.*

### The Compelling Issue at Stake

American Civilization is identified in the consciousness of the world with three phases in the development of its history.

The first is the Declaration of Independence and the freedom of the thirteen American colonies from British Imperial rule.

The second is the Civil War.

The third is technology and world power which are presently being challenged by the country that broke America's nuclear monopoly—Russia. So persistent, intense, continuous, and ever-present has been the self-activity of Blacks,<sup>1</sup> before and after the Civil War, before and after World War I, before, during and after World War II, that it has become the gauge by which American Civilization is judged. Thus, Little Rock reverberated around the world with the speed of Sputnik I, with which it shared world headlines in 1957,<sup>2</sup> and which gave the lie to American claims of superiority.

**The Civil War remains the still unfinished revolution 100 years after, as the United States is losing the global struggle for the minds of men.**

President Kennedy asked that this entire year, 1963, the centenary of the Emancipation Proclamation, be devoted to its celebration. Cliches strutted out for ceremonial occasions cannot, however, hide today's truth. Because the role of Black people remains the touchstone of American Civilization—and their struggle for equal rights today belies their existence—paeanes of praise for the Emancipation Proclamation can neither whitewash the present sorry state of democracy in the United States, nor rewrite the history of the past. Abraham Lincoln would not have issued the Proclamation had the Southern secessionists not been winning the battles and the Blacks not been pounding down the doors of the Northern Armies demanding the right to fight.

By 1960, the year when no less than 16 new African nations gained their independence, the activities of the American Blacks had developed from the Montgomery, Alabama, Bus Boycott in 1956, the year of the Hungarian Revolution, to the Sit-ins, Wade-Ins, Dwell-Ins, North



Black Union troops skirmishing in the U.S. Civil War in Dutch Gap, Virginia, 1864.

and South. In 1961 they reached a climax with the Freedom Rides to Mississippi. This self-activity has not only further impressed itself upon the world's consciousness, but also reached back into white America's consciousness. The result has been that even astronaut Walter Schirra's 1962 spectacular six-orbital flight became subordinate to the courage of James Meredith's entry into the University of Mississippi.

In a word, the new human dimension attained through an *oppressed people's* genius in the struggle for freedom, nationally and internationally, rather than either scientific achievement, or an individual hero, became the measure of human beings in action and thought.

### BLACKS' VANGUARD ROLE

The vanguard role of an oppressed people has also put white labor in mass production to the test. *And* it has put a question mark over the continuous technological revolutions, brought to a climax with Automation and nuclear power. For, without an underlying philosophy, neither the machine revolutions nor the splitting of the atom can produce anything but fear—fear of

1. The word "Negro," which at the time of writing was considered the respectful term and not a slur, has been changed to "Black." Also, gendered language that was typical of the time has been modified. —ed.

2. In 1957, white mobs and the state's National Guard tried to block court-ordered desegregation of Central High School in Little Rock, Ark., forcing President Eisenhower to call out troops to protect the nine Black students. —ed.

# The vanguard role of Black masses in American freedom movements

unemployment in the one case and fear of war in the other.

As was evident by Black people's attitude in World War II, nothing can stop them from being the bitterest enemy of the existing society. In the midst of the war, Blacks broke out in a series of demonstrations in Chicago, Detroit, New York as well as at army camps. Along with the miners' general strike that same year, these were the first instances in United States history when both labor, white and Black, and Blacks as the discriminated-against minority, refused to call a halt either to the class struggle or the struggle for equal rights. *Both* forces challenged their own State *as well as* Communist propagandists who had declared the imperialist war to have become one of "national liberation" which demanded subordination to it of all other struggles.<sup>3</sup>

Fully to understand today's activities—and that is the only meaningful way to celebrate the centenary of the Emancipation Proclamation—we must turn to the roots in the past. This is not merely to put history aright. To know where one has been is one way of knowing where one is going. To be able to anticipate tomorrow one has to understand today. One example of the dual movement—the pull of the future on the present and its link to the past—is the relationship of the American Black people to the African Revolutions. Because it is easy enough to see that the United States Supreme Court which, in 1954, gave its decision on desegregation in schools is not the Court which, 100 years before, proclaimed the infamous Dred Scott decision,<sup>4</sup> there are those who degrade today's self-activity of Black people. Instead, they credit Administration policy with changing the status of Black America.

They point to the Cold War and the need for America, in its contest with Russia, to win "the African mind." There is no doubt that the Cold War influenced the decision of the Supreme Court. Neither is there any doubt that the African Revolutions were a boon to the Black American struggles. But this is no one-way road. It never has been. For decades, if not for centuries, the self-activity of Black Americans preceded and inspired the African Revolutions, its leaders as well as its ranks, its thoughts as well as its actions. The relationship is to and from Africa. It is a two-way road. This too we shall see more clearly as we return to the past. Because both the present and the future have their roots in a philosophy of liberation which gives action its direction, it becomes imperative that we discover the historic link between philosophy and action.

### BIRTH OF ABOLITIONISM

Despite the mountains of books on the Civil War, there is yet to be a definitive one on that subject. None is in prospect in capitalist America. Indeed, it is an impossibility so long as the activity of Black people in shaping American Civilization remains a blank in the minds of the academic historians. The bourgeois historian is blind not only to the role of Black people but to that of the white Abolitionists. Mainly unrecorded by all standard historians, and hermetically sealed off from their power of comprehension, lie three decades of Abolitionist struggle of whites and Blacks that preceded the Civil War and made that irrepressible conflict inevitable. Yet these are the decades when the crucible out of which the first great independent expression of American genius was forged.

The historians who dominate American scholarship have only passing references to the Abolitionist movement. Clearly no unbridgeable gulf separates this type of history writing from Russia's infamous rewriting of its revolutionary history. Only Black historians such as W. E. B. Du Bois, Carter G. Woodson, and J. A. Rogers have done the painstaking research to set the record of American history straight by revealing Blacks' great role in its making. With few exceptions, however, their work is ignored by the dominant white academicians. Literary historians, like Vernon L. Parrington in his *Main Currents in American Thought*, did, it is true, recognize that the soil which produced a Ralph Waldo Emerson produced also a William Lloyd Garrison.

Essayists like John Jay Chapman go a great deal further than Professor Parrington. He sides with the Abolitionists against the great literary writers comprising the Transcendentalists. "The Transcendentalists," writes John Jay Chapman, "were sure of only one thing—that society as constituted was all wrong. The slavery question had shaken faith in the durability of the Republic. It was therefore adjudged a highly dangerous subject.... Mum was the word...from Maine to Georgia."

To this he contrasts William Lloyd Garrison's ringing proclamation: "I will be as harsh as truth and as uncompromising as justice. On this subject [slavery] I do not wish to think, speak or write with moderation. I am in earnest—I will not equivocate—I will not capitulate—I will not retreat a single inch—AND I WILL BE HEARD!"

In the 1921 preface to his biography of Garrison,

3. *The Negro and the Communist Party*, by Wilson Record, University of N. Carolina, 1951, is a useful book on all the changes in the Communist Party line for the period of 1941-45. Many of the quotations here are obtained from that book.

4. The 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* Supreme Court decision ruled that racial segregation in public schools is unconstitutional. The 1857 *Dred Scott v. Sandford* decision held that Black people "had no rights which the white man was bound to respect; and that the negro might justly and lawfully be reduced to slavery for his benefit." —ed.

Chapman boldly claims "that the history of the United States between 1800 and 1860 will someday be rewritten with this man as its central figure." This certainly separates Chapman decisively from the established historians who "analyze" Abolitionism as if it comprised a small group of fanatics removed from the mainstream of



The March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, Aug. 28, 1963. The second edition of *American Civilization on Trial* was published to coincide with the March.

American Civilization. Chapman certainly believed the Abolitionists to be the true molders of history. Such writing, however, remains a history of great men instead of great masses of "common men."

The Abolitionists, however, saw themselves differently. The great New Englander, Wendell Phillips, was fully aware of the fact that not only Black leaders like Frederick Douglass or Harriet Tubman, but white Abolitionists like himself and even the founder of the *Liberator*, William Lloyd Garrison, were "so tall" because they stood on the shoulders of the actual mass movement of the enslaved following the North Star to freedom. Without the constant contact of the New England Abolitionists with the Black mass, enslaved and free, they would have been nothing—and no one admitted it more freely than these leaders themselves. **The Abolitionists felt that strongly because they found what great literary figures like Emerson, Thoreau, Hawthorne, Melville and Whitman did not find—the human force for the reconstruction of society.**

This is what armed them 100 years ago, with a more accurate measure of "the Great Emancipator" than most of today's writers, though the latter write with hindsight. This is what gave the Abolitionists the foresight to see that the Civil War may be won on the battlefield but lost in the more fundamental problem of reconstructing the life of the country. This is what led Karl Marx to say that a speech by Wendell Phillips was of "greater importance than a battle bulletin." This is what led the great Abolitionist, Phillips, after chattel slavery was ended, to come to the labor movement, vowing himself "willing to accept the final results of a principle so radical, such as the overthrow of the whole profit-making system, the extinction of all monopolies, the abolition of privileged classes...and best and grandest of all, the final obliteration of that foul stigma upon 'our so-called Christian civilization, the poverty of the masses...."

### AMERICAN ROOTS OF MARXISM

The spontaneous affinity of ideas, the **independent** working out of the problems of the age as manifested in one's own country, and the common Humanist goal made inevitable the crossing of the paths of Karl Marx and the Abolitionists.

Deep indeed are the American roots of Marxism. Since Marxism is not only in books but in the daily lives of people, one must, to grasp its American roots, do more than inhabit an ivory tower. Far, however, from heeding Wendell Phillips' admonition that "Never again be ours the fastidious scholarship that shrinks from rude contact with the masses," American intellectuals have so adamantly sought escape from reality that they have become more conservative than the politicians. To use another expression of the great Phillips, "There is a class among us so conservative, that they are afraid the roof will come down if you sweep the cobwebs."

This characterizes our age most accurately. It applies just as appropriately to the end of the nineteenth century when the country turned from Populism to rampant racism because capitalism found it "simply liked the smell of empire."<sup>5</sup> By then Phillips and Marx were long since dead. Fortunately, however, Marxism being a theory of liberation, its Humanism springs ever anew in today's activities.<sup>6</sup>

5. *American Diplomacy, 1900-1950*, by George F. Kennan.

6. For the Humanism of Marxism in its American setting see [Marxism and Freedom](#) by Raya Dunayevskaya.

# The Todayness of a Marxist-Humanist Classic American Civilization on Trial: Black Masses as Vanguard

## What Florida Gov. DeSantis and his ilk don't want you to know as they ban Black history in schools: The true story of freedom movements in the U.S.

### From the introduction to the 1970 edition

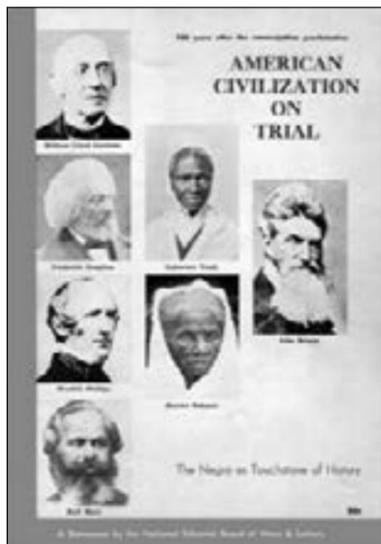
The eruptions throughout the length and breadth of this country, in the year 1967, were totally spontaneous, and spoke in much clearer terms than any of the leaders....The Black masses refused to be silenced. They proceeded to search for a total philosophy on their own....

It becomes imperative, therefore, that every freedom movement re-examine its past, and map out its future in **direct relationship to the continuous, the ceaseless, the ever new Black revolts.** This includes all:

- the mass anti-war movement, which was born in opposition to the U.S. imperialist bombing of North Vietnam in 1965. (See [The Free Speech Movement and the Negro Revolution.](#))
- the Women's Liberation Movement. (See [Notes on Women's Liberation: We Speak in Many Voices.](#))
- those Black leaders who have maintained a distance from the Black masses. (See [Black Mass Revolt.](#))
- the whole generation of revolutionaries searching for a total philosophy of revolution.

### From "A 1980s View of the Two-Way Road between the U.S. and Africa."

It was in his last decade that Marx discovered still newer paths to revolution. Present day existing state-capitalisms calling themselves Communist, like Russia and China, have totally abandoned both the philosophy and the actuality of Marx's "revolution in permanence." Marx, on the other hand, began introducing fundamental changes in his greatest theoretical work, *Capital*, which disclosed his new perceptions of the possibility of a revolution in technologically underdeveloped lands before the technologically advanced West. Take the simple word "so-called" placed by Marx in the title of the final part of *Capital*: "The So-Called Primitive Accumulation of Capital." Though that word has been disregarded by post-Marx Marxists, it touches the burning question



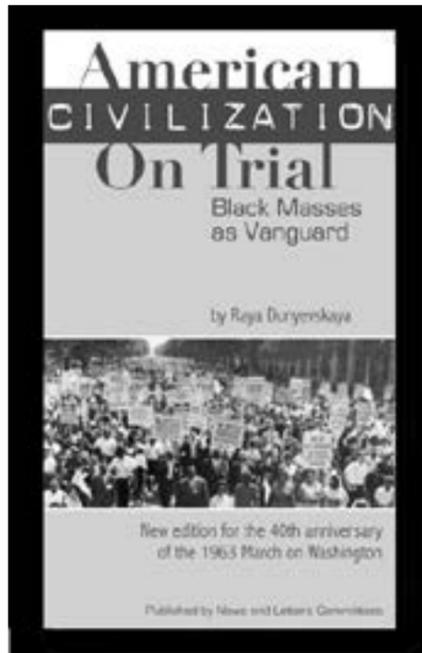
First edition of American Civilization on Trial

of our day—the relationship of technologically advanced countries to the technologically underdeveloped Third World. What Marx was saying with that word, "so-called," was that it simply wasn't true that capitalism's carving up of the Asian and African world characterized only the primitive stage of capitalism.

To further stress that technologically advanced capitalism has not at all left behind the so-called primitive stage of turning Africa into "a warren for hunting black skins" and forcing them into slavery in "civilized" countries....Marx added a whole new paragraph to the 1875 French edition of *Capital*, which showed that this continued outreach into imperialism "successively annexed extensive areas of the New World, Asia and Australia."

Marx's projection of the possibility of a revolution coming first in technologically underdeveloped lands achieved a new meaning for our age with the emergence of a whole new Third World, as well as new mass struggles and the birth of new revolutionary forces as reason. The Black dimension in the U.S. as well as in Africa showed that we had, indeed, reached a totally new movement from practice to theory that was itself a new form of theory. It was this new movement from practice—those new voices from below—which we heard, recorded, and dialectically developed. Those voices demanded that a new movement from theory be rooted in that movement from practice and become developed to the point of philosophy—a philosophy of world revolution....

*American Civilization on Trial* cast a new illumination on the two-way road between Africa and the U.S. via the West Indies by showing that what, to the capitalists, was the triangular trade of rum, molasses and slaves, was, to the Blacks, the ever-live triangular development of internationalism, masses in motion and ideas. This triangular development remains the dominant force to this day.

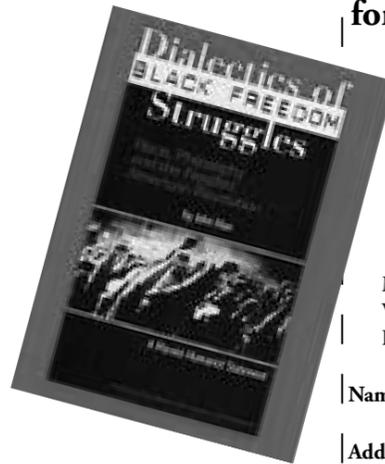


### From Part VII: Facing the Challenge, 1943-1963

The truth is old radicals are forever blind to the **positive**, the **subjective** new dimensions of any **spontaneous** struggle. Each struggle is fought out in separateness, and remains isolated. While the way to hell may be paved with Little Rocks, the way to a new society must have totally new foundations not alone in action but in thought....

The very people who played down the East European Revolts, from Stalin's death, in 1953, through the Hungarian Revolution, in 1956, also played down the Black struggles from the Montgomery Bus Boycott, in 1956, through the Freedom Rides, in 1961, to the current struggles in Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi. We, on the other hand, do not divide the underlying philosophy from participation in all these struggles.

Above all, we hold fast to the one-worldedness **and** the new Humanist thinking of all oppressed from the East German worker to the West Virginia miner; from the Hungarian revolutionary to the Montgomery Bus Boycotter; as well as from the North Carolina Sit-inner to the African Freedom Fighter. The elements of the new society, submerged the world over by the might of capital, are emerging in all sorts of unexpected and unrelated places. What is missing is the **unity** of these movements from practice with the movement from theory into an overall philosophy that can form the foundation of a totally new social order.

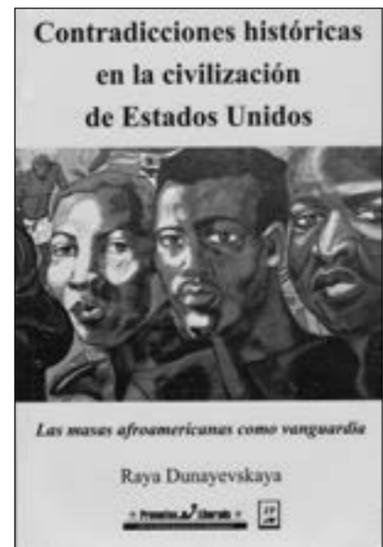


See page 7 to order [American Civilization on Trial.](#)

Limited time offer: \$20 for *American Civilization on Trial* AND *Dialectics of Black Freedom Struggles* (postage included) A \$4 saving!

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Mexican edition of American Civilization on Trial

## American Civilization on Trial: Black Masses as Vanguard in the Archives of Marxist-Humanism: Selected items

### Significance of the new pamphlet

↪ Weekly Political Letter of April 13, 1963: "*American Civilization on Trial* as Statement of Our Views and as Basis for Follow-Up Studies and Articles" (reprinted in [January 2013 N&L](#))

↪ *Facing the Challenge: Nationally and Internationally.* Draft Resolution, July 1963 (#3251 in the *Raya Dunayevskaya Collection*, "Marxist-Humanism: A Half-Century of Its World Development")

↪ *The Need to Transform Reality.* Report by Raya Dunayevskaya to National Editorial Board Plenum, Sept. 1963 (#3279). This was excerpted in the [Jan.-Feb. 2001 N&L](#), reposted [at marxists.org](#).

### The 1983 edition as a new projection, not only an update

↪ The pamphlet's [fourth expanded edition](#) features "A 1980s View of the Two-Way Road Between the U.S. and Africa," by Raya Dunayevskaya, as a new introduction. It was included in [Marx's Philosophy of Revolution in Permanence for Our Day: Selected Writings by Raya Dunayevskaya](#),

reposted [at marxists.org](#), and excerpted in the [Feb.-March 2006 N&L](#). The excerpt was reposted [in N&L](#).

↪ Dunayevskaya's [presentation and remarks](#) to the Resident Editorial Board, June 28, 1983, on her draft of the new introduction.

↪ Dunayevskaya's May 5, 1983, [letter to "Dear Friends,"](#) written May 5, 1983, including proposal to issue a new edition of *American Civilization on Trial: Black Masses as Vanguard*.

### Writings by Charles Denby on American Civilization on Trial

↪ "Negro Action Will Change Things—Not Politicians or Resolutions," [March 1963 "Worker's Journal" column.](#)

↪ June 1983 [letter to Dunayevskaya](#), reprinted in Denby's ["Worker's Journal" column.](#)

↪ [Statement to 1983 News and Letters Committees](#) Constitutional Convention—the last letter by Charles Denby. Reprinted in [Nov. 1983 N&L](#).

## THIS SOCIETY'S INGRAINED VIOLENCE

Ingrained violence, unseparated from ingrained racial and class disparities, stood out starkly on the recent local news. It opened with seven minutes of reports on the wonderful community support for the Michigan State University students after the recent mass shooting there. The support included adjustments to academic requirements, the closing of Berkey Hall for the semester, over 200 counselors and several therapy dogs coming to campus. Following that report came two more of shootings in Detroit which injured one seven-year old and two teen-aged boys, in about 30 seconds. Where are the counselors and therapy dogs for these Black children? Who is looking out for their mental health and that of their families? Will their aggressors even be caught or prosecuted?



**Susan Van Gelder**  
Detroit

\*\*\*

I drove to MSU several days after the shootings there and talked to several students. Then I headed to the state capitol. At least 2,000 people were there. It was very emotional, listening to the students who were speaking into the microphone set up on the capitol building steps, telling how they felt they were going to die. One of the themes seemed to be how the youth have been abandoned by their elders and that if anything is going to change, it is they, the youth, who will have to do it. I remember reading a column in the *Battle Creek Enquirer* several years ago. The writer said that her youngest child had just graduated from high school and that she had gone through “active shooter” training since kindergarten. These people are in college now. They have been groomed by the corrupt, obsolete capitalist system of political economy to be victims. “A long train of abuses, long ignored”: these are the preconditions of revolution, as enunciated by Thomas Jefferson. The students today are the true subjects of revolution.

**Curtis**  
Battle Creek, Mich.

## AFTER THE MURDER OF TYRE NICHOLS

Cops in Los Angeles beat a man after a traffic stop. In Memphis, they beat a Black man to death after a traffic stop. When are the sheeple going to realize that Amerikkkan cops are exactly like the Nazi storm troopers? Their “job” is to intimidate people of color, arrest kids for drug possession and write traffic tickets, the big source of money for cities around the U.S. And if you need help, don't call a cop, especially if it is a mental health crisis. Someone could easily wind up dead and it won't be the cop.

**John Taylor**  
Cañon City, Colo.

\*\*\*

After the death of Tyre Nichols in Memphis, I saw at least two more videos on TV showing a Black man being murdered by police. Then just before I wrote this there was another one. In such an environment, one might justifiably conclude that Black men will never receive justice and that we are going to be watching these atrocities forever. We have already been watching them for over 30 years, since the Rodney King incident in L.A. As a society we should be able to solve this problem of extrajudicial murder, but the murderous, genocidal logic of the system of political economy that we live under dictates otherwise. It leaves the solution up to each individual, willy-nilly. There is no solution under capitalism. We must kill it before it kills us.

**Ex-postal worker**  
Kalamazoo, Mich.

## WOMEN AND GIRLS FACE OPPRESSION

When I read the studies about how girls were in such terrible trouble even

# READERS' VIEWS

before the pandemic, with rates of suicide and suicidal thoughts skyrocketing and so many high school girls experiencing forced sex, I got so angry. None of the articles mentioned that girls and women are oppressed because they are girls and women. Clearly, women are despised, not seen as human, at least not the way men are. That is seen most recently in how cruel the new abortion restrictions are and how gleeful about it are those who created these inhuman laws. No real solution was offered, only that girls should learn to deal with the world the way it is, when what is needed is to transform it completely. Girls would be crazy not to be depressed as they approach puberty and see what this society has in store for them.

**Disgusted**  
Chicago

## CHURCH SEXISM AND HYPOCRISY

Re: “[Church survives on sexism & hypocrisy](#)” (Jan.-Feb. 2023 *N&L*), Catholic hospital networks certainly do create “dangerous conditions in their drive for profits,” which they extract through their supposedly non-profit hospitals. This just happened where I live, in Hammond, Ind., where Franciscan Health Alliance took over St. Margaret's hospital and soon started selling off medical equipment and demolishing various buildings. I usually avoid going there but was referred by my regular clinician about a year ago. I walked to my appointment through a campus of eerily silent and darkened hallways. According to Mayor McDermott, in 2021, the Franciscan administration summoned him to a meeting which they opened with a prayer. Then they said they were closing all of the hospital except the ER, which they pledged to keep open as the only ER remaining in Hammond. In November 2022, they reneged, announcing they would stop accepting ambulances effective Dec. 23. A court injunction was necessary to hold Franciscan to their stated mission, which is to serve the poor with an ER, for the next nine months, which gives the city some time to find a new provider.

**Buddy Bell**  
Indiana

\*\*\*

Ms. Moon wrote a great article about the Catholic Church. Everything she wrote is true. The Catholic Church controlled the show for 1,000 years. But once Martin Luther squalled, the Protestants were created, which resulted in things like the Thirty Years War as both groups battled for control of everything. Today when there is a march against women's reproductive freedom, the Christian Fascist Religious Right Protestants are standing next to the Catholics. In some ways, the Protestant big wigs like Texas Gov. Abbott and Florida Gov. DeSantis may be more dangerous than the Pope.

**J. T.**  
Cañon City, Colo.

## FUNDAMENTALISM VS. WOMEN

Men, under the guise of any fundamentalist religion you want to name, certainly are obsessed with what women wear. While we all know about the Taliban—who invented a fanatical form of Islam, it seems, just to terrorize and enslave women—we're just learning about Israel's ultra-Orthodox Shas party and its chair, Aryeh Deri. Their proposed new law forbids the playing of any musical instruments and imposes a strict dress code—mostly on women—at the Western Wall Plaza. Dare to show your shoulders? You'll go to prison for six months and pay a \$2,840 fine. This bill is all about con-

trolling women. While at this moment the bill stands no chance of passage, it reveals not only that the goal of the Shas party is women's oppression, but that they also are testing the waters to see just how far they can go and how fast.

**Terry Moon**  
Chicago

## CALL TO ACTION

We encourage every inmate from every state to join us in solidarity to combat our nation's judicial iniquities and oppressions upon the lower class. Our nation's elite has been profiting from the incarceration of its own people. The state of Pennsylvania is no stranger to injustice, and recently it has been getting worse because we have been allowing it. Philadelphia officers have been circumventing the laws in order to arrest and convict our brothers, sisters, fathers, mothers, and children. We have had enough, watching, as teachers in this country struggle to get children the proper supplies to learn, as prisons flush money and supplies down the drain. We are sick of having to beg our families to help support us so we are no longer hungry because we can't afford the outrageous prices for [commissary items]. Our jobs only pay us 19 to 42 cents an hour. Our state pays millions to contractors in monetary incentives. A company in Florida scans inmate mail which the local prison staff could easily do. Private phone and email companies charge our families ridiculous amounts to use their service. The prisons and this state need us to do the work in prison in order for these facilities to run. I'm asking that we all stand together, and refuse to work, beginning Saturday, June 3, 2023. The inmates in Alabama did it because they finally had enough, and they succeeded. It's our turn. We need to do this for our families.

**Prisoner**  
Houtzdale, Pa.

## CENSORSHIP HERE AND NOW

I'm writing to tell you about how you are being censored. As you can see by the photocopy, the mailing label was cut from the envelope your paper came in and then taped over a swath of the text, completely avoiding the large area at the top where the paper's banner resides. This is just



one of many tactics being used. Please keep sending me the paper and fighting the good fight.

**Prisoner**  
Salters, S.C.

\*\*\*

I'm writing to notify you of an ongoing repeated violation of Offender Mail Procedure at Jefferson City Correctional Center, by the mail and property room personnel. They violate Constitutionally protected rights to due process and freedom of press. “Religious organization” and “community resource organizations/agencies”—such as prisoner literary organizations that promote literacy by distributing books or educational and recreational reading—are defined as “special mail” under “IS 13-1.1 offender mail procedures/2 definitions.” Furthermore, the same document states: “envelopes containing special mail shall be opened by the mail room and forwarded to the assigned corrections case manager (CCM) who shall distribute the

contents to the offender.” This is not being followed. In addition, I've been informed that many of these packages sent to me have been sent back: “Return to sender” by property room staff before I'm informed of their arrival. Their actions are a violation of my due process rights twice over, and freedom of the press. Cease this illegal activity motivated by a sick agenda of depriving prisoners of reading material.

**Prisoner**  
Jefferson City, Mo.

## BREXIT CATASTROPHE

Brexit was sold as a racist nationalist solution to all of Britain's problems. It failed catastrophically. The British working class needs to reject nationalism, racism, isolationism and push for a socialist agenda.

**Expat**  
Munich

## CHINA'S WORKERS AND U.S.

“[China's white paper revolution scares Xi Jinping](#)” (Jan.-Feb. 2023 *N&L*) takes up the question: What is the global context of the very important revolt in China; why now? American workers must relate to Chinese workers.

**Steve**  
Detroit

## IRAN REVOLT CONTINUES

In January, three new Iranian demonstrators were condemned to death. Khamenei, the murderer, finally came to talk to his followers. I think the only way the people of Iran can get rid of the government is if they are forced to change. Almost every Iranian would have to go on strike, which many will not do because they are tied to the regime. A strike in the bazaar helped bring down the Shah's regime. Forty years ago, when the current government came to power, they said: “Iran is not important for us. Islam is important for us.” They still follow the same line. A friend told me many times that the guardians of Islam, these murderers, have a direct hand in the economy of Iran. They are the Bazaar. They're the ones sending sons and daughters abroad, buying property and living there, the same crap. Nothing changed about these leaders. Only the title has changed. They should not be driving motorcycles and shooting people. A demonstrator said, “We are scared that the government will drop an atomic bomb on us.” The regime has no shame.

**Iranian in exile**

## AZADKAR, IN MEMORIAM

I'm sending this donation in memory of Azadkar. (“[Azadkar \(Tooraj Haji Moradi\), 1952-2022](#),” Jan.-Feb. 2023 *N&L*.) My heart goes out to all who experienced the enormity of his contributions and his loss. The magnificent mosaic of voices that is built on Raya Dunayevskaya's philosophy is irreplaceable.

**Miriam**  
Livonia, Mich.

## 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 people engaged in struggles inside and outside prison walls can be heard speaking for themselves.

## UKRAINIAN SELF-DETERMINATION AND THE IDEA OF FREEDOM

Re “[Ukrainian self-determination and idea of freedom](#)” (Jan.-Feb. 2023



*N&L*): When we write about movements, a lot of attention is

paid to extraordinary bravery or extraordinary acts. I am not discounting that. But the idea of people not trying to be heroic, but still putting their lives on the line for the right to self-activity is important to raise. It may not sound very revolutionary. But it is more than opposition to the immediacy of Putin's oppression. People in Ukraine don't say what they are fighting for (at least it's not reported), but that they will fight. This essay does not quote a Ukrainian saying, “I demand the self-determination of the idea of freedom.” That is a statement from a philosopher looking at an actual struggle. Zelensky may want to limit his “wish list” to weapons to defeat Russia. But that does not exhaust what people in Ukraine want. Engaging ideas that animate activities is more than asking us to be organizers.

**David M’Oto**  
SF Bay Area, Calif.

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It is how we treat one another that makes new moments of social solidarity so powerful. Society reorganizes itself, with the whole population creating ever new ways of experiencing their solidarity in everyday life. Ukrainians know oppression and the lack of food from five million starved by Stalin 90 years ago to today. A Kyiv gourmet baker now bakes thousands of loaves daily underground to give out to people who need it. He is not producing commodities.

**Ron Kelch**  
Oakland

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The experience of organizing life differently can be the beginning of a new consciousness of what is important about surviving as a free people. As individuals, many are taking great risks, even sacrificing their lives. That bravery comes from a deep sense of what it means to be human.

So there is a possibility that the question of what it means to be free can develop from its first take, that of being free from Putin's totalitarian-fascist regime, to a deeper sense of what it means to be free in one's everyday life when Putin is defeated. Isn't this what Marx meant when he said that the 1871 Paris Commune's greatest accomplishment was “its own working existence?”

**Urszula Wislanka**  
Oakland, Calif.

### N&L FOR THE STUDY GROUP

Another prisoner shared his *N&L* with me. I'd like to have a subscription to use in my study group, as we're attempting to build a better sense of unity among the general population of 3,700 men assigned to this unit. There is a need to open the minds of inmates to a better quality of life and state of mind. Your paper would serve the purpose of bringing forth needed change. Thanks for being a voice for us to the free world. It makes a difference in our lives.



**Prisoner**  
Iowa Park, Texas

### SHARING THE PAPER

A friend of mine shared a copy of your paper with me. Could you put me on your mailing list so that I may share it with others in my building. It's rare to read this level of material at this Unit. I enjoy every page of the paper.

**Prisoner**  
Iowa Park, Texas

### CLIMATE MOVEMENTS VS. SUMMITS

The subhead “Climate Summit vs. Climate Movements in [“COP15 and COP27: Ecology summits hide two worlds clashing”](#) (Jan.-Feb. 2023 *N&L*) captures the “two worlds” we are facing over the looming catastrophe of climate chaos. The climate summits which are rolled out each year seem so much about posturing by one leader or another. Greenwashing

is being substituted for concrete actions. What does seem worthwhile are the climate movements which gather at these summits to demand real action and voice protest and expose the extreme danger we are in. What I would ask is whether their important protests against the emptiness and manipulation of the summits can be at the same time a projection of the need for a kind of full uprooting that can put us on the road toward a new, human beginning.

**Eugene Walker**  
Mexico

### UNSANITARY PRISON CONDITIONS

We are going through a real struggle here in Texas prisons. We have been oppressed here for a long time! Inmates are now trying to speak up, protest, and push back. We need help that must come from the public. News publications are very powerful when telling the public about conditions in these prisons that are being carried out as cruel and unusual punishments and with taxpayer money.

The unit I'm on, Robertson, has many harsh conditions. Some are dangerous: the toilets leak urine and feces from the base; and water is leaking in the pipes and making sparks off a light fixture. Seriously! The food here is spoiled sometimes, not nutritious, and leftovers are served for lunch and dinner. Breakfast is dry pancakes, oatmeal and prunes every morning! Same meal! The showers are being conducted once in a blue moon. We are in the cells 24/7 with a cellmate and officials are always claiming shortage of staff. However, officers just don't want to let us take a shower.

There are many deprivations, abuses, discrimination, and failures by this administration. You would need to see it to believe it.

**Prisoner**  
Abilene, Texas

### PRISON EXPLOITATION

Me and my comrades enjoy *N&L*. When I get out, I will join the “big business” to end the “slavery” in prison. Not only are we working for pennies a day, now they are trying to take 75% of money coming in for fines, child support or anything they can bill us for. We have no problem paying if we got the right currency, but they never talk about that.

**Prisoner**  
Branchland, W.Va.

### VOICES FROM BEHIND BARS

I deeply thank you for your important publication. I have been incarcerated since 2009. You have been a true voice of reason I have

listened to. Every word you print is not some wasted nonsense. Each article is of utmost importance because it reflects individualism, even in the face of utter adversity. What makes change is but one voice raised up, even in printed form, which you aid. What you have done for me I'm certain you do for others with each issue, to provide a true freedom that while they have our bodies, our minds are free to thrive.



**Prisoner**  
Avenal, Calif.

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I enjoy reading *N&L*. It helps keep me up on what is going on outside these walls. I would like to thank the people who are donating the funds so that I may continue receiving the paper. I do highly appreciate it and all the other people helping to write the news and everyone else involved with it. Thanks to making this happen to help those of us who need help.

**Prisoner**  
San Diego, Calif.

*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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## Detroiters demand: 'Stop Cop City!'

**Detroit**—On Feb. 24 several dozen protesters marched in downtown Detroit chanting: “Stop Cop City!” “I am...a revolutionary!”

The march followed a rally with members from the Michigan Environmental Justice Coalition (MEJC), Michigan Liberation, Detroit Will Breathe, Black to the Land, and Detroit Leadership and Environmental Education Program (D-LEEP). It was in solidarity with protesters in the Atlanta area against “Cop City,” 85 acres of forest where a fake city is planned that would destroy the forest to build a military training facility for cops. Friday’s demonstration was called as a vigil for [Manuel Paez Teran](#), also known as “Tortuguita,” the activist killed by cops in Georgia. (See “Police murder of Tyre Nichols puts U.S. civilization on trial yet again,” p. 1.)

### STOP THE EXPANSION OF CAMP GRAYLING!

Protesters oppose a similar situation in Michigan—the expansion of Camp Grayling. Camp Grayling is a military training facility in the north of the state, 162,000 acres of state-owned land across several counties. It would more than double its current training grounds, according to [Bridge Michigan](#).

**Gabriela Alcazar of MEJC stated: “Environmental justice is an intersectional struggle...we work with folks on all kinds of different social justice issues.”** Christiana Beckley, an activist from Southwest Detroit, said that is what prompted the individual organizations to become one: **Detroit by Atlanta Stop Cop City Solidarity Coalition.**

[Bridge Detroit](#) quoted Rai LaNier of Michigan Liberation, who said police and military technologies and partnerships have hurt Black and Indigenous people worldwide. “The fight in Atlanta...is directly related to our fight against police surveillance projects like ShotSpotter and Project Greenlight. Things that were supposed to protect us and defend us.” Instead, LaNier continued, the city is “wasting our money...” Christiana Beckley, an activist from Southwest Detroit, said, “[T]he idea of having cops and military taking over forests and funding, like funneling tons of money into that when we don’t have affordable schools or health care or food or housing for anybody, is just something that I think is atrocious, so that’s why I’m here.”

### POLICE TARGET PRACTICE IN CITY PARK

Detroiters are well acquainted with the militarization of parks and the connection between environmental injustice and police. Detroit police have used [Rouge Park](#) as a training ground for decades. Directly across

the street from homes, the police use the site daily for shooting practice. They’ve deployed bombs and tear gas in the park during training exercises.

**“Those same tools of militarized police impact us here in Detroit, just as they do in Atlanta,”** said Antonio Cosme, an education coordinator with the National Wildlife Federation, and leader with Black to the Land Coalition in Detroit. Like Tortuguita, Cosme has Latino ancestry, and has had his fair share of dealings with the police and environmental injustice in Detroit. Last year he took part in a sacred Indigenous ceremony at Rouge Park held to start the maple syrup tapping season. It was [broken up by 12 police officers and a helicopter.](#)

Cosme said, “We’re trying to kick the Detroit Police out of Rouge Park. We’ll be accountable to the community and we won’t be firing during community events and kids camping...”

—Susan Van Gelder

## Stop tax handouts to Detroit developers



Susan Van Gelder for News & Letters

**Detroit, Mich.**—On Feb. 14, a small but vigorous demonstration in front of Cass Technical High School called by the Detroit Peoples’ Platform protested tax increment financing (TIF) for downtown development projects, which flourish while tax-funded public libraries and schools struggle to make ends meet.

### BILLIONAIRES DON’T NEED OUR TAXES

Protesters demanded an end to public funds for billionaire developers Steven Ross and the Ilitch family, creators of “District Detroit” surrounding Little Caesars’ Arena, where their decade-long incomplete development projects have only added to blight. We called out the Neighborhood Advisory Council for failing to stand firm for real community benefits or stop the city’s weak enforcement of previous community benefit agreements.

**The widespread but crazily obscure practice of TIF results in public money being given to private developers, especially in low-income rural and urban areas. A “district” is defined and property taxes within its boundaries are frozen. Theoretically the investment “raises all boats” by increasing property values within the district, and would also raise property taxes if they hadn’t been frozen. That incremental increase is given to the developer. Right. No wonder more of us aren’t out there protesting!**

According to *The Detroit News*, research shows that the increased property values often fail to materialize. “This development doesn’t appear to be about rebuilding a distressed urban economy in Detroit.... This particular proposal is one more decoration of the central business district...”

—Angry Detroit homeowner



by Elise

UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak supports legislation allowing police to forcibly shut down protests in Wales and England, even when the protests aren’t disrupting people’s day-to-day business. The updated Public Order Bill, expected to pass the House of Lords, also grants police the power to shut down a protest based on demonstrations a group has held in the past. Disabled People Against Cuts, Disabled People Direct Action Network, Disability Rights UK, Liberty, UK Uncut and all potential protesters are under threat. The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act makes “unjustifiably noisy protests” a crime. Noisy direct-action protests have raised significant awareness about the disabled, and helped them in their ability to secure rights and stop funding cuts.

\* \* \*

Coumba Ndiaye, a disabled woman who is president of the municipality commission for education, training and local language in Pikine, Senegal, works to ensure access for disabled children to education, appropriate learning materials, healthcare and living accommodations. Coumba also strives for delivery rooms in her city of more than a million people to be accessible for disabled women and for staff to be trained to work with them. When she was in labor over 20 years ago, four health centers refused her admission; the midwife at the fifth hospital assumed she needed a Caesarean without examining her. After her baby was delivered vaginally, thanks to another healthcare worker, Coumba hemorrhaged and landed in a resuscitation room, and the head midwife strongly advised her not to have more children.

\* \* \*

Disabled people in Saskatchewan, struggling to make ends meet, want an increase in their Assured Income for Disability (SAID) benefits. Barrier Free Saskatchewan is demanding accessibility legislation with teeth. Canadian Pension Plan (CPP) benefits are deducted from SAID payments. Recipients who work have their SAID benefits reduced once their annual income reaches \$6,000 Canadian. The New Democratic Party, the opposition to the ruling Saskatchewan Party, is demanding increases in SAID benefits, tying future increases to inflation, benefits targeted to those most impoverished and aligning benefits with Canada’s *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. Hundreds have already signed its petition, which also demands that SAID recipients no longer be forced to apply early for CPP benefits, a practice already found discriminatory by the province of Manitoba’s Court of Appeals.

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## Resistance in Burma

I am originally from Burma, also known as Myanmar. Very gross human rights violations are happening there. According to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners in Burma (AAPPB), there are 13,613 political prisoners in Myanmar. So far 2,750 prisoners have been tortured and killed since Feb. 1, 2021.

### TERRORIST MILITARY FIGHTS CIVILIANS

The military attempted a coup in Burma on Feb. 2, 2021. The people overwhelmingly rejected it and are still resisting. The military has degenerated into a terrorist group and is committing crimes against humanity, subjugating the people by extreme force of arms. They are arresting, torturing, raping and killing civilians. They are burning crops to starve the people and burning whole villages to make people sick by depriving them of shelter. People have taken up arms to defend themselves.

**A civil war has started and there is a humanitarian disaster in the making. The military is blocking humanitarian aid to areas where the people resisting reside. We don’t even want to call them the military. They are just a gang of criminals and only deserve to be called military terrorists.**

The military terrorists have a very clear strategy. This strategy is not to fight the armed resistance called the People’s Defense Forces but to fight the civilian population. This is a typical Russian military strategy. Russia does not fight the armed opponent. Russia fights the civilian population.

**The weapons which are killing the civilians have been provided to Myanmar. If somebody looked at how Russia conducted the war in Chechnya, how Russia helped Bashar al-Assad of Syria survive, how Russia is today fighting in Ukraine, it was always systematic targeting of the civilian population on a massive scale. This is what the junta is doing.**

The junta is intentionally creating a huge humanitarian disaster. This is not a secondary consequence of the war, this is their primary goal—to create a huge humanitarian crisis. They want to burden every single stakeholder in Burma who is challenging them. What the junta is doing is criminal!

**The other part of their strategy is approaching Ethnic Resistance Forces with the carrot of humanitarian aid and saying to them: “Hey, if you do even a temporary ceasefire with the junta, you will be able to get humanitarian aid.” We see a very dirty misuse of humanitarian aid for political purposes in order to break the alliance of forces against the junta. The UN is helping them.**

To the junta aid is a means to achieve as many ceasefires as possible so that they can concentrate all their military power to crushing the people’s resistance in the Burmese heartland regions of Sagaing and Magway.

We are struggling now to make the public more aware of the junta’s strategy. We need international assistance, especially from our neighbors, to get around this but we are getting very little cooperation from China, India and Thailand. This lack of assistance could make the unrest spread throughout the region.

—Burmese woman activist

## LAPD training death

Shaking my head! Officer Houston R. Tipping of the LAPD was murdered by fellow officers during training on May 26, 2022, after submitting reports from a woman who claimed four officers raped her. Attorney Bradley Cage told NPR that the 32-year-old officer was deliberately assaulted after submitting the reports. The training was used to cover up his killing which was in retaliation for whistleblowing activity, Cage said.

### JOE BIDEN BETRAYS BLACK VOTERS

After the murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, an international movement called for transparency and to defund the police. President Biden is not the answer. He is a band-aid to stop the bleeding, calm stuff down, and prevent uprisings. He recently backed down from the Fraternal Order of Police. In fact he did a 180 degree turn on Black voters.

**The woman victim identified four officers by name tags and Tipping immediately began looking into her reports, moving it “on up the chain,” Cage said. Tipping had three broken ribs, lacerated liver and required stitches in his head. UCLA medical experts who have reviewed Tipping’s autopsy report concluded that the officer’s injuries do not square with the department’s version of events.**

LAPD claims many of Tipping’s injuries were the result of attempts to revive him at the academy. Cage said that is untrue. Medical records obtained by his legal team show that a LUCAS device, which works as an automatic CPR machine and was in the training room at the time, was not turned on and no video footage is available.

—Comrade Easley #306400, 2001 E. Central Ave., Toledo, Ohio 43608. DM: Jpay.com, ConnectNetwork.com, Instagram: @DecarcerateOhio\_33

**Readers – Share your own solidarity struggles and learn about others’ battles in each issue of News & Letters.**



# Why we're here for Russian dissidents

*Editor's note: On Jan. 21 we wanted to express solidarity with Russian dissidents who expressed their opposition to Putin's war right within Russia itself. We gathered in Oakland, Calif., and handed out leaflets and engaged people coming to a farmer's market. Below we print what some of the participants said about why they were there.*



News &amp; Letters

We are here today to be in solidarity with political prisoners in Russia and all around the world. I didn't know that Jan. 19 was a day of solidarity with all dissidents in Russia who had been against Putin's invasion of Ukraine. Many of them have lost their lives fighting against that terrorist regime. Russians who are in prison because they raised their voice against the invasion deserve utmost solidarity and admiration for their incredible courage.

With the rise of the right-wing movement in this country we don't know how long we'll have a right to protest. Putin is a beacon for fascist movements around the world and he must be brought down, he must be defeated in Ukraine. That's the first step. That's why I am here today.



—Cheryl

I am a Ukrainian Jew and a proud Leftist. I am here because I feel the Left has to speak out more on Ukraine. I want to be able to get back to Ukraine, but I also want to show how our struggle is tied with other peoples' struggles, with the people in Burma, for example, Iran, Syria, East Turkestan, Russian opposition, and many others.

The situation of the Muslims in India reminds me, as a Jew, of the Holocaust: same tactics, same tropes. I want to be here to show solidarity. No one is free until we are all free.



—Isaac

## Propping up fascism

continued from p. 1

Now there are renewed threats that China will join North Korea in supplying lethal weaponry to Russia.

### CHINA'S IMPERIALIST AMBITIONS

The meeting in Beijing between Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi and China's Xi Jinping, and Xi's meeting in the spring with Putin in Moscow, may determine if the need to control its population at home pushes China toward more adventures abroad. Ending the autonomy of Hong Kong, once guaranteed for another 24 years, had a great deal to do with Xi attempting to eliminate dissent in the rest of China.

**Merely holding a non-approved primary for opposition candidates in 2021 was so threatening to Xi that Hong Kong has 47 defendants on trial now. Invading Taiwan, in Xi's mind, might add to his popularity in the same strange way that Reagan sending troops to tiny Grenada in 1983 increased his popularity.**

Syria's Assad regime faced little international pressure against its genocidal campaign to crush the revolution there. Economic sanctions were hardly sufficient to obstruct his rescuers. This was reminiscent of Spain in 1936-38, when Nazi Germany and fascist Italy backed Gen. Franco's overthrow of the Republican government, but the UK and France offered at most words of condemnation. Anti-Franco opposition came from international solidarity of armed anarchists, Trotskyists, and socialists of all stripes coming to the defense of a bourgeois government against fascist attack.

At that time, it was no surprise that Communist Party members jumped to the front in resisting fascism, until reversing to protect Hitler after he and Stalin partitioned Poland in 1939.

We have come full circle, as figures on the right like Tucker Carlson and Matt Gaetz join too many self-identified leftists in identifying with oligarchies and state-capitalist butchers and disregarding the resistance's defense of life and freedom.

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I am here today to show solidarity with the Ukrainian people who have been a beacon to the world to not give up on democracy, not just in a formal sense, but as a whole people: Jews, Russians as well as Ukrainians. They oppose the devolving into fascism that is happening all over the world, which responds with hatred of the "other" as they have no hope to offer the youth.

**The world needs a return to the idea of humanism that begins with one's actual life activity. Ukrainians are telling the world that we don't have to live under fascism and the interminable totalitarian twist that Russia has given the fascist movements in the world.**

I have solidarity with all movements against fascism, movements that need to be grounded in a new philosophy of freedom. Most of the world, and especially the Left, has avoided focusing on that so far.

—Ron Kelch



Urszula Wislenska for News &amp; Letters

On Feb. 26, hundreds gathered in San Francisco to commemorate the anniversary of Putin's brutal invasion of Ukraine and Ukrainians' incredibly brave resistance. One participant commented: "For me it was a tremendously uplifting experience of solidarity especially with the turnouts from the Iranians, Belarusians, Chinese, Buryats, and Russian dissidents. I met so many interesting and thoughtful people, I felt like I was with the best of humanity for a day."

I am with Ukraine Socialist Solidarity Campaign. I am here for this 19-year-old young woman whose picture I'm carrying, Olesya Krivtsova, facing 10 years for "terrorism" for speaking up against Putin's invasion of Ukraine.

**We see a worldwide drive towards fascism. For example, Steve Bannon was collaborating with Brazil's ex-president Bolsonaro to try to overturn the election in Brazil. A part of the drive towards fascism is seen in the increased oppression and the increase in political prisoners all around the world: Burma, Iran, Russia, Israel, and also in the U.S.**

We need a renewed socialist movement as part of a new workers' movement to fight back against fascism, for workers' interests, workers' rights and for socialism. The issue of political prisoners is directly involved in international working-class solidarity.

—John Reimann

## Prisoners need their mail

**Gunnison, Utah**—The Dept. of Corrections in Utah and other states are digitizing mail, which impedes our civil rights. It delays mail delivery and takes away our right to be able to hold and look at our personal mail any time we want or need to. We look forward to mail, visits, phone calls, and commissary. Someone who's never done prison time could not understand how important it is for us and our mental health to have and hold mail from our loved ones knowing they wrote it thinking of us.

### PHOTOCOPIED MAIL AND BARRIER VISITS

We no longer have contact visits, they are now visits behind barriers. It's depressing and frustrating because you can't even hear each other. The video visits cut in and out most of the time. I have seen inmates come back from these visits in tears. It's hurting our loved ones as much as it is us.

Inmates in Utah are mass punished. Policy FDol/2.01 states that disciplinary principles are constitutionally supported. I have read this over and nowhere does it state that mass punishment is constitutionally supported. It states that inmates should be held accountable for their misbehavior. I agree. But it also states that the actions taken be fair and impartial. Mass punishment isn't fair or impartial. It only guarantees that the recidivism rate won't go down due to the fact that the D.O.C. took away stuff needed to help prisoners who want to rehabilitate, because a few misbehaved.

**We will be back in society one day and would hope that our time in prison was spent rehabilitating ourselves with programs and educational opportunities provided by our state and our country. Not helping us isn't working, so let's try the opposite. Believe in us and change.**

Being in here you run into pure evil, real monsters. The more society dehumanizes everyone in prison, the more the prison keeps taking from prisoners who want to change, the more monsters society will get back. We and our families deserve a fighting chance at a better life. Shouldn't the question be: Did we give them something to fill the void instead of criminal behavior? Did we teach them a trade or educate them to earn a good living?

Some people just don't want to change; but a lot of us really want the chance. We're not given any real options, we're just told to shut up and deal with it. Well, that's not me. I love my family and I believe in humanity.

—Prisoner

## Boycott 'Rage Against the War Machine'

*Editor's note: News and Letters Committees is one of many signatories to this statement. We publish it because, although the Feb. 19 event it refers to is past, more such events are sure to be held, and it is vital to be aware of their reactionary "red-brown" nature.*



A coalition of extreme right groups and groups nominally on the "left" have organized a rally in Washington, D.C., on Feb. 19 called "Rage Against the War Machine." The organizers say the event is for peace in Ukraine. However, if many of their demands are implemented, it will be a victory for Putin and the "peace of the graveyard" for Ukraine.

**This "anti-war" rally's demands pertaining to Ukraine have been thoroughly exposed as Russian disinformation.** And not all of their demands relate to Ukraine. The rest are general demands, such as, "Global nuclear de-escalation," which most people agree with. These easy to agree with anti-war demands serve as cover and, they hope, make them appear legitimately concerned about the violence of state warfare as a means by which to attract honest people who want peace.

**The "Rage Against the War Machine" event is significant: it represents a dangerous escalation of a developing red-brown alliance.**<sup>1</sup> This rally is sponsored by far-right groups and figures that include Ron Paul and the Libertarian Party. Others, such as Chris Hedges, Max Blumenthal, and the People's Party, pose as being "left" but are worsening conduits to the far right and what can be termed "fascist entryism." The Green Party, the largest independent progressive party in the U.S., has let itself be co-opted into this red-brown coalition with its endorsement of the event by a narrow 54-50 vote of its National Committee. Jill Stein, the Green Party's 2012 and 2016 presidential candidate, and an ally of Putin's regime and Russian geopolitics, has agreed to speak at it. Originally a sponsor of the rally, Code Pink (Russian disinfo purveyors with campist politics) has now withdrawn....

Nevertheless, their duplicitous role is made clear by Code Pink leader Medea Benjamin, in her tweets supporting MAGA neo-fascists Marjorie Taylor Greene and Donald Trump, and in Medea Benjamin's alliance with "leftist" Vijay Prashad, who supports the Russian imperialist idea of Eurasianism—which was first developed by fascists in the 1930s and was re-popularized by Dugin, a Russian fascist, in the last 40 years. Prashad is also a denier of the genocidal treatment of the Muslim Uyghurs in China.

The Arab Spring was a turning point for the Left internationally. Bashar al Assad's Syrian Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party has maintained ties with large parts of the Left throughout the world, despite his regime's brutal repression of the Syrian people's democratic revolution for a Free Syria, from 2011 to present. Russian imperialism stepped in to save the Assad regime in 2015 and launched a relentless (and ongoing) disinformation effort to cover up the war crimes of the Assad and Russian regimes in Syria. Much of the liberal and socialist Left in the U.S. has been silent and/or complicit in the face of these atrocities.

This disinformation war's success, and the silence of the Left, paved the way for Putin's military invasion of Ukraine. Now, Russian disinformation continues directly under the banner of extreme right-wing forces allied with those who call themselves anti-war (some claim to be pacifists), anti-imperialists, and anti-capitalists—but conspicuously no "left" groups, including Code Pink, claim to be socialist, anarchist, and/or anti-fascist. All of the groups taking up "anti-" positions (war/imperialism/capitalism) are trumpeting traditionally leftist slogans and postures. This is noteworthy. **Fascist movements have historically tried to expand the base for their reactionary agenda by building red-brown alliances using leftist slogans and posturing.** The upcoming "Rage Against The War Machine" rally is no different.

**We urge Left and peace activists to not be fooled and co-opted into joining a right-wing movement.**

**We stand unequivocally in solidarity with Ukraine, and for a military defeat of the Russian invasion.**

**We oppose all red-brown alliances and we will organize to expose and denounce them.**

Sponsored by [Ukraine Socialist Solidarity Campaign](#), [Syria Solidarity NYC](#), [CISPOS](#)

1. The term "red-brown" is shorthand to describe when the far left, which is supposed to be anti-fascist, and the far right, which is on a fascism spectrum, come into open alliance (red = far left, and brown = far right, named after Hitler's brownshirts).

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# Police murder of Tyre Nichols puts U.S. civilization on trial

continued from p. 1

He said in an [interview](#): “If these officers had understood: I’m beating up this guy, it’s on video, and if I get caught, not only do I get in trouble with the force, I may have to pay thousands of dollars out of my own pocket—that might make a difference.”

## POLICE KILLINGS CONTINUE TO RISE

Whatever changes were made in city after city since 2020, the toll of over 1,000 people killed by police each year has continued—and even [rose last year to a new record](#) of at least 1,176. That gave new energy to those saying that this flows from the very nature and mission of the police, so only a fundamental transformation of society can stop the inhumanity.

As Sylvia Askew, whose son Steven Askew was murdered by the Memphis police ten years ago, [said](#): “It made me reflect on a system that has not changed.”

It is common these days to hear that this kind of violence and terrorization is no exception but is what the police are designed to do. A [recent analysis](#) showed that more than 1 in 20 homicides in the U.S. are committed by the police.

Clearly, the Memphis police expect little if any reprisal for their behavior exhibited in full view of body cameras. Days earlier, they had approached Monterrius Harris in their black hoodies and masks. As one officer yelled “I will shoot you!” Harris attempted to drive away before realizing by their vests that they might be the police. He was beaten up, with his head hitting concrete. He survived but now faces charges of driving at the police. Body camera footage is being withheld.

In another incident last August, Memphis police started beating and pepper spraying Tyson Walker after he said, “Officer, you don’t have to touch me. I will step out the car myself.” The city wouldn’t release footage unless he paid \$600 through his lawyer! This fee is still being challenged in court.

The *Washington Post* interviewed a former Memphis officer who claimed he quit in disgust: “Decades ago, it was said, if you run, you’re gonna get beat up. That changed, but you still have lieutenants who talk about how great it was back in the day, because if somebody punched you, you sent them to the hospital. So then you get these rookies on that say, ‘Man, that sounds awesome.’”

As police work becomes more unpleasant, the job attracts fewer people. Then it predominantly brings in those who are there to do harm. A 2014 decision by the city council to slash pension benefits and health insurance did not help. Nine years later, police ranks are skewed toward people who have less than 10 years of job experience, and who are asked to work 70 or more hours per week.

## STANDARDS FOR POLICE CONTINUE TO FALL

The Memphis PD tried lowering their hiring standards to recruit more staff. In 2018, it deferred a college requirement; in 2022, it relaxed on physical fitness and criminal history. Demetrius Haley, the man who took and sent the picture of Tyre Nichols’s body, had actually been rejected after his first application.

It has [been made public](#) that Haley was accused of assault before. In 2015, he beat prisoner Cordarius Sledge, banging his head into a sink at the Shelby County Correctional Center. The assault was so vicious that the entire cellblock of 34 other inmates signed a letter of concern. It stated in part: “We are truly asking that this matter gets looked into before someone gets hurt really bad or lose their life because of some unprofessional officers.” Yet Haley still worked at the prison as late as 2020. He beat a federal lawsuit by claiming Sledge did not follow the correct procedure of filing a grievance.

In less than 24 hours the information about SCORPION, combined with the proliferation of street demonstrations, changed Memphis Police Chief Cerelyn Davis’s message from “they do good work [but] went off the rails,” to “it is in the best interest of all to permanently deactivate the SCORPION unit.” Although the intent of such units is to fight crime in economically poor neighborhoods, their high price tag (try [\\$14 million annually!](#)) strains logic.

## PRACTICAL ALTERNATIVES NEVER HAPPEN

Memphis protester [Amber Sherman](#) requested the obvious alternative—have the city address actual poverty. “Instead of offering support, we offer more police and make more taskforces.” Unfortunately, support is actually sabotaged. Lifelong Memphis resident and Fight for \$15 organizer [Antonio Cathey](#), someone whose every day of effort is to put more money in the pockets of poor people, had the police spending money installing cameras outside his home and otherwise harass him. “There’s no trust right now,” he said.

Politicians with “tough on crime” platforms want to scare people with the specter of criminals who will kill you if the police are not given every last power. It is true that the police are not the only ones killing people, as seen in the horrendous 48 mass shootings in the U.S. in January alone. That is dwarfed by the 40,000 gun deaths a year, half of them suicides.

This can only be understood if police violence and other kinds of daily violence are recognized as two sides of

the same coin. They are two complementary expressions of the ingrained violence of the social system we have the misfortune to live under.

## BLACK MASSES AS REASON

It is this violent, decaying system that is oozing fascism from every pore, whether it is the sadistic cops celebrating their soon-to-be-fatal beating of Tyre Nichols or the Florida governor’s assault on African American Studies. The special hatred of Black Studies is that the Black dimension is linked with all freedom movements in U.S. history. It is liberation and liberatory movements that they wish to eliminate from history.

**The opposite to that—and therefore the opposite to all the expressions of fascism, of counter-revolutionary anti-freedom, including police violence, attacks on LGBTQ people, and the bans on abortion which are attacks against the movements of women for liberation—is not only the restoration of true history but the actual freedom movements in unity with their universalization in thought, the philosophy of revolution in permanence.**

The category of Black masses as Reason is inseparable



Tortuguita in the forest.

from that philosophy’s development as Marxist-Humanism. Its meaning and centrality in U.S. history were shown in the pamphlet whose 60th anniversary we celebrate this year: *American Civilization on Trial: Black Masses as Vanguard*. (See pages 4 and 5.)

## REPRESSION OF ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENDERS

Another horrifying killing unfolded in Atlanta, where city finances have been drained into “cop city,” a police training center, complete with a practice course for high-speed vehicle chases and a helicopter landing pad. (See “Detroiters demand: ‘Stop Cop City!’” page 8.) A letter signed by [1,300 climate, justice and community](#) groups said: “Mayor Dickens can somehow find [\\$90 million](#) for cop city, one third of which will come from taxpayer money. Still, he can’t find money to keep our already overwhelmed hospitals open or to finance much-needed affordable housing.”

The land in the South River Forest, now granted to Cop City, was [constitutionally guaranteed](#) in 2017 to become a publicly accessible green space, integral to Atlanta’s plan to combat climate change. Four years later, the former mayor and city council violated the city’s constitution and the public will in order to approve the new facility. They also blocked DeKalb County from revoking the building permits as required by law, because, [according to the EPA](#), the construction-induced sedimentation in the South River has exceeded the maximum allowable level.

## STUDENTS TOO OPPOSE COP CITY

Atlanta-area students engaged high gear. At [Emory University](#), 100 of them drafted and signed a letter to the former university president, asking her to leave the board of the Atlanta police foundation, the organization behind Cop City. The current president of Spelman College is also on that board, but insists the college itself does not financially support it. Students at [Spelman](#) petitioned her to step down and denounce the proposed facility. Petitions also circulated at Clark Atlanta University, Georgia State University, Georgia Tech, and Morehouse College.

As bulldozers and tree removal carried on, some students and other environmental activists encamped within the forest. Very soon, they fortified themselves in tree sits because the Atlanta and DeKalb County police, the Georgia Bureau of Investigation (GBI), the Georgia state patrol and the FBI began to send waves of officers to clear them out of the intended construction zone.

After several months of success on the part of the tree sitters, the state upped its ante. [Elias](#), a tree-sitter, said that “since December, the police have repeatedly stormed the forest with military-grade weapons, pointed assault rifles at protesters, fired chemical weapons at tree sitters, and used chainsaws in an attempt to dismantle treehouses with tree sitters still in them.”

On Jan. 18, one or more of these officers fired [13 shots](#) into the body of a young tree-sitter and pacifist nicknamed Tortuguita. The Georgia state officers do not wear body cameras, and Atlanta city said on Jan. 20 they would keep their officers’ footage [tightly sealed](#). And yet the government line is that Tortuguita fired first. The activist legally carried a pistol for scaring off large animals.

Tortuguita’s death is believed by some historians

to be the first killing of an environmental activist in the U.S. The murder is another menacing example of the way fascism pervades the culture and becomes accepted in some quarters as normal or even desired. Murders that explicitly target someone’s environmental stance have been commonplace in countries like Brazil or Indonesia.

## PROTESTERS VILIFIED BY THE PRESS

On Jan. 21, protesters took to the streets in downtown Atlanta. Thanks to local politicians and to the influence of wealthy donors, the protests were widely vilified that weekend in the press. [Cox Enterprises](#) had already bought out the local paper, the *Journal-Constitution*, and was also a donor to the police training center. Syndicated CNN commentators pontificated while the screen replayed an ominous loop of broken storefront windows and a trampled placard calling for socialism.

Georgia Governor Brian Kemp as usual took the opportunity to call the protesters “terrorists.” State prosecutors followed suit, or else were ordered to charge everyone arrested in the forest as domestic terrorists. [Not a single person](#) charged with terrorism was accused of actually injuring anyone. Attorney Marlon Kautz said: “At this point the police seem to be charging every protester they arrest with ‘domestic terrorism’ regardless of the circumstances. The other pattern we’ve noticed is they are charging everyone arrested on a given day with all crimes which happened that day.”

The charges failed to bring an end to the candlelight vigils and commemorations that occurred in more than [50 small and large cities](#) during the week after Tortuguita’s assassination. Some were planned before Tortuguita’s identity was known. In Minneapolis, people held banners over Interstate 94, and in Boulder, Colo., a protest against Wells Fargo bank denounced its financial support of Cop City. In Olympia, Wash., a vigil took place “in remembrance of the fallen forest defender who was murdered by the police. Their death is the cruel outcome of the cold machinery that makes up Atlanta’s city governance, private interests and police department.”

On Feb. 2, Atlanta mayor Andre Dickens appeared at a Morehouse College public forum. A group of Morehouse and Spelman students stood in front of the stage to speak to attendees about the folly of Cop City. Morehouse sophomore [Daxton Pettus](#) took aim at Dickens’ crocodile tears over Tyre Nichols while he “gives support to a system that has harmed us as Black people and that harmed Tyre Nichols himself. The seven police officers who engaged in the death of Tyre Nichols were trained. We’ve been training police officers more and more, adding more training, but we still continue to see Black people murdered on television.”

Spelman junior [Adrian Sean](#) told of two students forced from their car and tasered in 2020. “We, as well as the residents of the city of Atlanta, need to be taken seriously. We’ve said it time and time again. We do not want Cop City.” Still, as Dickens verbally sparred with the students, it became clear that his donors had made up his mind.

The people who insist on racial equality in public space, and who demand true environmental stewardship, find themselves situated in opposition to a profound complacency or nihilism that persists among an alienated American population. These citizens espouse or tolerate sentiments of anti-democracy and corporate supremacy which leads to increasingly intransigent and unresponsive government. As time passes, we see the symptoms of social disarray compound.

In order to erode police, corporate, and government impunity, more people must see the fight for justice as their own fight. The philosophy of *total* liberation already implicit in the justice movements must be made explicit, penetrate the haze and excite a larger segment of people in the U.S. and around the world. Social movements are about more than stopping the injustices that surround us. A philosophy of liberation brings out the positive in the negative, the vision of a new human society, as a pole of attraction to focus and energize movements.

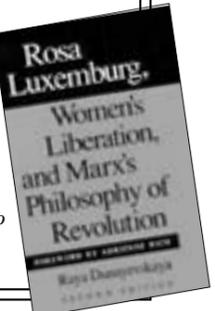
Celebrate *Women’s History Month* by reading *Rosa Luxemburg, Women’s Liberation, and Marx’s Philosophy of Revolution* by **Raya Dunayevskaya**

“For the first time, Dunayevskaya placed Rosa Luxemburg’s life directly into the history of the women’s liberation movement, and connected her thought to today’s women’s movement.”

“She also shed new light on Rosa Luxemburg’s relationship with the ‘Black Dimension’ and with the liberation movement of the Third World.”

—Narihiko Ito

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## YOUTH IN ACTION

by Buddy Bell

Students from [47 different schools in Iowa](#) walked out of class on March 1. With chants of “We say gay” and “[insert school name] says gay!” the students protested a package of bills advancing in the Iowa legislature and modeled after the U.S. conservative movement’s “Don’t Say Gay” craze.

### STUDENTS SPEAK WITH PASSION

As he marched toward the governor’s mansion in Des Moines, Dayton Fleenor expressed how he felt about a provision requiring parental notice if a student begins using different pronouns. “Any person knows if your parent doesn’t agree with what you are, life is not going to be easy for you... we’re just trying to make it easier for all of those students.” In Johnston, Waverly Zhao, cofounder of the student group IowaWTF, said she organized a walkout to “promote the need for conversations about LGBTQ issues in schools, which is something that is being taken away with a lot of these bills.”

In Ankeny, a walkout of about 100 students was harassed by someone yelling slurs from a passing car. “I will raise my voice so high they can’t help but hear me,” said Evan Huegel, to cheers. In Marion, [Hannah Neuville](#) said, “We refuse to stay silent. This generation has the power to speak up and out about the issues that affect us. The government shouldn’t have a say in private matters such as sexual orientation, gender identity—it doesn’t affect them. We say gay, we say trans, and that will not change.”

\* \* \*

Instead of tackling corporate greed and the refusal to invest profits back into labor, bipartisan majorities in several U.S. states have tried to address labor shortages by introducing bills that [loosen restrictions on child labor](#), including New Jersey, Minnesota, and Ohio. A bill pending in Iowa would allow minors to work in slaughterhouses.

The laws are passed even as they retroactively condone employers who already skirt or outright violate existing laws. Meatpacking companies in [Minnesota](#), [Nebraska](#), and [Wisconsin](#) were already found employing children last year, as were [Alabama](#) auto manufacturers. The Department of Labor removed [688 children](#) from illegal workplaces in 2022.

\* \* \*

In Scotland, the [West Dunbartonshire Youth Council](#) held a protest March 1 against imminent spending cuts to a youth assistance and engagement program called “Working4U” in this town north of Glasgow. Some of the [placards](#) held at the demonstration read: “We didn’t vote for cuts!” “There’s nothing left to cut!” “Save our centre! Save our gym!” “Shame on any councilor passing savage cuts!”

## QUEERNOTES

by Elise

Lesbian mother Julissa was finally reunited with her six-year-old daughter and newborn son thanks to a petition circulated by Lesbian Mothers in Mexico and All Out demanding their reunification. After the Yucatan government received the petition, with over 100,000 signatures, it relented. Yucatan’s institutional violence against Julissa and her children happened after a social worker interviewed her while her son was still in the hospital.

\* \* \*

About 50 high school members of the Wyoming Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) met with state legislators on the GSA’s biannual Civics Day. Most of the members do not see a bright future for the LGBTQ+ Wyoming community, in the state where out gay University of Wyoming student Matthew Shepard was murdered 25 years ago. Many are planning on attending college in another state. Wyoming has no hate crime laws. Legislation banning Transgender girls and women from participating in sports recently passed the state Senate and is expected to be signed by Governor Mark Gordon. The ironically named “Equality State” also has four “Don’t Say Gay” bills and two more Transphobic bills in the wings. One GSA member said she still doesn’t feel safe being herself, so she will be moving to Colorado for college.

\* \* \*

NGOs including Damj, the Tunisian Association for Justice and Equality, and Mawjoudin Institute for Equality are circulating a petition demanding freedom for Maya, a Trans woman sentenced to the maximum three years in prison and another man sentenced to one year, for suspicion of taking part in an LGBTQ+ event at a private residence, in violation of Tunisia’s Article 230. Tunisia’s Social Protection Unit raided the event, arresting two other individuals who were subsequently acquitted. All four were tortured. Tunisia is being called on to honor the human rights treaties and conventions it has signed and to allow the National Commission for the Prevention of Torture and the Tunisian Association for the Defense of Human Rights to determine if the two prisoners are housed in humane conditions. To sign the petition, go to <https://action.allout.org/en/m/55cf4094/>.

## Is COVID over when thousands still die?

by Franklin Dmitryev

“The pandemic is over. If you notice, no one’s wearing masks. Everybody seems to be in pretty good shape.” So President Joe Biden announced in a [60 Minutes interview](#) last September. In doing so, he was declaring defeat, not victory. He admitted that COVID-19 is still “a problem.”

### TRANSFORMATION OF SOCIETY NEEDED

A pandemic is an outbreak spiking above normal levels, so declaring it over while COVID is still killing over 300 people in the U.S. each day—and over 1,000 worldwide—is to say that this level of the disease has become accepted as normal. A new normal, that is: before 2019, zero people got COVID. And yet new variants keep emerging, while huge numbers of people are not fully vaccinated and [public health remains vastly underfunded](#).

**Biden is not alone. He joins a chorus of business and political leaders, pundits and ideologues who have been trying to get back to business as usual since the pandemic was declared three years ago. At the very beginning, Donald Trump’s economic adviser announced, “America should stay at work,” rather than keep workers safe. The main reason is simple: get rid of the temporary protections and benefits accorded to workers and the unemployed, in order to end the “labor shortage” that is actually a consequence of the capitalists’ refusal to raise wages, improve safety and allow workers some control over the hours they work.**

Other reasons include cutting business costs and beating the idea out of people’s heads that the [correct response to the pandemic is to transform society](#) to put power in the hands of the mass of people instead of capitalists like oil, pharmaceutical and insurance companies and their hired politicians.

### BIG PHARMA HIKES PRICES WHILE PEOPLE DIE

Declaring the pandemic over was the first move in ending the associated declaration of a national emergency.<sup>1</sup> Two parts of the emergency declarations will be ended in May. Tests, vaccines and COVID medications will likely become less accessible and/or more expensive for many people. Pfizer and Moderna plan to quadruple vaccine prices.

**In April or soon after, millions of people will be kicked off Medicaid. The government’s monitoring of COVID is diminishing too. Testing centers and vaccination clinics have already closed, and far too many people have not received booster shots, including half of nursing home residents and a quarter of their staff. All of these retreats will hit hardest on people who are homeless, poor, disabled, elderly, or Black or Latinx.**

Mask-wearing has already dwindled, as mandates have largely been lifted, and in some places mandates have been banned for political and ideological reasons. Little has been done to make workplaces, schools, nursing homes and prisons safer, including much-needed ventilation enhancements, and businesses are trying to roll back what regulations do exist. Millions of people in the U.S. alone suffer from long COVID but are largely ignored in public policies and debates.

As a result, the most vulnerable have been left to fend for themselves as the country at large abandons precautions. Many people are living in isolation and even fear. Bioethicist Nancy Berlinger [summed it up](#): “Americans do not agree about the duty to protect others, whether it’s from a virus or gun violence.”

### AN ONSLAUGHT OF DISINFORMATION

In fact, “Americans” did not make some collective agreement to toss old people and massacred schoolchildren into a ditch and pretend everything is fine. We have been assaulted by an onslaught of disinformation, scapegoating, fearmongering, demonization and manipulation. Decisions have been made in capitols and boardrooms and foisted on us as if it was our wish fulfilled.

Similar disinformation and manipulation campaigns have spread across the world. Some people [got rich from them](#). Joseph Mercola’s business spreading disinformation is worth \$100 million from selling snake oil medicines, books and food.

**China’s government has its own propaganda campaign, which has swung 180 degrees from “Our controls are achieving zero COVID” to “COVID is no longer a threat because of our perfect policies,**

1. Actually, there are five national emergency declarations surrounding the pandemic, as explained by Katelyn Jetelina and Caitlin Rivers in “[What ending the emergency actually means](#)” on the “[Your Local Epidemiologist](#)” blog, Feb. 7, 2023.  
2. In Feb. 2020, Xi Jinping [declared the highest goal](#) to be, rather than protecting the population, to “turn the crisis into an opportunity to restore production and social life in an orderly fashion.”

so no more controls.” It is possible to find Western leftists parroting these claims, in support of “socialism.” In reality, it was [massive unrest that spurred the government’s U-turn](#), which was so hurried that [from 1 to 1.5 million people died of COVID in China between December and Feb. 9](#). The official figure of 83,150 is widely discredited. Of course, many governments, from the U.S. to India, also undercounted deaths, but China outshines their efforts by an order of magnitude.

The official propaganda is only one part of a drive to return to a pretended normal, to keep anything fundamental from changing. Even if it means



Alberto Giuliani

A doctor at the end of a no-break 12-hour shift on March 11, 2020, at San Salvatore Hospital in Pesaro, Italy.

leaving the door wide open for [the next pandemic](#), and the next after that.

Everything points to the need to abolish the existing power relations—which entails abolishing capitalism and revolutionizing society—so that we can transition not to a weakened shadow of the pre-pandemic world but to a new human one.

## Not a natural disaster

continued from p. 1

to the 1999 earthquake, had overseen a system allowing developers to ignore the new rules in return for bribes—even, in some cases, substituting styrofoam for reinforced concrete.

Erdogan then did an about-face and shamed his critics for “[politicizing a tragedy](#).” These critics include members of the Union of Turkish Bar Associations, which announced that lawyers were ready to [assist in investigations](#) of possible construction flaws among destroyed buildings.

### ASSAD MAKES DEALS WHILE SYRIANS DIE

In Syria, just a trickle of the relief aid that poured into Damascus made it to districts under Bashar al-Assad’s control. Meanwhile, in rebel-held areas, 12 years of incessant bombardment by Assad, made even worse in the last eight years by troops and bombs from Russia and Iran, had caused [structural fragility](#) even before the earthquake.

**No aid of any kind came for 10 days, time for most of those buried to die under the rubble. Aid finally reached hard-hit cities like Afrin. Assad took advantage of the tragedy by trying to negotiate the end of sanctions against his terrorist regime in exchange for permitting aid to reach rebel-held areas before agreeing to border crossings for UN and international relief. Assad’s extortion largely worked, even though humanitarian aid is exempt from UN, EU and U.S. sanctions.**

To the rage of local residents, the first convoy arrived with only cleaning supplies, all but admitting that they had come too late to bring rescue equipment. As of Feb. 16, Assad had resumed [shelling](#) in the northwestern town of Al Atarib, presumably targeting rescue workers like Syrian Civil Defense: the White Helmets.

**“It has been 12 years of us asking for help, calling on people who have discarded us as we died in front of their eyes,” said Hussam Zeito, 47, a member of Syrian Civil Defense. “And during this huge unfortunate humanitarian crisis, the world has turned its back on us, as if there aren’t human beings in this area, as if there are no souls [here].” Working with little more than backhoes, hand tools and their bare hands, the White Helmets, who had rescued victims of regime and Russian attacks, documented pulling out over 2,800 trapped victims of the earthquake.**

More than 11 days after the earthquakes, with damaging aftershocks as great as 6.4 magnitude that took more lives, rescuers in Turkey’s Hatay province and in rebel-held Idlib were still locating victims and pulling them alive from under piles of rubble.

Some local citizens in hard-hit Turkish regions, irate at the [government neglect](#), could only vent their anger at an Austrian rescue team—Turkish officials knew to avoid angry critics. Erdogan evaded a woman who managed to get close enough to shout at him by jumping into a car and fleeing. Assad had no such worries: After 12 years of slaughtering the people who continue to oppose him, nothing he did after the earthquake could make Syrians hate him more than they already do.

True humanitarian aid means supporting the self-determination of the people to live in freedom and in their own best interests.

# WORLD VIEW

by Eugene Walker

Whatever compelled President Daniel Ortega to ship 222 political prisoners out of Nicaragua, stripping them of citizenship from their own country (!), it certainly was no humanitarian gesture. Ortega after all, had imprisoned them for the “crime” of speaking out against his dictatorial regime, or possibly running against him and his vice-president/wife, Rosario Murillo, in the 2021 Presidential election, or peacefully protesting against his increasingly oppressive police-state rule. Among those banished were former Sandinista militants who had broken with his betrayal of the revolution’s goals.

Ortega’s misrule has a long history, but a crucial turning point was the widespread spontaneous revolt against him and Murillo in the spring of 2018. Sparked by an attempt to change the social security system, the protests quickly grew, involving students, peasants and other sectors throughout the country. While shaking Ortega’s rule, the revolt was violently suppressed, with over 300 killed by the government and its supporters and over 500 jailed. It was now obvious that the majority had had enough of Ortega and Murillo.

Fearing defeat in the 2021 Presidential elections, Ortega’s solution was to jail every possible presidential candidate, along with dozens of others opposing his rule, including many ex-Sandinista fighters from the 1970s and early 1980s, many of whom had organized an authentic Sandinista opposition organization. Among them was the well-known Sandinista Comandante Dora María Téllez. With no significant opposition, Ortega won his fourth consecutive election since 2007, though there was a sizeable boycott of the election. Those imprisoned before the election are the ones expelled from the country this January, but not before enduring months of inhumane prison conditions, including solitary confinement, in darkness, unable to even write.

## ‘We are all Africans!’ vs. Tunisia state racism

Demonstrators have taken to the streets of Tunis, capital of Tunisia, to protest President Kais Saied’s racist remarks against undocumented sub-Saharan immigrants changing the country’s culture. “We are all Africans” read one sign. Chants included: “No fear, no terror, the streets are for the people.”

“This is a land that should be open for everyone, and Tunisia should not be the police for any kind of borders, northern or southern,” stated one civil society activist. Tunisia is a major transit point for Africans seeking to leave for Europe.

This is only the latest authoritarian talk and action from Saied, who came to power as a so-called reformer, but instead has cracked down on any opposition and imposed a new Constitution that gives him almost total control and makes it impossible to impeach him. Opponents are designated as “traitors and terrorists.” Dozens of opposition figures have been arrested this month. Meanwhile there are food shortages and a gravely damaged economy. To turn attention away from his failures, Saied is turning to racism to shore up his authoritarian rule.

# Ortega attacks Nicaraguan human rights

Shocking as it may seem, there are segments of the international Left that continue to support the Ortega regime in the name of “anti-imperialism.” Fortunately, they are fewer than before. We need to continue to oppose U.S.



Part of the massive protests in Nicaragua in 2018.

intervention in Latin America, including in Nicaragua, where the U.S. has a long history of military intervention from opposing Augusto Sandino’s 1927-34 rebellion through Reagan’s Contra wars in the 1980s. The Somoza dictatorship that followed Sandino’s assassination and was overthrown in the 1979 Sandinista revolution was most assuredly made in the U.S.

But the authentic challenge and task for today lies

## Pogrom by Israeli settlers

On Feb. 26, the Internet was full of calls by Israeli settlers to attack the Palestinian town of Hawara, with specific threats to burn down homes. And yet, neither the Israeli police nor Israeli soldiers nor Israeli fire engines entered the town to protect the residents.

In the evening, 400 settlers entered Hawara with full intent to carry out a pogrom. By the time it was over, at least 15 homes were burnt down, several with the residents still inside, 25 cars were burnt to cinder, one man was killed from gunfire, 100 were injured (some from smoke inhalation, others from blows), and the damage to property was extensive. Not to mention the trauma to the families and their children.

Who was held responsible? Out of the 400 settlers who carried it out, six were arrested. Four were released later that night while the other two walked the next morning. No charges were pressed.

In contrast, 20 left-wing demonstrators were arrested on Feb. 25 for lighting a bonfire in a street of Tel Aviv.

No one in the army was reprimanded for failing to act on the threats to the innocent residents. Not a surprise: Over the past 17 years, despite repeated acts of violence by settlers against Palestinians, only 3% of those suspected of this violence were indicted and convicted. The other 97% walked. Even when there are clear photos and videos of them carrying out brutal crimes.

Bezalel Smotrich, one of the Israeli far-right Knesset members who “liked” the pogrom against the Palestinians, will be visiting the U.S. in March. **Do not give him legitimacy by meeting with him, interviewing him in the media, or providing any public forum for him to spew hatred.**

I am so grateful to the protesters who came out on the streets sending a message to the government for the March 1 “Day of National Disruption,” which will not be the last one.

I don’t want to be the constant bearer of bad news about Israel, but if we don’t recognize the inhumanity of Israel’s occupation—and try to end it—we are complicit.

—Gila Svirsky

not alone in opposing capitalism, including its imperialist tentacles, but in probing how to prevent transformation into opposite of revolutionary movements, and how to begin anew when faced with soured revolutionary moments. Nicaragua could be an important living laboratory for this.

Certainly, there will new moments of opposition to Ortega and Murillo. But will it be enough? Don’t we need to think not alone about opposition or permanent revolt, but about **permanent revolution**, not as an abstraction, but as a concrete possibility in which it is both a practice in life, **and in thought**? This was Marx’s view in his writings and in his lifelong activity.

## El Salvador youth gulag

El Salvador’s President Nayib Bukele has opened a gigantic new prison called the Center for the Confinement of Terrorism, with a capacity for tens of thousands of prisoners. In his iron-fisted approach to gang violence, Bukele has continued to round up thousands of young men—some no doubt gang members, but others just rounded up from the street.

Built to hold as many as 40,000 inmates, complete with x-ray machines, surveillance towers, a “riot intervention squad,” and isolation cells that are kept completely dark, he has created a true First World prison in a Third World Country, a monument to man’s inhumanity to man.

At least 60,000 Salvadorians have already been imprisoned since Bukele initiated a state of emergency that continues in permanence. El Salvador has the highest incarceration rate in the world, beating the U.S. with around 100,000 in a population of only 6.5 million. Long live the incarceration state!

## ‘Peace’ rallies spurn Ukrainian freedom

While tens of thousands across the globe marked the one-year anniversary of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine with support rallies for Ukraine’s fight for self-determination (see “Why we’re here for Russian dissidents,” p. 9), there were a few disturbing “anti-war” rallies: coalitions of far-right with so-called Left groups in Germany, Britain and the U.S., calling for an end to supplying arms to Ukraine in the name of peace.

In Berlin, there were peace groups, but also pro-Russia rightists calling for Germany to end arms shipments to Ukraine. Some placards carried banners calling for “America go home,” carrying the logo for a far-right magazine. Others carried Russian flags. Meanwhile, in Washington, D.C., a coalition of libertarians and “Left” anti-war activists rallied against U.S. support for Ukraine at a “Rage Against the War Machine” demonstration. (see “Boycott ‘Rage Against the War Machine,’” p. 9.)

To those at these rallies who call themselves socialist or Leftist, we ask: What has happened to the right of nations to fight for self-determination? Are we to abandon the perspective of peace through social revolution in the nuclear age? Are we always going to be at the mercy of big power politics? Have you given up on the possibility of an independent pathway to social transformation?

What does it mean for a significant portion of the Left to align themselves with events dominated by the far right and parroting Russia’s pro-war propaganda while claiming to be anti-war?

It should be noted that many Russian dissidents have rallied to Ukraine’s defense and right for self-determination on the first anniversary of Putin’s invasion with demonstrations in many cities around the world—something impossible to do within Russia itself, where dozens of anti-war protesters languish behind bars.

## 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.

Send for a free copy of the *Constitution* of News and Letters Committees or see it on our website: [www.newsandletters.org](http://www.newsandletters.org).