

# NEWS & LETTERS

THEORY / PRACTICE

"Human power is its own end" —Karl Marx

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## WORKSHOPTALKS

### Capitalism trashes union democracy

by Htun Lin

The "Great Recession" we're living in will continue so long as we accept that there is no alternative to capitalism. It is a lie perpetuated by the dominant ideology.

In the past year, the Occupy Movement has given many of us hope that things can change. One idea in the movement is that if only the 99% can reclaim the wealth hijacked by the 1%, the restoration of real democracy will follow.

This puts the cart before the horse, and turns upside down the actual history of political economy. It assumes, as liberal economist Joseph Stiglitz did, that increasing inequality in America is causing the erosion of democracy. In reality, inequality is the result of the lack of democracy.

#### UNION DEMOCRACY SEIZED

A friend, active in the Occupy Movement, recounted how the longshore workers of ILWU Local 21 at Longview, Washington, suffered a big defeat when international bureaucrats took over their local in the midst of a picket action which had forced management to the bargaining table.

What followed in Longview was a sellout contract which gave management a "partnership" clause that took away the right to strike, or to "engage in any work stoppage." Longview management got the right to replace any workers with new hires at the sole discretion of the employer. The hiring hall, controlled by the

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## EDITORIAL *One billionaire, one vote*

"For Sale" signs for public offices will be popping up all over the country following Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker's stunning victory this month over the effort to recall him from office. Walker's revoking the right of public unions to negotiate contracts created national and statewide protests that rocked the nation for months.

The recall campaign pitted Walker against Mayor Tom Barrett of Milwaukee. It focused the nation's attention on the power of the union movement against the power of Republican "super Political Action Committees" (super PACs).

**Buying elections is nothing new in the U.S. The political history of the nation is replete with examples, but most were marked by secrecy and under-the-table conspiracies that were exposed after the fact. Not any more.**

Since the Supreme Court's Citizens United decision that corporations as persons had the right to free speech gave them the green light to contribute unlimited campaign money for elections, the floodgates of unfettered corporate funding opened—and the money has not stopped flowing. This was disclosed during the Republican primary race, most dramatically by GOP candidate Mitt Romney, who overwhelmed his opponents with super PAC money.

The same thing happened in Wisconsin. Just a few weeks before the recall election, all the polls pointed to Walker's defeat. However, the effort to recall Walker had gained national attention. His recall would have been a victory for liberal pro-labor, pro-union forces in Wisconsin and throughout the nation, putting the brakes on reactionary officials in many other states

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## Spain, Greece, Europe: capitalist crisis and revolt

by Franklin Dmitryev

When the bailout of banks in Spain, the Eurozone's fourth largest economy, was announced on June 9, the immediate reactions revealed the two worlds that exist in every country. The Spanish masses intensified their protests, marching directly on both banks and government, while Greek and Spanish workers exchanged messages of solidarity against the austerity strangling both nations. On the same day, labor unions held huge anti-austerity rallies in Portugal and Italy.

More than 8,000 coal miners in the province of Asturias began an indefinite strike May 31, protesting subsidy cuts that threaten 40,000 jobs.

They blockaded roads and railroads, occupied mines and the plaza in front of the regional Parliament, and engaged in battles with police, fighting back with slingshots and homemade rocket launchers against rubber bullets, batons and tear gas. On June 18 a general strike shut down large parts of the mining regions in several provinces.

An earlier general strike on March 29 brought out nearly 80% of workers in the country against the labor law "reform." On May 22 students and teachers went on a nationwide strike, at all levels from elementary school to college.

In the other world, that of the rulers, the markets—that is, finance capital—celebrated for two hours before turning to attack Italy, economy number three.

After six months of denying the need for a bailout, Spain's Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy bowed to intense pressure from the leaders of the U.S., Germany and European financial institutions. The deal, to be overseen by the "troika" of the European Union, European Central Bank and International Monetary Fund, is nothing but a nationalization of bank debt. It takes the form of a loan to the Spanish government, adding to its already high debt and driving up the rate Spain must pay on bonds. This *increases* the risk of a government default.

The loan's purpose is to stave off a financial crash sparked by bank runs; 100 billion euros have already been pulled from Spanish banks just this year. Spain's taxpayers will bail out the Northern European banks



March 12 demonstration in Valencia, Spain, marking first anniversary of M15, or *indignados*, movement.

that lent to Spanish banks and helped inflate the housing bubble. That bubble's crash triggered the fiscal crisis of Spain's financial sector and government.

Only three days later, a *New York Times* reporter declared that the bailout "has failed" and "could make things in Spain worse."

The VAT (a sales tax, which hits the poor and unemployed the hardest) is 18% and sure to rise, at a time when Spaniards are suffering a veritable depression. Unemployment is near 25%, with youth unemployment over 50%. Labor laws have been "reformed" to make it easier to fire workers. Pensions, health and education have been slashed.

#### ARAB SPRING MOVES TO EUROPE

Over 400,000 families have lost homes, and in Spain they have to keep paying mortgages even after being tossed out of their houses—at a rate of 159 evictions per day. With over one million homes empty, more and more of them are being occupied by homeless families, with the help of the *indignados*, or M15 movement, whose occupation of Madrid's Puerta del Sol plaza

drew from Tahrir Square in Egypt and helped inspire Occupy Wall Street.

Direct actions have become a daily feature of life in Spain, from eviction blockades to occupations to assemblies in public spaces, from *caceroladas* (demonstrations featuring banging on pots and pans) to strikes.

Spain and Italy are only the latest dominos to tip. Before them, Ireland, Portugal and Greece received bailouts coupled with austerity programs that have sent them into depression. Greece in particular, after two bailouts and repeated rounds of austerity, has plunged its people into terrible poverty and misery—and has been shaken by deep revolt.

Amid that ongoing revolt, Greek parliamentary elections of May 6 shocked the troika when the self-declared "radical left" party Syriza came in a close second with 17% of the vote. With no party able to form a government, new elections were called for June 17. Big banks from Germany to Japan announced their readiness to intervene should Greeks vote the wrong way.

Media and politicians embarked on a propaganda

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## Fighting the war against women

**Chicago**—On June 8 about 30 determined activists for reproductive justice faced off around 800 anti-abortion, anti-birth control fanatics. The fanatics acted like thugs, sending people to our demonstration with their signs to try and block us from view and to start arguments, or try to record pro-choice demonstrators. Many times police had to order them back across the street.

The antis, organized primarily by the Catholic hierarchy, tried to hide their anti-reproductive justice stance under the lie that freedom of religion is under attack. It was laughable as, clearly, they were there with a huge picture of Christ harassing us. Their rights are safe but ours are not. As the director of the Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics and Ritual put it, "In so far as there is a War on Women, the Catholic bishops are among the generals."

#### 'RELIGIOUS FREEDOM' = CATHOLIC DOGMA

The attack on birth control is now out in the open. Hundreds of printed signs called for an end to the Health and Human Services mandate requiring insurance companies to provide free birth control. To them, "religious freedom" means women have to adhere to Catholic dogma!

Republicans and Blue Dog Democrats in the U.S. Congress and state houses across the nation are all

taking shots at women and destroying lives in the process. Stunning is not only the breadth and depth of the attacks—against access to birth control, defunding Titles IX and X, shutting down legal and safe abortion clinics, gutting the Violence Against Women Act, allowing pharmacists to decide what drugs they want to dispense and to whom, attacking equal pay for women—it is also the nasty, petty, and inhuman way the battle is being fought.

#### 'VAGINA'—NOW A FIGHTING WORD

A case in point is Michigan Democratic Representative Lisa Brown, who was speaking against a horrific anti-abortion bill in the Michigan State House that would, among a slew of other outrageous things, force a woman to carry a dead fetus to term. She spoke of being Jewish and that under Jewish law, if the health of the mother is in jeopardy because of pregnancy, an abortion is mandatory. She ended saying: "I have not asked you to adopt and adhere to my religious beliefs. Why are you asking me to adopt yours? And finally, Mr. Speaker, I'm flattered that you're all so interested in my vagina, but no means no."

For this she was banned from speaking in the House for two days, supposedly because what she said was "disrespectful." No, the bill was disrespectful.

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## WOMAN AS REASON

by Terry Moon

Mona Eltahawy, an American-Egyptian journalist, wrote an eloquent essay published in the May/June edition of *Foreign Policy* titled "Why Do They Hate Us? The real war on women is in the Middle East."<sup>1</sup> The myriad negative responses to it reveal serious examples of counter-revolution from within the revolution in the wake of Arab Spring.

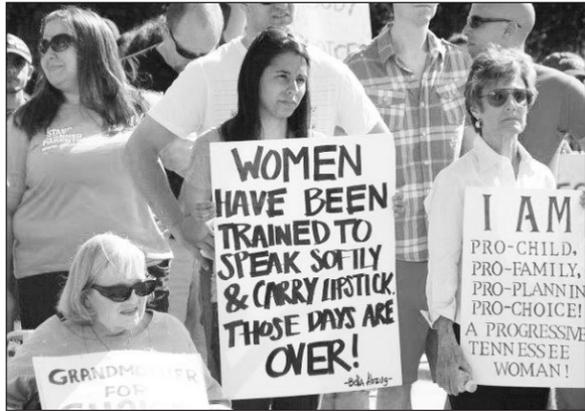
### ARAB SPRING FACES COUNTER-REVOLUTION

Eltahawy takes up "the pulsating heart of miso-

1. Mona Eltahawy, "Why Do They Hate Us? The real war on women is in the Middle East," *Foreign Policy*, May/June 2012, [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/04/23/why\\_do\\_they\\_hate\\_us](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/04/23/why_do_they_hate_us)

## War against women

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United Against the War on Women demonstration in Nashville, Tenn. on April 28. Demonstrations took place on the same day in at least 48 states and many more cities, but were ignored by the mainstream press. Signs read: "Women have been trained to speak softly & carry lipstick. Those days are OVER!" and "I AM Pro-Child, Pro-Family, Pro-Planning, Pro-Choice! A progressive Tennessee woman!"

But the message to Lisa Brown—and any woman who speaks her mind—is that if she isn't going to toe the line we'll shut her up.

Considering the anti-woman, undemocratic, thugish behavior of so many in the anti-abortion movement, and especially those across the street from us, it was shocking to read a letter from the Chicago-based March 19 Anti-War Coalition gushing about their participation "with a big Right to Life rally at Federal Plaza." As they reduced the situation in every country from Syria to Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, Pakistan, and Mexico, among others, to U.S. warmongering, they waxed enthusiastic over "this positive response to our work, with 750 leaflets distributed in a little over an hour."

### LEFT SUPPORT FOR RIGHT-WING THUGS

Clearly, this group is not about freedom, and is willing to throw women and our right to control our own bodies under the bus for their 750 leaflets and a \$10 donation from "Maureen from Hickory Hills [who] not only praised our stand, but said to call on her for future support...and gave us a big god bless you. Another fellow, carrying a big religious flag of some sort, also said the same thing."

So besotted were they with the fanatics that they failed to see that "big religious flag" was the flag of the Vatican! While they oppose U.S. intervention even in Syria—which the U.S. has made sure to stay far away from—evidently it is fine for government to invade women's bodies, mandate invasive, painful, expensive and unnecessary medical procedures, as well as force doctors to lie to women. While most of the Left just stay away from the struggle for reproductive justice as too "divisive," few go as far as the March 19 Anti-War Coalition and actually support those whose activism consists of destroying women's freedom.

### WOMEN FIGHT IN CREATIVE WAYS

None of this has stopped women from fighting back in creative ways. For example, Eve Ensler performed her *Vagina Monologues* together with Lisa Brown and State Sen. Gretchen Whitmer on the steps of the Michigan State Capitol on June 18 to a crowd of 5,000. Billed as "Vaginas Take Back the Capitol!" the audience was also protesting: carrying pro-women signs and chanting "Vagina! Vagina!" A week before, hundreds of Michigan women and men, taking their cue from labor demonstrators in Wisconsin, stormed into the State Capitol to protest the proposed law, chanting and pounding on the banister ringing the Capitol balcony.

Women are all over the internet and in the streets, including Unite Against the War on Women whose participants held protests in almost all 50 states on April 28. Over 50 women's organizations formed a new coalition, HERVotes, to try to influence elections and educate the public on the War on Women. A lot of the real work is done by small groups of women, escorting at abortion clinics, and demonstrating against the Right wing. It's clear to us that this is a very well funded war against women, and we are determined to defeat it.

—Chicago Women's Liberationist

# Egypt, women and permanent revolution

gyny in the Middle East." It is crucial that her essay is about the need for the revolutions of Arab Spring to continue and deepen. So important is this to her that she begins and ends with that point. On the first page she declares:

"An entire political and economic system—one that treats half of humanity like animals—must be destroyed along with the other more obvious tyrannies choking off the region from its future. Until the rage shifts from the oppressors in our presidential palaces to the oppressors on our streets and in our homes, our revolution has not even begun."

And on the last page she writes:

"The Arab uprisings may have been sparked by an Arab man—Mohamed Bouazizi, the Tunisian street vendor who set himself on fire in desperation—but they will be finished by Arab women.... Our political revolutions will not succeed unless they are accompanied by revolutions of thought—social, sexual, and cultural revolutions that topple the Mubaraks in our minds as well as our bedrooms."

Not one of the critiques I read mentions that this is what her essay is about. Rather than speaking to her essay's content—the unbearable sexism that women experience in the Middle East—they try to discredit her. Where she talks of how "more than 90% of ever-married women in Egypt—including my mother and all but one of her six sisters—have had their genitals cut in the name of modesty," she is chided for using the "wrong" word, genital mutilation instead of circumcision. Another critic attacks her by reminding the reader that genital mutilation of women did not originate with Islam or in the Middle East. But none speak to the actuality of genital mutilation, under whatever name.

### FORM ATTACKED, CONTENT IGNORED

She was also widely criticized for publishing the essay in *Foreign Policy*, as if that somehow silenced other Arab women's voices, even though *Foreign Policy* invited four responses from Arab women. Or, critics say, it was wrong to publish in *Foreign Policy* because her audience was presumed to be Americans, but no publications or websites the critiques were in would have printed her essay, and it is crystal clear from the responses that her essay was widely read by an Arab audience.

Then there was this age-old shibboleth, used whenever someone wants to shut up a woman who dares to bring up the fact that we live—all of us—in a deeply misogynist world: Eltahawy "blames and hates all men."

Any who doubt the importance of what Eltahawy raises need only remember the Iranian women who, in the midst of revolution in 1979, came out by the thousands against Khomeini's order to wear the chador. They cried out: "At the dawn of freedom we have no freedom." They were calling for the Iranian revolution to continue. Had their demands been taken seriously by the Left, Iran might be in a very different place today.

### NEED FOR PERMANENT REVOLUTION

In an interview given several weeks after her essay was published, Eltahawy reiterated that she is talking

## WOMENWORLDWIDE

by Artemis

In May, delegations of Japanese officials came to Palisades Park, N.J., where more than half the community is of Korean descent, to request the removal of a memorial to the Korean "comfort women." They shockingly claimed that the more than 200 women, who were forced to be sex slaves for the Japanese military during World War II, were lying. Borough officials rejected the request and instead plan to erect more memorials.

\* \* \*

Women With a Vision's (WWAV) clinic in New Orleans, La., was damaged in May by an arson attack. WWAV was founded by a collective of Black women in response to non-existent HIV prevention resources for poor women, sex workers, women with addictions, and transgender women. WWAV made national news for leading the successful fight against Louisiana's Crime Against Nature Statute requiring sex workers to register as sex offenders. The fire seemed to be part of an arson crime wave against women's health centers in the South, including two in Georgia during May. Donations can be made at WWAV's website: <http://wwav-no.org/>.

\* \* \*

In June, thousands of pro-choice women marched in Istanbul in response to the ruling Justice and Development Party's (AKP) plan to introduce a bill banning abortions after four weeks except in emergencies. Signs read, "We are women, not reproduction machines," "AKP take your hands off my body," and "Our right to abortion is not up for discussion." Abortion up to the tenth week was legalized in 1983 because 225 out of 10,000 pregnancies ended in the death of the woman due to back alley and self-induced abortions. Abortion has suddenly become an issue now that the AKP is trying to impose Islamic fundamentalism on the government and society.

about deepening revolution:

"So what my essay is trying to do, is to say that the women...now have two revolutions that need to be completed: The revolution against the regime, which oppresses all of us; but also a second revolution against a society that oppresses us as women."<sup>2</sup>

While Eltahawy is not talking directly of Marx's concept of revolution in permanence, that is what she is calling for. As Arab Spring faces counter-revolution from within and without—and is now facing an election where both candidates may well worsen women's oppression—we call for the greatest possible solidarity with what Eltahawy is raising.

2. *Minerva Nett*, Nils August Andresen, Kommentar:1, May 8, 2012, <http://www.minervanett.no/the-women-hater-hater/>

## Radical feminism redux

In blogs and podcasts, feminists have been discussing the perennial problem of having to explain that feminism means the struggle for gender equality, not female supremacy. Now many third wave and younger feminists have found the courage to reclaim not only the original meaning of "feminism," but "radical feminism." During the 1960s and early 1970s, "radical feminism" was used interchangeably with "women's liberation" to describe a more profound feminism than liberal feminism.

In an interview in the Fall 2011 issue of *Feminist Studies*, Ti-Grace Atkinson, one of the founders of this movement, described how it turned into counter-revolution: "Probably what was called 'radical feminism' by the mid-1970s really did not even resemble its origins. In most ways, later incarnations were the opposite of earlier radical feminism. For example, if matriarchy becomes radical feminism, you find that power dynamic again... It certainly wasn't a challenge to sex [gender] roles because it was sex roles with a vengeance."

### RADICAL IDEA: PEOPLE ARE EQUALLY HUMAN

Younger feminists call hijackers of the expression "radical feminism" by the derogatory term "radfems." Radfems' twisted version of radical feminism happens to be the same as the Right's stereotype of it, and in fact radfems tend to resemble the followers of fundamentalist religion in their preoccupation with purity and dogmatism. In their attempts to distance themselves from this faction by dropping the word "radical," equality-minded feminists have allowed the Right to redefine "radical" as meaning "extremism." This contributed to the Left's disowning of the word and its power to make people think that a completely new society is possible.

In reality, conservatism means wanting the system to remain the same, liberalism means wanting to make changes in the system, and radicalism means a desire for a completely new system. (The religious fundamentalists of the Right are reactionaries, not radicals, because they want to go back to an old system.) The idea that all people are equally human is radical because it is the opposite of the reactionary systems of both patriarchy and matriarchy.

In the first episode of their podcast "Opinionated," Samhita Mukhopadhyay and Amanda Marcotte reclaim radical feminism and distinguish it from liberal feminism which is mostly concerned with workplace equality. They state that their feminism is about achieving equality in all areas of life. Laura, host of the "Fully Engaged Feminism" podcast, in the "Radically Feminist" episode, discusses with Avory Faucette of the Radically Queer blog how radical feminism means examination of the intersectionality of oppressions, including racism, queer- and trans-phobia, and classism.

### RADICAL FEMINISM CHANGES SOCIETY

I agree, but would add that radical feminism is also an active force changing everything about society. When liberal feminists focused on workplace equality, radical feminists questioned what counts as real work, including unpaid labor such as caregiving and creative work along with the manual labor of women in developing countries. The Feminist Health Movement, along with the Civil Rights Movement, have not only been concerned with making it possible for women and people of color to be doctors but with removing the paternalism in medicine, giving patients responsibility for their own health and a say in treatment. The Feminist Spirituality Movement has not just been about allowing women to be ministers but about redefining deity and spirituality in gender-inclusive and non-hierarchical ways (for which they continue to take scolding from the fundamentalist Right).

These basic changes in philosophy and society do not come from female superiority but from equality. Also, a radical form of feminism requires a process of listening to, being allies with, and learning from other oppressed groups, for example, sex workers, rather than the radfems' simplistic and ineffective desire to pass laws to "rescue" them. When feminists call the process in which they are already engaged "radical," they reconnect with and learn from the activists of the past and develop confidence in the possibility of a new society.

—Adele

# Fukushima nuclear worker's testimony

*Editor's note: "S," an organizer of nuclear workers for the Precariat Union in Tokyo, currently works at Daiichi and Daini as a subcontract worker. He spoke on March 4 to about 200 people in New York City on a panel, "Eyewitnesses to Fukushima," sponsored by Shut Down Indian Point Now! (SDIPN!).*

Eighty percent of nuclear workers in Japan are contract day laborers. Fukushima is an example of "internal colonization," subordinate to Tokyo. Young workers are a class in Japan colonized by the rest of the country: they suffer low wages and hard work. There are no other jobs.

Eventually they will run out of people to do this work in nuclear plants. The high radiation levels mean that people can work only one to two months until they test at the maximum of 100 millisieverts (a measurement of radiation). Typically they cannot return to nuclear work for about four to five years until their radiation levels are low enough.

Just conditions would be: you work one to two months and then be compensated. But instead, workers are just let go. Another concern is that there are fewer and fewer skilled and experienced nuclear workers. Our union is called "Precariat" because many other workers depend on these people. There is no healthcare, espe-

cially down the road. We are treated as disposable objects, expected to die soon, so we are worked as slaves.

In the fear and panic after the tsunami in 2011, the discourse was that radiation hits everyone equally. But it is actually concentrated on the poor. The rich can flee the area and have better chances at uncontaminated food. Poverty, nuclear war, and these reactors are intimately related. The government has not taken up the cause of the workers.

The anti-nuclear movement addresses some crucial issues, like class discrimination, but it is marginalized. The anti-nuclear movement must also address migrant workers, Koreans and the homeless. Power plant workers are largely minorities, including Koreans.

In the worst cases some in this movement have worked with ultra-right groups. Some hate groups have been accepted by the anti-nuclear movement and have tried to gain momentum for their agenda.

I stand in solidarity with the workers and their demands for healthcare, decent jobs with good pay, safety and dignity in the workplace.

## Sutter nurses strike!



David M'Oto/News & Letters

**Oakland, Calif.**—Sutter Health nurses throughout Northern California walked off the job for one day on June 13. Hundreds of nurses and some doctors marched and rallied in front of Oakland's Summit Medical Center and Berkeley's Alta Bates Hospital.

Summit will not even renew the previous contract because they insist on a number of takeaways, including sick leave. One picket sign read, "Nurses need healthcare too." To the tune of "Dancing in the Streets" strikers sang, "This is an invitation to save the patients, strikin' in the streets..."

Nurses were locked out for five days so that Sutter could faithfully honor, as they always do, the strike-breakers' contract. —David M'Oto

## Using robots to attack labor upsurge in China

Workers who created a wave of strikes in China from auto and electronics to steel over the past two years have confronted the power of private capital, the state and the Communist Party. In 2011 alone, China's State Council acknowledged 500 large-scale "mass incidents" per day, including peasant resistance to land grabs as well as strikes.

An artificial labor shortage has helped workers, as factories informally blacklist all but young migrant workers who they expect to put up with inhumanly long hours, intensive labor and subsistence wages. Strike pressure in province after province to raise the minimum wage by as much as 30% has lifted the floor wage on average over 12% above rampant inflation.

**Workers' protest, even suicides, spotlighted the life-endangering hours, 60 and even 80 hours a week, at Foxconn's Apple and Microsoft production facilities. Responding to public airing of grievances, Foxconn claimed to reduce overtime—by pressuring workers to keep working, but off the books, for free. Even where Foxconn honestly reduced hours, workers were left impoverished on straight time.**

Workers in Shenzhen who struck Panasonic's OHMS Electronics in March were recently allowed to elect their union leaders, as were workers at Hitachi's Shenzhen Hailiang Storage who had struck in December. This exposes that, until now, the official trade union had permitted the capitalists to fill union slots with their own executives.

Capitalists' ultimate weapon over Chinese workers' insurgency is more capital—automation and robots. As Karl Marx said, "...strikes have regularly given rise to the invention and application of new machines. Machines were, it may be said, the weapon employed by the capitalist to quell the revolt of specialized labor."

Foreign investors 20 years ago forced Chinese workers at their benches to compete against heavily capitalized Western factories. Now one company alone, Foxconn with its 1.5 million workers across China, wants a million robots in its factories to undermine workers' power. —Bob McGuire

## NYC May Day march

**New York**—There was a large May Day rally and march in New York City—but you would not have known it from reading *The New York Times*. The march of around 10,000 was a convergence of individuals, organizations, and participants in actions earlier in the day, primarily targeting sites of labor disputes and financial headquarters.

Although the largest number of people seemed to be youth from Occupy, many others dressed theatrically with make-up and props, or all in black. But the masses of immigrant workers who had come out in 2006 and the large mainstream union contingents who had marched in October with Occupy were not there. Occupy Wall Street had called for a General Strike, which did not happen.

**A small group of activist teachers with Occupy the Department of Education marched. There were educational theatrics by the Community Food Alliance, which supports the Coalition of Immokalee Workers who pick tomatoes in Florida. They have won several "Fair Food" agreements since last fall (see Sept.-Oct. 2011 N&L) and are now targeting Chipotle Mexican Grill.**

There were small contingents of United Federation of Teachers, CUNY Professional Staff, Musicians Local 802, nurses, doctors, *jornaleros* (day laborers) and Hospital Workers Local 1199 had a small group.

A number of Latino groups were there too and some environmental groups, and a lot of individuals. There was one difference from traditional large marches: contingents were not cohesive. People seemed to be mingling a lot more.

—Susan Van Gelder

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ILWU since the 1934 San Francisco General Strike, has in effect been turned over to the employer.

What was the union left with? Its so-called jurisdiction, touted by the international's bureaucrats as a victory. To them it means dues-paying members. Jurisdiction is preserved, but democracy is assassinated.

Workers at the docks for decades have been steadily eliminated through automation. At Longview, much of the work will be conducted by managers running computers in the control room.

In my shop union democracy died the day a Labor-Management Partnership (LMP) was imposed from the top in the midst of a strike wave over the right to provide quality care. When our local protested undemocratic practices by the SEIU International, they fired all our local officers and imposed a trusteeship.

Recently, the president of the LMP, at the conclusion of "bargaining" for a new contract (now referred to with the euphemism "common issues committees" towards "shared goals"), spoke of how the lives of working men and women (the 99%) have been made tougher by the 1% who control the wealth.

### UNION URGES HELP FOR THE BOSSES

Then, with a straight face, he urged us to continue to help the employer "cut costs" in order for the company to stay "competitive." He was essentially saying there's no alternative if we want to keep our jobs.

The following week, he announced that he was entering into an expanded partnership with the California Hospital Association to help erode landmark quality care legislation won by nurses mandating minimum nurse-to-patient ratios.

The steady decline in work conditions didn't happen overnight. Union officials saw themselves as nothing more than business agents focused on the economic package. They gave away our right to strike, as well as any say over work conditions, or how to use technology.

Charles Denby, an auto worker at Chrysler, editor for many years of *News & Letters*, and author of *Indignant Heart: A Black Worker's Journal*, once spoke about a union business agent who complained to him, asking why it was that, even after he got workers better pay, more bonuses, more benefits, they were still unhappy.

Denby said that what the boss gives us in wages and benefits, he can take away. Whatever he gives us at the table, he takes back more in production. Every extra penny we get in wages, the boss more than reclaims by extracting more value (surplus labor) from us, through speedup.

### THE BOSSES' ULTIMATE WEAPON

Automation is the boss's ultimate weapon, which kills not only jobs but also union democracy. For longshore workers, containerization replaced legions of their ranks. In healthcare, total information management is stripping all the human interest from our work. To accept the lie that this is necessary progress is to surrender to the dominant ideology.

Automation is our own creation. It came from our own minds, fashioned with our own hands. Yet, it is a Frankenstein's monster that dominates us. Economic inequality also didn't just appear by itself. It keeps being recreated so long as we have no self-determination in our daily lives in production.

Democracy on the shop floor must come first. Only then can we overcome the problem of inequality. Only by reclaiming not just our own labor power, but also the meaning and purpose of our own laboring activity, can we gain control over technology and achieve economic justice.

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who had enacted anti-labor legislation.

On the other hand, a Walker victory would not only embolden anti-labor officials to propose even more repressive anti-worker measures, it would encourage those officials who were not considering anti-labor legislation to do so to try to reduce their burgeoning financial crises, which virtually all states are experiencing.

Money from Republican super PACs began to pour into Wisconsin—a total of \$45.6 million, seven times more than Walker's opponent was able to raise. It resulted in victory for Walker. The reactionary forces in the nation will certainly become more aggressive in their efforts to eliminate all of the progressive gains made in decades of struggles by workers, women, youth and oppressed minorities.

The Democrats did not think the recall election was worth an all-out effort. President Obama was not there to support Barrett—a decision that alienated many workers who knew a Walker defeat would help them collectively, as well as individually.

### DEMOCRACY DROWNED IN CASH

Right now, the outlines for the coming presidential election are becoming clear: Who can raise the most money? Capitalist corporations have such an overwhelming financial advantage with their super PACs over what union and liberal forces can raise, that Romney, even with his reactionary anti-labor and anti-progressive social positions, has hopes of defeating President Obama, now that many find themselves in a worse economic condition.

Moreover, the future is looking increasingly dim for the working class (that all politicians now call the middle class—horrors, to think that there is a class war in this country). The simple fact is that as state and local governments keep laying off public workers, unemployment cannot drop lower than 8%. There is no prospect of change in the foreseeable future.

Hundreds of thousands of workers are nearing the end of their unemployment benefits. Hundreds of thousands more have already exhausted theirs and are existing under increasingly destitute conditions. Occasionally, the daily press will have a feature article describing the horrible plight of an individual jobless family, but such conditions exist for millions of families.

This is the specter that is haunting all politicians. They are increasingly aware that the millions who are suffering are seething with revolt, determined to change their lives.

### SIGNS OF REVOLT

It is this revolt born of despair that is threatening to explode. It shows itself in many forms: increasing robberies and burglaries, more drug and alcohol addiction, increasing divorces and escalating murders and suicides. These are individual expressions, and it is when these individual expressions coalesce that the seeds for revolution are watered and can flower into a society based on human needs and aspirations.

But there is also a cautionary note, that with the birth of revolt there is the threat of counter-revolutionary forces that must be confronted. How well-organized the forces of revolt are will determine the outcome, and the crucial element is a philosophy that gives the revolt its direction.

## FROM THE WRITINGS OF RAYA DUNAYEVSKAYA

*Editor's Note: 2012 is marked by potential historic turning points and the search for new beginnings. It also marks the 25th anniversary of Raya Dunayevskaya's last writings. We present part of her unfinished "Why Hegel's Phenomenology? Why Now?" which was an important aspect of her work on Dialectics of Organization and Philosophy: 'The Party' and Forms of Organization Born out of Spontaneity. We excerpt the introduction, originally printed in the May 8, 1987, N&L together with Part I, which she described as "a study of Hegel's first (and what Marx considered his most creative) work, Phenomenology of Mind (Geist), written as Lecture Notes for a class I gave on the Phenomenology in the 1960s." Second are excerpts from a draft of Part II, "an essay on the Hegelian Dialectic as Marx critiqued it in his Humanist Essays in 1844 and continued to develop it throughout his life." The full draft of Part II is in the Supplement to the Raya Dunayevskaya Collection, pp. 10883-10900. Footnotes are added by the editors, except as otherwise indicated.*

### Introduction to "Why Hegel's Phenomenology? Why Now?"

The Spirit of the time, growing slowly and quietly ripe for the new form it is to assume, disintegrates one fragment after another of the structure of its previous world. That it is tottering to fall is indicated only by symptoms here and there. Frivolity and again ennui, which are spreading in the established order of things, the undefined foreboding of something unknown—all these betoken that there is something else approaching. This gradual crumbling to pieces, which did not alter the general look and aspect of the whole, is interrupted by the sunrise, which, in a flash and at a single stroke, brings to view the form and structure of the new world.

—Hegel, Preface to the *Phenomenology of Mind*

The most difficult of all tasks that have confronted every generation of Marxists is to work out Marx's Marxism for its age; the task has never been more difficult.... We often like to quote that creatively great statement of Hegel about the "birth-time of History." What is important to see is that the same paragraph that talks of the birth-time of history and a period of transition is likewise one that speaks about the period of darkness before the dawn.

That is what we all have had to suffer through—the darkness before the dawn. Hegel articulated both the darkness and the dawn in the very same paragraph lucidly enough. Yet, because this appears in the Preface to the *Phenomenology of Mind*, it looks as if it were written in anticipation of the book, whereas, in truth, the Preface was written *after* the whole work was completed; thus, we do not realize that the contradictory unity first became that translucent *after* the work was completed.

It never fails that, at momentous world historic turning points, it is very difficult to tell the difference between two types of twilight—whether one is first plunging into utter darkness or whether one has reached the end of a long night and is just at the moment before the dawn of a new day. In either case, the challenge to find the meaning—what Hegel called "the undefined foreboding of something unknown"—be-

# Why Hegel's *Phenomenology* now?

comes a compulsion to dig for new beginnings, for a philosophy that would try to answer the question "where to begin?" This was the reason for a new revolutionary philosophy—the birth of the Hegelian dialectic—at the time the great French Revolution did not produce totally new beginnings in philosophy. It caused Hegel's break with romanticism. His deep digging went, at one and the same time, backward to the origins of philosophy in Greece around 500 BC and forward as the French Revolution was followed by the Napoleonic era trying to dominate all of Europe.

In a word, the crucible of history shows that the forces of actual revolution producing revolutions in philosophy recur at historic turning points. Thus in the 1840s, with the rise of a totally new revolutionary class—the "wretched of the earth," the proletariat—Marx transformed Hegel's revolution in philosophy into a philosophy of revolution. This founding of a new continent of thought and of revolution unchained the Hegelian dialectic, which Marx called "revolution in permanence."

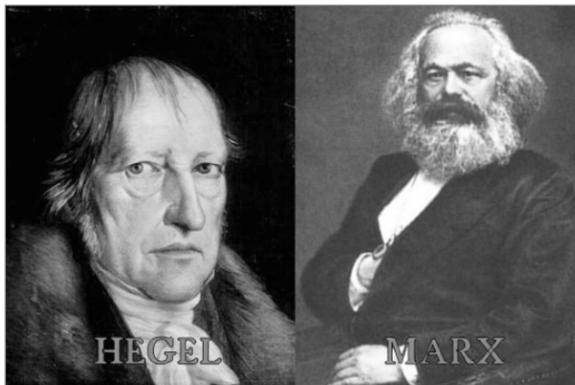
Just as the shock of the simultaneity of the outbreak of World War I, and the collapse of established Marxism (the Second International) compelled Lenin to turn to Marx's deep-rootedness in the Hegelian Dialectic,<sup>1</sup> so it has become imperative to find that missing link of a philosophy of revolution in the post-World War II world.

A whole new world—a Third World—has been born. Just as the East European revolutionaries rose up against Communist totalitarianism from within that orbit, so the Third World arose against Western imperialism. This movement from practice that is itself a form of theory has been digging for ways to put an end to the separation between theory and practice. It is this movement that has rediscovered Marx's early Humanist Essays, as well as the work of his final decade where Marx predicted, in his studies of pre-capitalist societies, that a revolution could come first in a technologically backward land rather than in the technologically advanced West. It has had to struggle under the whip of counter-revolution in a nuclearly-armed world.

Nowhere has this been more onerous than in the 1980s under the Reagan retrogressionism, which has been bent on turning the clock backward—whether that be on civil rights, labor, women's liberation, youth and education or children. At the same time that there is this ideological pollution and the revolutionary struggle against it, even some bourgeois Hegel scholars who opposed the "subversion" of Hegel by Marx and by today's Marxist-Humanists have had to admit: "If Hegel has not literally been to the barricades of strife-ridden cities, or explosive rural foci, he has been in the thick of current ideological combat."<sup>2</sup>

In its way, this, too, will help illuminate why we are publishing "Why Hegel's *Phenomenology? Why Now?*"...

1. See "Lenin and the Dialectic: A Mind in Action" and "The Irish Revolution and the Dialectic of History" in Part IV—"World War I and the Great Divide in Marxism"—of my *Marxism and Freedom, from 1776 until Today*.—RD
2. See George Armstrong Kelly's *Hegel's Retreat from Eleusis* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), p. 224, and my answer to his critique of my *Philosophy and Revolution: From Hegel to Sartre and from Marx to Mao* in the new Introduction I wrote for the 1982 edition.—RD



Why *Phenomenology*? Why Now? What is the Relationship either to Organization, or to Philosophy, Not Party?

On the road to discovery of a whole new continent of thought and revolution, in 1843-44, Marx, without any conscious concrete reach for any such Promethean vision, was nevertheless posing in his Doctoral Thesis the question of where to begin. As a Hegelian, he found himself in disagreement with his master (Hegel), not just on the analysis of the different views of Epicurus and Democritus on the philosophy of nature. Rather, he saw the grandiose system of Hegel failing to achieve a unity of reason and reality in the present (1840) period of crisis. Instead, there seemed to be a total diremption of two separate totalities; reason and reality confronted each other with hostility....

Marx's answer was to turn to the dialectical method, stressing that "the practice of philosophy is itself theoretical. It is the critique that measures the individual existence by the essence, the particular reality by the Idea."<sup>3</sup> And that meant that the answer could only be found through a new beginning, in a totally new element. Marx found it in revolution, the very specific revolution which had both inspired and mystified Hegel—the great French Revolution—but he extended his hearing of the self-determination of the Idea to the *sans-culottes*.

Soon after the Doctoral Dissertation, Marx moved to break with capitalism as well as with the Young Hegelians, and on to the "Critique of the Hegelian Dialectic" in 1844.

The very way Marx abbreviates the contents page of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Mind* shows a reorganization which, far from "subverting" Hegel, actually brings greater order into the work than that magnificent, elemental, seemingly chaotic burst-

ing forth of all the profundities on Spirit—in such spontaneity that Hegel didn't even have subheadings for it, whereas Marx raised Absolute Knowledge, which was just a chapter in Hegel, into a Part unto itself.

Secondly, Marx wasn't only critiquing Hegel, but the materialist Feuerbach, whom he had "followed" but who he now says was deficient, having not understood the greatest creative contribution of Hegel of all, and that was "the negation of the negation" as the most creative, not mysterious, but actual movement of history, which he tried to shroud with abstractions by "dehumanizing," that is to say, turning man into the abstraction of "self-consciousness."

"The greatness of Hegel's *Phenomenology*, and its final result—the dialectic of negativity as the moving and creating principle—lies in this: that Hegel comprehends the self-production of man as a process...grasps the essence of labor and conceives of objective man, true actual man, as the result of his own labor."<sup>4</sup>

But since it was in alienated form, it had to, just when it reached its highest point, Absolute Knowledge, undergo the Golgotha of the Spirit and perish....

Historic transcendence.

What is exciting about transcendence is that Marx credits Hegel with seeing it as what made him grasp objectivity and because he does that, though Hegel lives in an alienated world (and as a philosopher is the most alienated of all individuals) and uses the philosopher as the yardstick, nevertheless Hegel does not take the last step—boredom—but "arrives at an essence which is its very opposite, i.e., Nature."

Stop. Do you realize how great that is? What a leap? It was not only for Marx clearing his road, his totally new continent of thought and of revolution, but ours? Well, just consider how far in advance it is even of Lenin. Nature is not Practice. And Nature is not Sartrean exteriority. Nature, says Marx, is true essence because you can't separate Nature from Human Nature. And that is why he uses, not as a naturalist, "thoroughgoing Naturalism or Humanism" which would first alone grasp the act of world history" and therefore have undergone the transcendence both of religion and thinghood, i.e., mediated by atheism and communism as the abolition of private property, and *only then* would there start "positive Humanism, beginning from itself."

The fact that we cannot give an answer, a blueprint, does not absolve us from the task. It only makes it more difficult. What we are trying to do with this book-to-be is to make this task historically and philosophically so deeply-rooted that both we and all whom we can reach on the outside will be glad to journey these uncharted roads....

3. From Marx's Doctoral Dissertation, "The Difference between the Democritean and Epicurean Philosophy of Nature," as published in Marx-Engels *Collected Works*, Vol. 1 (International Publishers, 1975), p. 85.
4. From "Critique of the Hegelian Dialectic" in Marx's 1844 Humanist Essays, as translated by Dunayevskaya in the 1958 edition of her book *Marxism and Freedom*, p. 309.

## On the 25th anniversary of the Raya Dunayevskaya Memorial Fund

To assure that Dunayevskaya's work remains available to all those searching for a philosophy of revolution and to continue expanding her archives, in July 1987 her colleagues established the Raya Dunayevskaya Memorial Fund dedicated to:

- Assuring that Dunayevskaya's published writings remain in print.
- Preserving, organizing and presenting her library and documents to the Wayne State University Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, which houses the Raya Dunayevskaya Collection.
- Supporting continued research into the body of ideas called Marxist-Humanism founded by Dunayevskaya.

Over the past 25 years, in conjunction with News and Letters Committees, the RDMF has organized and donated three supplementary volumes to the Raya Dunayevskaya Collection.

The RDMF has organized and donated books from Dunayevskaya's personal library, with important marginalia, and an Audio-Visual Tape Collection.

It has created guides to these donations and to the supplementary volumes. It has assembled, arranged and catalogued the John Dwyer Collection and the Harry McShane Collection.

Together with News and Letters Committees, it has arranged new editions of Dunayevskaya's books and has published new collections of her writings. (See literature ad, p. 7, for listing of these books.)



Current projects include the publication of a new collection of Dunayevskaya's writings on Marx, and making available on the worldwide web searchable pdf files of the documents in the Raya Dunayevskaya Collection and the Supplement to the Collection, and of all the issues of *News & Letters* dating back to its beginning in 1955.

Please lend your assistance. Send contributions to:

**Raya Dunayevskaya Memorial Fund**  
228 S. Wabash, Room 230  
Chicago, IL 60604

## DISCUSSION ARTICLE

## Trade unionism &amp; revolutionary syndicalism

by Michael Gilbert

The theory and practice of how to organize workers to take power into their own hands and fight for a new social order has always been uppermost in the minds of all true revolutionaries, even in the darkest moments of capitalist and state-capitalist repression. Following Marx, the founder of Marxist-Humanism, Raya Dunayevskaya, has shown that the struggle for freedom is one with Marxism and that the ideas of revolutionary Marxism, cured of all reformist delusions, are as valid today as they were in Marx's time. Marxist-Humanism has placed the highest emphasis on the self-organization of workers as a class. The working class will break down the barriers of class, race, gender, and create a new human being, who will transcend the limits of the old society in a new non-alienated global social order.

**What is the classic form of the self-organization of the working class?** What form of organization appears whenever workers battle capitalism, whether in the U.S. in the nineteenth century or in China and Egypt today? **It is the trade union.**

Today, global capitalism is in a state of severe crisis and the "solutions" of international capitalists—be they the state-capitalists of China or the financial moguls of Wall Street—are more draconian cuts, severe forms of repression and social injustice, which goes hand in hand with the movement of millions of workers determined to fight for their rights and for a new society.

In the beginning of the industrial revolution the men, women and children who made factories run and made exorbitant profits for their employers while slaving under the most hellish life, began to realize that, as the old saying goes, there is strength in numbers. However, in the U.S., until the 1930s, the unions were essentially craft unions, dominated by fervently anti-revolutionary white skilled craftsmen. There were exceptions who were the U.S. union movement's greatest leaders in its finest hours, be it the national labor uprising of 1877, the rail workers union of Eugene Debs, the Western Federation of Miners and its outgrowth, or the Industrial Workers of the World, a truly revolutionary syndicalist trade union organization whose goal was a social revolution and the end of the capitalist system.

With the 1930s and the rise of the CIO came the vast expansion of the union movement into thousands of factories and mills throughout the U.S. The 1930s saw the rise of the great unions in the steel, auto, rubber, coal and garment industries. That decade saw the emergence of a powerful union system in U.S. ports. It was the decade of the sit-down strike, bloody clashes between workers and the hired guns of the capitalist class and even general strikes. It finally seemed that U.S. workers realized that their power and strength was to be found in unity and militancy.

**TRANSFORMATION INTO OPPOSITE**

In the decades that followed the end of World War II the unions became more bureaucratic and less militant. They became partners with the capitalist system and ceased to be fighters for the entire working class. Workers who were not in unions ceased to be a concern of union bureaucrats. As the U.S. became less and less industrialized with the closure of factories and the outsourcing of jobs, unions represented a smaller and smaller part of the working class. Now, approximately 9% of the non-governmental work force is unionized.

Most young workers, in particular, have never been in a union, have never gone out on strike or supported other strikers. The spirit of solidarity which characterized the union movement at the beginning of the 20th century and during the 1930s is dead. The capitalist state is openly hostile to unions or any efforts by working people to organize unions and fight for justice. If you even whisper about a union in most non-union workplaces, you'll be out on the street before you know what hit you.

The old unions have failed the working class in the most elementary task of all: liberating them from the chains of economic slavery. They failed because, long ago, they made a deal with the devil—the capitalist system—but the devil had better cards: control of the state bureaucracy that has never stood on the side of working people. The union bureaucrats were satisfied if they kept their place as the overseers of the unionized work force. They became a part of the system and had no intention of rocking the boat. Now the boat is going down and the old unions are going down with it.

Even the public sector unions are under a sus-

tained and ferocious attack by the ultras in the capitalist state machine. These ultras want to make being in a union, having collective bargaining rights, having the right to strike, etc., a thing of the past. There are ominous parallels with the destruction of unions under the totalitarian regimes of the 20th century.

Revolutionary syndicalism has always been uncompromising in its opposition to unions using the capitalist political machine to gain alleged victories for the workers, even if the politicians claimed to be on the Left, socialists, or whatever. Today, as in the past, revolutionary syndicalists have no confidence in that part of the bureaucratic state that regulates unions and the life of workers, such as the National Labor Relations Board in the U.S. They put their faith in organizing all workers in strong, fighting unions that do not make deals with the bosses or the state. They put their faith in the ultimate weapon of the united working class: the general strike. Revolutionary syndicalists also believe in union democracy, members controlling their union and determining its future.

**Revolutionary syndicalism is resolutely anti-capitalist, believing that the union struggles today will lay the foundations for the society of tomorrow.** Revolutionary syndicalists believe in direct action on the

job, in solidarity with other movements for revolutionary change. Revolutionary syndicalism also believes in the organization of the entire working class into one big union, such as the IWW, not the division of workers into separate rival unions. For example, there is no reason why teachers in public schools should be in a separate union from the custodians, kitchen employees, etc.

At every workplace, all those who work for "the other" should be united in one union. Every industry should be united in one union. It is scandalous that U.S. unions often spend more energy fighting each other than the system, their common enemy. The disunity in the union movement is a major cause of its organic weakness.

A revolutionary Marxist syndicalist organizer at Wal-Mart would tell those who work there that every Wal-Mart worker should be in one union across the world and that if the Mexican Wal-Mart workers strike, so should their U.S. counterparts, including those who work in the monster's bowels in Arkansas. International working-class unity is the banner of revolutionary syndicalism, but that solidarity must begin at home.

**SYNDICALISM AS SOCIAL MOVEMENT**

Revolutionary syndicalists believe that the syndical organization of the working class must go beyond the factories, offices, and retail establishments and advocate the organization of unions in schools, public housing and private apartment buildings, ready to strike if their rights as students and tenants should be violated by the school administrators, public housing administrators, or landlords. Revolutionary syndicalism is a social movement that seeks to struggle in every area of modern society where there is oppression and social injustice.

There are tens of millions of U.S. workers who desperately need the power that can be found when workers unite and form unions. As the U.S. workforce becomes more exploited by a collapsing system, as working conditions become worse, as salaries are cut and benefits are taken away, the only defense the workers have is to unite and unionize. **But what revolutionary in their right mind would want to bring workers into a trade union bureaucracy that is in bed with the whole capitalist system, a union structure which, in itself, is counter-revolutionary? No: there has to be a better way.**

That better way lies in the self-organization of the working class wherever it may be found, in its discovery of its own power and rejection of the systems of alienation which permit those with power to control the rest of us. The key is the development of revolutionary consciousness, understanding that the alienation that millions feel from their work is caused by the existence of the capitalist system. One overcomes alienation by uniting with others in a common struggle for a new and non-alienated society, the famous negation of the negation of Hegel and Marx. But this will not occur through the old trade unions, the Democratic Party, or the various reformist currents that claim to be part of the Left.

Revolutionary syndicalism recognizes that the massive syndical organization of the working class can occur without and outside of the corrupt U.S. trade unions. It can occur when women and men who believe in the syndicalist ideal of a new society, who are in various workplaces of America, come together and form

such an organization. Such unions will emerge from the daily struggles of people for social justice and a new world. But first we must have dedicated revolutionaries in the factories, offices, schools, and neighborhoods, to carry this forth. Marxist-Humanists can bring to a revolutionary syndicalist movement the fruits of a half century and more of struggle and theory, an appreciation of the Marxist conception of the historic role that the working class can play in profound social transformations. It can provide linkages between the workers and the youth who have once again taken to the streets to fight against the capitalist system, and they can introduce Marx and Marxism to a new generation and show the validity of his ideas. Like Marxist-Humanists, revolutionary syndicalists see the organization of the working class as the task of the working class itself and reject the notion of the vanguard party. Like Marxist-Humanism, revolutionary syndicalism stresses looking beyond the bourgeois society of today to the revolutionary society of tomorrow. And like Marxist-Humanism, revolutionary syndicalism sees the development of revolutionary theory coming from revolutionary practice and vice versa.

In both theory and practice, I believe that there is a strong foundation for the mutual incorporation of the ideas of revolutionary syndicalism and the ideas of Marxist-Humanism in the common struggle for a world in which capitalism is negated and a new world will arise from the ashes and debris of the old.

**Specter of Depression: Mattick's Business as Usual**

*Business as Usual: The Economic Crisis and the Failure of Capitalism* by Paul Mattick, Reaktion Books (London), 2011.

Paul Mattick's *Business as Usual* is an attempt to come to grips in Marxist terms with the global economic crisis that began in 2007. It is an entry into a growing category of books which includes David Harvey's *The Enigma of Capital and the Crises of Capitalism*. Mattick (son of the late council communist Paul Mattick) argues that, contrary to views of the entirety of the world of economists and business journalists, **the ongoing crisis (ongoing in the sense that economies of Europe and the U.S. are inextricably interrelated) fundamentally reflects the dire problem of profitability for capitalism.** However much the economists may wish to trumpet the long-awaited turnaround, the threats of depression and war haunt a system running out of options.

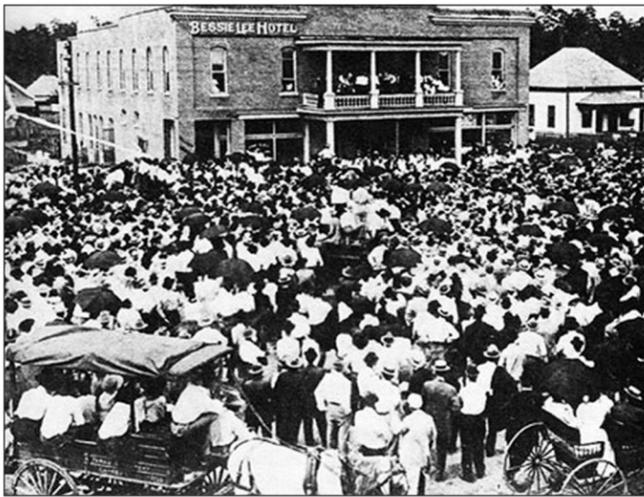
Mattick provides a bracing reminder of the reality of the nature of the capitalist system in his analysis of the limits of Keynesian stimulus policies:

From the viewpoint of economics—including most left-wing approaches—the point of an economy is the allocation of resources to meet consumption needs. The chief issue distinguishing conflicting viewpoints, then, is what sort of economy—what mix, for example, of market and state planning—does the best job of promoting the public welfare (the wealth of nations). This is why most economists, including Keynes, think of profit-making as a device for getting people with money to invest in the production that serves consumption. And this is what allows a contemporary Keynesian like Paul Krugman to ignore the imperative of profitability and insist, in making an argument for a massive stimulus program, that "under current conditions, a surge in public spending would employ Americans who would otherwise be unemployed and money that would otherwise be sitting idle, and put both to work producing something useful." But capitalism is a system not for providing "employment" as an abstract goal but for employing people who produce profits; its goal is not the production of useful things but the increase of capital.

Mattick excels in the anti-Keynesian argument so necessary today (Naomi Klein should put this book on her reading list) as well as in his passages on the enormous role of the state in the capitalist economy. But in his stated aim of avoiding "jargon," he constructs a critical structure lacking a treatment of the foundation of the origin of profit: surplus value (the word "value" does not appear in the book) and the abstract labor that produces it. This stems from Mattick's apparent interpretation of Marxism as a critique of political economy, rather than a philosophic criticism not only of political economy, but of the subjective assumptions that underlay it. **The fetish of the commodity, as Marx criticizes it in Chapter 1 of *Capital*, is neither an economic nor a sociological category, but rather a philosophic predicate of capitalist "civilization."**

Because of this sociological truncation of Marx's thought (one he shares with David Harvey), the criticism offered in *Business as Usual* is ultimately inadequate. It should be read, however, as the puncturing of the balloon of dominant economic thinking it delivers is a salutary one.

—Kevin Michaels



Aug. 1, 1911, mass meeting in De Ridder, La., of the Brotherhood of Timber Workers. The Brotherhood of Timber Workers enrolled Black workers and affiliated with the Industrial Workers of the World.

## REVOLUTION, COUNTER-REVOLUTION AND NEED FOR PHILOSOPHY

In the Draft of Marxist-Humanist Perspectives for 2012-2013, published in the last issue, while the global analysis is good, it is partial and emphasizes mass uprisings that may be a part of history tomorrow, i.e., Syria, while ignoring the long-term struggles that have a potential for raising a clear anti-capitalist, anti-state-capitalist banner, especially those in China. China is crucial in terms of an ongoing worldwide revolutionary dialectic, because it is a call for workers' self-management, for a new revolution. I would have given more space to the ongoing struggles in Europe, where the rise of a new fascism is a distinct possibility.

**David M.  
New York City**

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In the U.S. the objective of capitalism is to overwhelm consciousness. Look at the world of finances. Ferdinand Lundberg wrote a book in the 1930s about America's 60 richest families. Now there are 1,000 billionaires in the world. All of this overwhelms and is a part of the consciousness being created to oppress. The other part of the picture is the revolt. Capital fears this potential explosive force that they know exists and is showing itself in many ways. The economic crisis destroyed the foundations of capitalism. The whole world today asks the question: is capitalism viable?

**Andy Phillips  
Detroit**

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We get first negativity through our feelings, through the eviction notice, or through the pink slip, or the bad review for a performer waiting up all night to see what the critic is going to say about him. The way out of the chasm is the recognition of ourselves as Subject that includes, not just the working class or Blacks or women, but all together experiencing it as individuals, and through a philosophy trying to change the world.

**Paul Geist  
New York City**

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Last year I often went to Occupy Detroit. There were 30-35 tents and about 200 people at times. A homeless person who was part of Occupy froze to death after the Occupy camp was destroyed. Businesses do not allow homeless people to sit indoors even when they need to do so to save their lives. There was a proposal to superimpose an image of the person who froze to death on the business that wouldn't let him get warm. But the ground is shifting. The revolution cannot be frozen in time or retrogression be allowed to tear it apart.

**Dan P.  
Detroit**

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After thinking that global warming is going to trump politics, I now think that Fukushima is going to trump even global warming as a path to destruction.

**January  
Chicago**

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The Draft Perspectives states, "the economy appears to have a will of its own that cannot be controlled." There



are a lot of people who think it can be controlled. The smartest people say no one understands how the economy works. It is a shorthand to say that the theory of fetishism encompasses not only first negation but second negation and freely associated labor is needed to abrogate the law of value. It needs more explanation.

**Critic  
Oakland, Calif.**

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The Draft Perspectives is good in its critique of racism in the U.S. and its political discussion of the Middle East, especially Syria, but the economic situation today challenges the new movements and their inability to meet the crisis. In the small section on the environment and the economy, we get a good discussion of the environmental costs, but not the objective barriers to capitalist growth that the U.S. and Europe are experiencing. What growth there is leaves aside the thousands of previously employed people who may never work again.

**Librarian  
Chicago**

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One thing that struck me in Raya Dunayevskaya's writings is the movement from practice that is itself a form of theory. To me this means that whatever happens in the mind has already happened somewhere in the world. All our lofty concepts of democracy, liberty, freedom do not descend from heaven into the minds of intellectuals as God's gift, but are the result of day-to-day struggles of often the most oppressed. Dunayevskaya expertly demonstrates that this was even the case with Marx, who revised *Capital* in light of new developments in the class struggle. This is perhaps the most antithetical idea to the "postmodern," "neoliberal" capitalist superstructure that would have all good ideas be the result of the studies of technocratic experts.

**Latino  
New Orleans**

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### THE SITUATIONISTS

The Situationists were by far the most successful revolutionaries to date. There is no doubt in my mind that the Occupy Movement's success, such as it is, is due to its basis in Situationist theory and practice. Aside from them and their progeny, all I've heard is a lot of ineffective noise. Merely to call attention to a situation does not change it. At some point one must take action. Ultimately, even the Situationists were unsuccessful and it doesn't look good for Occupy, either, since what made Occupy a threat, the physical occupation of territory, has been ruthlessly eliminated by the state.

**Rand Gould  
Michigan**

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I include a sub renewal and a little donation. You've done excellent work reporting revolt around the world, includ-

# READERS' VIEWS

ing the Occupy Wall Street movement. I was also impressed that you raised the Situationists for discussion (see March-April *N&L*). I have been since the mid-1960s a critic of the Situationists, but *N&L*'s discussion was unusual on the Left.

I followed the Situationists' splits and for the most part was disgusted. They reminded me of the old Socialist Labor Party, another anti-State, Marx-quoting faction. Both were vanguardists in their internal arrangements. The incredible *creativity* of young workers and students in the streets of Paris in May-June 1968 could not possibly have derived from the plodding and tendentious diatribes of Guy Debord et al.

In the 1960s I could tell at a glance that C.L.R. James, Castoriadis, Murray Bookchin, the Situationists, etc. had little to offer. But I've continued to follow *N&L* throughout all these years.

**Seamas Cain  
Minnesota**

### HANDS OFF BHEKI!

Bheki Buthelezi, from the Durban branch of the Unemployed People's Movement, was arrested on June 23. There have

been a number of protests in the area, including road blockades, which culminated in a large march on June 8. People have been struggling for housing, electricity and water and against an unresponsive councillor and for participatory development. The situation with the water is particularly serious as people are being forced to drink from polluted streams. Police demanded that Bheki cancel a planned Abahlali baseMjondolo mass meeting. He told the police that if the government wants to stop the protests they must address the people's concerns. How can people be expected to live without houses, electricity and even safe water almost 20 years after democracy? After sustained pressure the police finally released Bheki later that day.

**Unemployed People's Movement  
Durban, South Africa**

### VATICAN VS. CHRISTIAN ETHICS

A great voice in ethics and Christian spirituality has been censured by the Vatican. Dr. Margaret Farley inspired an entire generation of students, been a mentor and a wise, eloquent voice guiding the Church towards a profound ethical understanding of what it means to live humanely. Her censure reflects on the state of politics in the Catholic hierarchy, which is engaging in open persecution of American religious women. This is a sad day.

But I was happy that Farley's book *Just Love: A Framework for Christian Sexual Ethics* became an Amazon best-seller in the aftermath of the censure. From #142,000 something to #16 today! God has a way of making a way. Maybe Dr. Farley can set up a scholarship for Catholic feminists.

**Woman pastor  
Memphis**

### L.A. REBELLION, 20 YEARS AFTER

The L.A. revolt was far from simply spontaneous. It was preceded by the thinking of those who had had enough of the unjust justice system. The movements that came out of it and against the prison-industrial complex express, in their critique of the justice system, the rationality of revolt. They quickly grasp that elite politics hawked by politicians don't change anything, just as the offer to create employment by building pris-

ons is fool's gold. They understand in the most Fanonian sense—from their experience—that the essence and appearance of a carceral society built for them, the surplus humanity, are one and the same: violence. And yet, to think with Fanon, it is from that arid zone of nonbeing, in the necessities of struggle, that a radical sense of what it is to be human flickers in the dark.

**Nigel Gibson  
Boston**

### A GLOSSARY NEEDED?

In rereading Eugene Walker's essay on Istvan Meszaros (March-April *N&L*), a thought came to me. A glossary would be helpful for readers with much interest but limited knowledge of the deep-thinking philosophers. I would suggest beginning with "dialectic" and how it is translated in the articles where it is used, e.g., "Hegel's dialectic." Other phrases would include "absolute idea," "negation of the negation," "revolution in permanence," "accumulation of capital." I think there are many in the Occupy Movement who are not aware of the relationship between Marxist principles and their own actions. *N&L* could be a conduit for enlightening the participants of OWS. The mainstream media will not do so.

**Gloria Joseph  
Virgin Islands**

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When readers have complained that *N&L*'s language is obscure, the response could simply be that these are difficult concepts. But there are other possibilities. Couldn't more be done with explanatory footnotes in essays for readers who might not know Hegel or Marx thoroughly? And fundamental concepts like dialectics cannot be explained too often.

**Longtime reader  
New York**

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No one can come to the philosophy of Marxist-Humanism, in terms of the Hegelian dialectic and, of course, its language, without being intimidated. It is also true that if you stay with it and not get dispirited, it's possible to make creditable inroads into the entire body of Marxist-Humanism. I say this in reflection of my own experience.

**Faruq  
Pelican Bay**

### PRO-DEMOCRACY IN MOSCOW

Recent events in Moscow show that the pro-democracy social movement is far from being "exhausted." On May 6, a day before Putin's "presidential inauguration," at least 100,000 people took part in the "popular march" protesting against the rigged elections and corruption in general. This time it was met by the government with brutal force. Many people were brutally beaten, more than 600 arrested.

The next day thousands of people wearing white ribbons (a symbol of protest) were again on Moscow streets. In order to let Putin's motorcade enter the Kremlin police had to block the city center, and the motorcade went through absolutely empty streets (precisely like Hitler in occupied Paris in 1940). But there were mass spontaneous demonstrations with people shouting "Russia without Putin!" "Putin is a thief!" and "Russia will be free!" Again police attacked and beat protesters, arresting about 500 (I was among them).

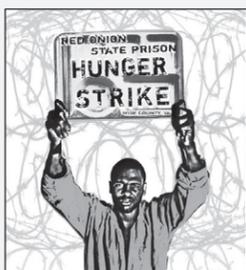
A permanent camp of protesters was organized on one of Moscow's central boulevards with several hundred people (mostly youth) staying there—like Occupy Wall Street. The revolutionary process is developing; it can be prolonged, but the crisis of the ruling regime is irreversible.

**Alexei Gusev  
Moscow, Russia**

## NEWS AND LETTERS SOLIDARITY WITH RED ONION PRISONERS

Here is the solidarity statement we sent to the hunger-striking prisoners in Virginia (see page 8):

The courageous prisoners at Red Onion State Prison, VA, are demanding recognition that is due all human beings. Your demands: for edible food, for real grievance procedures, for oversight of guards' performance, etc., are specific to your institution and conditions. Yet they reverberate with every prisoner and every person who cares about human dignity. Your struggle is a part of many other prisoners' struggles, too. Georgia prisons went on strike on Dec. 9, 2010. Southern Ohio Correctional Facility in Lucasville, Ohio, went on hunger strike in



January 2011. Pelican Bay SHU prisoners organized a hunger strike in July 2011 and again in September-October 2011, that crossed not only the race/gang divisions the prison forces on prisoners, it inspired solidarity actions in many other California prisons and engendered unprecedented

support from outside, uniting families of prisoners with activists in various actions of support.

We in News and Letters Committees express the firmest solidarity with the strivings of Red Onion prisoners. You are not forgotten! Your struggle is our struggle, is everyone's struggle for a human world.

**News and Letters Committees**

**RICH AND DUNAYEVSKAYA:  
A SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP**

Thanks for your In Memoriam to Adrienne Rich. It revealed a dimension that many who were appreciative of her poetry and feminism may not have known—Rich's exploration of Marx's ideas through her reading of Raya Dunayevskaya. One piece Rich wrote was titled "Dunayevskaya's Marx." It was crucial how you documented the impact of Dunayevskaya's concept of "revolution in permanence" on Rich's thought. As you put it, that was "the vision that Adrienne Rich kept alive throughout her own life."



**Marxist-Humanist  
Latin America**

the hopes of saving \$2 million. The new outsourced staff would receive lower salaries, no benefits and they could be moved from position to position. Teachers, parents and students were outraged, arguing that the educational quality of the district would suffer. Paraprofessional aides usually come from the same community as the students, and provide support and bridging between the community and the professional educators in thousands of ways, not easily quantified or measured on a statewide test.

**Retired Teacher  
Detroit**

\*\*\*

The May-June Workshop Talks column shows that workers controlling automation is an illusion. Technology is just another tool the bosses use to exert pressure on employees. In *Capital* Karl Marx said a worker manipulating a machine is an appendage of it. When nurses and doctors feel "hurried, harried and harassed," the consequences of dead labor's domination over living labor are disastrous for both patients and healthcare workers.

**Reader  
Oakland, Calif.**

\*\*\*

There has been a fundamental change in the U.S. working class. It has become far more multinational and *N&L* should reflect this by having a page in Spanish. Here in New York City, the real working-class organization is being done among Hispanic workers because they are exploited the most. Spanish is becoming a revolutionary language. Publications without a Spanish section are cutting off tens of millions of workers from exposure to new and revolutionary ideas.

**Observer  
New York City**

\*\*\*

I understand the need for radical unions to adopt a structure that will take on corporations. However, I think that unionization must happen alongside more autonomous worker actions in order for us to advance the struggle away from worker movements that mimic state power. I am not against "organization," but I don't think that leaving decisions up to union leaders, who often sell out workers, will lead to revolutionary gains. As with the ILWU interna-

tional leadership during the December West Coast Port Shut-down—who told rank-and-file workers not to trust Occupy activists—or the recent sell-out of the Millionaire's tax by CTA leadership in order to make a horrible compromise with Jerry Brown, we run into the same walls time and time again if we put our trust into a concentration of power.

**Haven  
California**

**WAR ON WOMEN AND QUEERS**

Thanks for your coverage of the war against women. We had 250-300 people (probably 25-30% from Memphis!), at our Unite Against the War on Women demonstration in Nashville on April 28. There was great spirit and over a dozen speakers. Like so many, we felt this was the start of something, not the finish.

**Feminist activist  
Memphis**

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Thank you for Adele's review of the book *Captive Genders* (May-June *N&L*). Transgendered/gender non-conforming people are treated terribly in the U.S. prison system. In Chicago, Trans prisoners are placed with their chosen gender only if "surgical intervention" has been completed. Trans prisoners must be placed according to their own gender self-identification AND where they choose to be placed. So, yes, a radical Queer liberation movement is very much needed!

**Elise  
Illinois**

**MEDICAL MARIJUANA**

On April 2, I witnessed a federal raid on the Oaksterdam medical marijuana dispensary. A crowd of about 100 protestors followed the police agents, chanting, "respect our rights!" and "have compassion!" One man told me he needed medical cannabis because of his exposure to Agent Orange in the Vietnam war. Two women cancer patients said they use it to increase appetite and for pain management; another spoke of needing it for fibromyalgia. All fear losing access to medication that they need.

Obama originally indicated that he would respect the rights of those with medical needs. The raid was part of the escalation of the already-failed "War on Drugs." Polls show a majority of Americans favor legalization of the medical use of marijuana. The outpouring of support for patients and for freedom of choice on this long-running Prohibition is growing.

**D. Chêneville  
Oakland, Calif.**

**VOICES FROM THE INSIDE**



I can definitely relate to the freedom struggles in prison and in the outside world, and all the great articles in *N&L* about human beings standing up for their rights. What I love best are the articles about world events that the capitalist media suppresses. Please keep up your great work and keep us informed.

**Prisoner  
Huntingdon, Penn.**

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You are unmatched among the media. One radio station in Houston presents labor, indigenous, prison, immigrant, gay, economic, women's and children's issues from their oppressed perspectives. The only other that comes close is *The Abolitionist*, published by a Maoist group, which attempts to publish theory. *N&L* has it all in one place with accurate, in-depth news reporting. The analyses by all your writers are concise, clear and incisive.

I recently realized that the Readers' Views part is not like the aloof, detached commentary found in many papers. Here it is an integral part of the revolutionary dialog necessary to create and support the ongoing revolution. Writing to *N&L* is a duty for all serious revolutionaries.

**Prisoner  
Huntsville, Texas**

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*TO OUR READERS: Can you donate the price of a sub (\$5) for a prisoner who cannot pay for one? It will be shared with many others.*

**INTERNATIONAL INREACH**

I like your website and want to follow up the news and vogue in literature. I'm grateful for your endeavor. It's a pleasure to keep in contact with you.

**Curbanjan  
Istanbul, Turkey**

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I've been reading *N&L* for a couple of years and found the issues to be relevant in building an alternative to capitalist hegemony. I just read your Draft Perspectives and liked the emphasis on reconstituting the subject through philosophical struggle combined with the practical struggle for liberation. Your outline of struggles that have occurred was also sharp. However, I was disappointed at the conclusion. There seemed to be little in practice for making Marxist-Humanism real to those in struggle.

**D.T.  
Durham, UK**

**WORKERS' OPPRESSION & REVOLT**

In Englewood, N.J., nearly 200 protested on June 7 against the Board of Education decision to fire all school secretaries and paraprofessional aides in

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- Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution** 1991 edition. Author's new introduction. Foreword by Adrienne Rich.....\$24.95
- Women's Liberation and the Dialectics of Revolution: Reaching for the Future** .....\$14.95
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- The Marxist-Humanist Theory of State-Capitalism: Selected Writings by Raya Dunayevskaya**.....\$8.50
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- On the 100th Anniversary of the First General Strike in the U.S.** by Terry Moon and Ron Brokmeyer.....\$5

- News and Letters Committees Constitution**.....44 ¢ postage
- Marxist-Humanist Literature Catalog** A full list of publications (includes many not listed here) available from News and Letters Committees.....61 ¢ postage

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- Guides to Collection and Supplement to the Raya Dunayevskaya Collection: Marxist-Humanism: A Half Century of Its World Development** Full description of 17,000-page microfilm collection.....\$4.50
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# Red Onion prisoners STRIKE!

**Wise County, Va.**—On May 19 an inmate from Red Onion State Prison (ROSP) phoned a member of Supporting Prisoners and Acting for Radical Change (SPARC), informing her that on May 22 at least 11 inmates were going on hunger strike to protest the inhumane conditions of Red Onion.

The group of participating prisoners spanning two cell blocks had composed a list of ten demands: 1. Fully cooked and nutritious food, 2. Unrestricted access to grievance forms, 3. Better communication with higher-ranking guards to make grievances, 4. End of indefinite segregation, 5. Adequate standard of living including having more than just a sponge with which to swab their toilets, 6. Third-party neutral observers to document the conditions of ROSP, 7. To be informed of any changes in policy as soon as they are made, 8. Adequate medical care, 9. Monthly haircuts, and 10. No reprisals for the hunger strike.

Solidarity with Virginia Hunger Strikers, an ad-hoc organization separate from SPARC, was quickly formed to assist the hunger strikers. Groups mobilized in D.C., Richmond, Roanoke, and southwest Virginia to spread the word and offer support. Two lawyers volunteered to be legal representatives for the leaders of the hunger strike. Protests and demonstrations were organized at the Department of Corrections headquarters in Richmond and at their branch in Roanoke. A story appeared in the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* and on the local television news, and announcements were made on WMMT radio.

The Virginia Department of Corrections initially recognized that a hunger strike was in progress (once the strikers had refused nine meal trays in a row), but they swiftly and ruthlessly cracked down on it by, among other things, isolating the participating prisoners. The organizer of the strike was at first segregated in an empty cell block and not allowed any visitors. DJs from WMMT who tried to visit participating prisoners were turned away.

The prison guards forced prisoners to accept their food trays through a variety of ruses. In one case, a prisoner who was expecting a legal visit had to accept a tray because otherwise he would have been sent to the medical unit, where they could prevent him from getting a legal visit at all. In another case, they confiscated the inmate's clothes and all possessions until he accepted a tray.

Ultimately, the majority of the hunger strikers were shipped off to Wallens Ridge State Prison, an institution reputed to have even harsher conditions and more punitive guards. The inmate who initially organized the hunger strike was shipped out-of-state to a prison in Colorado, and the Department of Corrections declared that the hunger strike was over. Solidarity with Virginia Hunger Strikers has been unable to verify this, because the DOC has blocked all attempts to visit or communicate with the prisoners involved.

In the end, because of the press coverage, support for the hunger strikers was manifested statewide and further. And the initiator of the hunger strike wrote from Colorado, where he was isolated without any of his possessions, "... one thing I can say, for all the repression they [are] putting me through, [they are] letting me know for all the times they ignored us, they heard our voice this time."

—Supporter

*Editor's note: See p. 6 for statement of solidarity from News and Letters Committees to the hunger-striking Red Onion prisoners.*

## Tasing prisoners

**Kincheloe, Mich.**—Recently, as I was awaiting a visit at the Control Center at Chippewa Correctional Facility, I observed three facility staff members around a computer monitor. I heard sound from a video they were viewing of an incident earlier that day involving staff use of TASER-manufactured electro-shock weapons on a prisoner in one of the housing units.

I could hear officers in the video yelling at a prisoner and ordering him to go to the back of the cell. After an exchange of words, staff discharged an electro-shock weapon on the prisoner and I could hear the prisoner who was hit hollering.

I heard one of the staff members watching the video utter in an excited tone, "F\_\_k yeah! Took the fight right out of 'em!" A female staff member watching the video immediately began laughing loudly. Staff in the video continued yelling at the prisoner and shortly thereafter discharged another electro-shock weapon projectile. Once again, the prisoner hit by the projectile began to holler in pain. The same female staff member burst into a loud laugh once again.

The following day, prisoners at the facility heard staff members talking and laughing about the tasing incident. Staff also encouraged co-workers to view the video in the Control Center.

Last year the Michigan Department of Corrections (MDOC) added electro-shock weapons to their arsenal as a tool to incapacitate prisoners when MDOC staff deem necessary. The MDOC entered into a \$3 million contract with Michigan TASER until 2013.

The recent nauseating events of MDOC staff viewing the tasing video show how electro-shock weapons will be misused against prisoners, and how the sadistic culture of violence and abuse against prisoners will escalate. We will witness a new frontier of inhumane treatment of prisoners.

Not surprisingly, these weapons are being discharged the most at prisons with large numbers of mental health patients. According to a MDOC staffer who asked to remain anonymous, "No special consideration is given to mental health patients or prisoners with physical disabilities before tasing them. We've been told to treat each prisoner the same."

The future of assaulting prisoners with electro-shock weapons and showcasing the incident videos is pregnant with a myriad of dark possibilities. What remains to be seen is the depth of that darkness.

—Eren Paredes

## End prison media ban!



On June 12 prisoners' families and prison reform advocates demonstrated on capitol steps in Sacramento, Ca. to urge the lifting of the media ban, which prevents press access to report on prison conditions.

## Latino voice reaches beyond SHU walls

**Pelican Bay, Calif.**—I have been a prisoner at Pelican Bay State Prison Security Housing Unit (SHU) for well over 20 years. As is the case with so many, contact with the outside world is rare. I hope my voice brings an awareness to those who may care to listen.

The struggle for justice and equality carries a heavy price to pay for one's efforts to maintain integrity and dignity in the fight against inhumane treatment. I have been a casualty of this battle. I spent more than 20 years of my life condemned and isolated to SHU confinement ("The Hole") with virtually no contact with other prisoners or the outside world.

Unfortunately, this is the reality of the many Latin/Hispanic people who comprise over 52% of those confined to SHU isolation—more than any other racial group in California. We continue to struggle against racist attacks and abuse by prison officials who subject us to torturous conditions and treatment as a means to enslave us and take what remains of our humanity. With very little resources and contact, most can no longer tolerate the psychological tortures imposed upon us. This results in prisoners becoming jailhouse informants to regain lost privileges at the expense of their own people. While some lose their sense of existence, many continue to struggle to maintain their sanity and more—myself included.

**I have no family, nor anyone left to comfort my thoughts or to bring serenity to my fears. It is only the kindred spirit of the wise before me who occupy my heart and the hearts of those still seeking justice!**

There is a saying in Latin: *nulli desperandum, quamdiu spirat* which means "not one is to be despaired of so long as he breathes," i.e., "while there is life, there is hope." It is from this concept that I draw strength.

My desire to extend my voice beyond these walls stems from the fact that, while society conceives of itself as an indivisible unit, it is divided by a dualism which perhaps originated when man ceased to be an animal, and invented himself, his consciousness and his ethics. Sometimes society's ends, disguised as moral precepts, coincide with the desires and needs of those who comprise it. But sometimes they deny the aspirations of important minorities or classes. Often they deny man's profoundest liberties and the very existence of humanity and what is just and fair.

Therefore, my people resemble a neurotic for whom moral principles and abstract ideas have no practical function. We have all, at one time or another, rebelled against the very rules that we have been conditioned to uphold—be it our parents', society's, whatever. But the cry of the less fortunate is not the cry of animals. Rather, it is a call to defend the moral right to be treated as a human being and not like some caged beast.

This is my voice of Latin descent which is the voice of many whose cry for justice is the hope that society looks beyond its fear and hatred and opens its mind to the true reality of institutional and systematic injustice and enslavement of minorities and those too poor to fend for themselves.

In the name of justice,  
**J.G.**

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## From the belly of the beast—Pelican Bay prisoners speak



## A new pamphlet

From the Introduction:

Hunger strikes by California prisoners, fighting perpetual solitary confinement, arose in mid-summer 2011 and the fall just when the Occupy movement took off. The prisoners' thoughts and actions put the criminal justice system on trial in the same spirit as the Occupy Everywhere movements put the capitalist system and its politics on trial. The hunger strikes shined a light on what is nearly universally recognized as torture at the belly of the beast of the criminal (in)justice system which, by any standard, can only be judged to be a total failure....

— Ursula Wislanka and Ron Kelch

### Contents:

- ◆ Introduction  
*July-August 2011*
- ◆ Pelican Bay SHU on hunger strike  
*September-October 2011*
- ◆ Hunger striker speaks
- ◆ Pelican Bay SHU struggle continues!  
*November-December 2011*
- ◆ SHU prisoners: We want to be treated like human beings!
- ◆ Voices from Pelican Bay SHU hunger strike  
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- ◆ Security Housing Unit prisoners react

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## Commemorating the Los Angeles Rebellion

**Los Angeles, Calif.**—On April 28, people from the Black community, some from Occupy LA, and others gathered at the 71st and Normandie Ave. block party on the 20th anniversary of the 1992 LA Rebellion.

The event was moderated by Mollie Ball—long-time community activist and part of the LA-4-Plus Defense Committee. That committee was formed to support the five Black youths who were at Florence and Normandie where Reginald Denny was beaten after the four police who brutally beat Rodney King were found not guilty.

Many Black youth from the neighborhood engaged in conversations. Also attending were women from Cease Fire Committee, a gang interventionist group, and Project Cry No More, a women's organization supporting families of victims killed by police or gang members. Keith Watson, one of the LA-4-Plus-ers, acknowledged other LA-4-Plus members, including Damien Williams, who is still in prison.

Congresswoman Maxine Waters said the LA Rebellion influenced her. She has never lost connections with the very poor of the Black community.

Three young Black women who live on the block learned of the May Day march from people of Occupy LA. They joined a leg of the march at Florence and Normandie, which caravanned through Central Ave. in South Central LA to downtown and united with the immigrant rights march.

There were other events for the commemoration of the 1992 Rebellion. One was held at the first AME Church, another by the Youth Justice Coalition, and on April 29 there was an open mike, poetry and music at Florence and Normandie.

On April 28, the LA Black Workers Center held a town hall meeting at the Watts Labor Community Action Center in remembrance of 1992 "to acknowledge the reality of lack of employment and opportunities, and the pain workers face in Los Angeles."

Twenty years after the Rebellion, the poverty and unemployment—especially among Black and Brown youth—have not improved. It has been this way since the U.S. Civil War ended 147 years ago. We want to fundamentally change the alienated human relations formed by the capitalist economic system into a new human society for all. The many ideas of Marxist-Humanism, theories and philosophies of freedom, are just as important as organizing practice and more practice. —Basho

## ADAPT activists sentenced

**Washington, D.C.**—Fourteen of 74 ADAPT activists arrested in April for protesting Chair of the House Budget Committee Representative Ryan's proposal to cut Medicaid funding by \$800 billion were sentenced in the Superior Court of the District of Columbia.

During the court proceedings, Mike Oxford, an ADAPT organizer from Kansas, made a statement on behalf of the group. "People felt that they had no option but to protest because the proposed Medicaid cuts are so extreme," he said. "If enacted, these cuts will leave people with disabilities without services that help them with the most basic aspects of living: getting out of bed, getting dressed, eating and going to the bathroom. For some with significant health problems, it will mean no healthcare. These cuts threaten our very lives."

Bruce Darling of Rochester ADAPT said, "The Medicaid cuts often focus on home and community services. What scares people most is that these cuts end up forcing people with disabilities and seniors into nursing homes and institutions." People should not be forced to give up their freedom to support tax cuts for corporations and the rich.

Medicaid budget cuts are being enacted across the country, shredding the social safety net for millions who have no financial recourse to preserve the services that empower them to live in their own communities.

After demanding that all those arrested appear in court in person, which would have caused great financial distress to those who lived far away (which was everyone), the U.S. Attorney's Office made a last minute reversal. Sixty were excused from appearing, but most had already made travel arrangements that were non-refundable. However, 14 of the protesters, from as far away as Kansas, Minnesota and Texas, were ordered to appear in the D.C. court.

The judge refused to allow ADAPT's attorney to appear on behalf of his clients. The 14 pled guilty and were sentenced to a suspended 10 days in a D.C. jail, and put on six months probation. In addition the court required they pay \$50 toward a crime victim's fund. During the six months, they must not be arrested and must stay off the Capitol grounds. The remaining 60 activists signed a similar agreement.

Said Adam Ballard of Chicago ADAPT, "Defending our freedom should not be regarded as a criminal act, and I will not be intimidated into silence by these tactics." —Suzanne Rose

## Chicago Spring vs. NATO summit



Michael Kappel

**Chicago**—"Some of us killed innocents. Some of us helped in continuing these wars from home. Some of us watched our friends die. Some of us are not here because we took our own lives. We did not get the care promised to us by our government. All of us watched failed policies turn into bloodshed. Listen to us, hear us, and think: Was any of this worth it? Do these medals thank us for a job well done? Do they mask lies, corruption, and abuse of young men and women who swore to defend their country? We tear off this mask. Hear us."

That is how Alejandro Villatoro of Iraq Veterans Against the War began the moving ceremony May 20 where almost 50 Iraq and Afghanistan veterans each announced why they were throwing their medals back to the generals. It came at the end of the march of thousands down Michigan Avenue, the biggest in a week of protests occasioned by the May 20-21 NATO summit here. The ceremony—held as close to the summit as the occupying army of police from numerous jurisdictions, National Guard and private contractors would allow—followed a speech from members of Afghans for Peace about the horrors of U.S./NATO occupation of their country and their statement of solidarity with anti-war U.S. veterans.

Contradictions in the movement were on display too, as many marchers thought that the highest expression of anti-imperialism was to defend dictator Bashar al-Assad from an imagined NATO plan to invade Syria. There was lively debate about such positions, especially

at the People's Summit the weekend before the NATO event. But there's truly a problem when people who hail Assad as an anti-imperialist hero are accepted as a legitimate part of the Left and of Occupy.

The week of protests was not limited to anti-war: National Nurses United held a rally of thousands, denouncing Wall Street plunder and healthcare cutbacks; protesters demanding the right to healthcare continued their 24/7 camps in front of two recently shuttered city mental health clinics and marched to Mayor Rahm Emanuel's house; an immigrants' rights march was followed by a sit-in; and anti-eviction campaigners set up furniture in a downtown Citibank, dramatizing the plight of people whose homes have been taken away and demanding a moratorium on foreclosure evictions in Cook County.

Two dozen demonstrators were seriously injured by police; several people who had livestreamed the protest on the web were detained at gunpoint; and, most notoriously, the local prosecutor tried to paint the movement as "terrorist" by entrapping five out-of-towners in violent plots hatched, or possibly fabricated, by police spies. Occupy Chicago members were involved in all protests, signaling that the movement is undaunted by continuing repression. —Protester

## Carlos Montes claims victory

**Los Angeles**—Carlos Montes was targeted by the FBI and charged with six felony counts in 2011 for his long history of anti-war and Chicano rights activism since the 1970s. He was facing 18 years. After over a year of struggle—demonstrating, organizing and court hearings—the district attorney offered a plea bargain in which Carlos was to serve five years. They finally dropped all but one count—a felony perjury, to which Carlos pleaded "no contest" on June 5. He will serve three years formal probation and do community service. He will serve no prison time.

On May 17, 2011, at 5:00 AM, LA County Sheriff's SWAT team along with FBI agents crashed his door and pointed guns to his head. They took his computers, guns and activism documents. They tried to interrogate him, but he asserted his Constitutional right to remain silent. His activism includes the 1975 Chicano moratorium mass protest against the Vietnam War in East Los Angeles, fighting for Chicano Studies in East Los Angeles College, protesting the U.S.'s wars on Iraq and Afghanistan, protests at the Republican Convention in '08, organizing and demonstrating for immigrant rights, and demonstrating against the FBI's raid on 23 activists in Chicago and Minneapolis on Sept. 24, 2010.

Carlos Montes considers the result a victory because the courts and mass media are slanted to get a conviction at a trial, especially against Black and Brown youths. Most judges are ex-prosecutors. The criminal court system is actually run in the interest of capital and not for the masses of people. Carlos Montes will continue to work for immigrant rights and other issues. —Basho

## QUEERNOTES

by Elise

Brave were the marchers in this year's Pride Parades in Warsaw, Poland; Riga, Latvia; and Split, Croatia. Heavy police protection was required at each march. While the Roman Catholic Church's anti-Queer stand remains strong, an openly Gay man and a Transsexual person were voted into Poland's Parliament in 2011 and a number of Croatia's government ministers marched in the parade in Split.

\* \* \*

The National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs, a U.S. alliance of Queer anti-violence groups, reports that 2011 witnessed the highest rate of GLBT people murdered. Transgender women account for 40% of those murdered. Encouragingly, however, when Queer people of color are the victims, hate crimes charges are more likely attached to the original charges.

\* \* \*

The American Psychological Association's proposal to include Intersex individuals, who are people born with atypical sex anatomy, in the upcoming edition of *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, also known as the DSM, used by mental health professionals worldwide, is drawing much criticism. The British Psychological Association objects to the unnecessary medicalisation of natural behaviors. They contend that much of the difficulties Intersex people experience are caused by social conditions, which are what need to be righted.

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# Europe experiences capitalist crisis and revolt

continued from p. 1

campaign to bully Greeks into voting for the parties that had voted for austerity. Buried in the business pages of *The New York Times* was an explanation:

"Greece continues to receive billions of euros in emergency assistance....But almost none of the money is going to the Greek government to pay for vital public services. Instead, it is flowing directly back into the troika's pockets."<sup>1</sup>

The Greek vote and the Socialist Party victory in France's presidential and parliamentary elections did deal a blow to the Eurozone's reigning policy of austerity. German Chancellor Angela Merkel and others signaled their willingness to renegotiate Greece's austerity program. Even the conservative New Democracy party made an about face and campaigned on demanding an easing of austerity—and narrowly bested Syriza in the June rematch.

That is not the only reason to beware the euphoria among many left parties over May's elections in Greece and France.

## FAR RIGHT SURGES

First, not only the electoral left, but the far right, got a big increase of votes. In Greece, the outright neo-Nazi Golden Dawn got 7%, and, worse, 13% of the youth vote. They also got 50% of the police vote. Some members of this group—known for violence against immigrants, minorities, and, in coordination with the police, against demonstrators and union members—have called for "a new Holocaust" aimed at immigrants. But the centrist parties created an opening for the far right not only by implementing finance capital's draconian austerity package but by scapegoating immigrants and drumming up nationalism.

Excuses were given that Greeks did not know what Golden Dawn represented, but it again got 7% in June, after one of its top politicians assaulted two women leftist legislators on live television and the video went viral. The vote followed a series of anti-fascist demonstrations calling attention to the true nature of Golden Dawn.

**Across Europe, the far right is surging, from Hungary, where they control the government, to France, where the National Front gained 18% of the presidential vote and won seats in parliament for the first time in 15 years. Serbia elected as its president Tomislav Nikolic, who was once an associate of Vojislav Seselj and Slobodan Milosevic, and has been linked to a 1991 massacre of Croats by a Serb nationalist militia.**

Second, Syriza, the Greek coalition of the so-called "radical left," is not so radical. Like the Greek Communist Party, this coalition of Eurocommunists, Stalinists, Trotskyists, Maoists, Greens, and social democrats has worked to contain the militancy of strikes and demonstrations in the crisis of the past four years and is closely linked to the union bureaucracy.

Syriza's program is social-democratic, calling for bank nationalizations, redistribution of wealth through taxes, renegotiating the austerity package, and staying in the euro. As a Greek anti-authoritarian group bitingly stated, Syriza's goal is "...an alternative path for the reproduction of capitalist relations in Greece that will be implemented by a different government in which the leftists will have assumed the role they deserve..."<sup>2</sup>

As Syriza's leader, Alexis Tsipras, told *The New York Times*: "...we have to press [German Chancellor] Merkel to follow the example of America, where the debt crisis wasn't tackled with austerity measures but with an expansionist approach."<sup>3</sup>

## LEFT'S ILLUSIONS ABOUT SYRIZA

The desperation, even opportunism, of the international Marxist and post-Marxist Left is revealed by the widespread illusions about Syriza. A June 4 appeal signed by such luminaries as Etienne Balibar, Alain Badiou and Antonio Negri uncritically declares its unity with "Syriza's activists and leaders" and equates "the Greek Left" with Syriza.

What Tsipras and Syriza do not urge is that the masses translate the reaction against austerity from votes for them into deepening the actions in the streets, the general strikes and popular assemblies. Instead, they channel all that energy into electoral politics.

## OCCUPY ATHENS' DIFFERENT VIEW

A totally different attitude was expressed in the May 27 manifesto of Occupy Athens:

- "Not long ago, during the economic bubble years,
- "Most Aid to Greece Circles Back," May 30, 2012, *New York Times*.
  - "Preliminary notes towards an account of the movement of popular assemblies," July 13, 2011, by Ta Paidia Tis Galaras, a self-described "anti-authoritarian communist group from Athens," <http://libcom.org/blog/preliminary-notes-towards-account-movement-popular-assemblies-13072011>.
  - "Rising Greek Political Star, Poe of Austerity, Puts Europe on Edge," May 19, 2012, *The New York Times*.

we were experiencing inequality and social fragmentation, violence or apathy, depression, systemic corruption and lack of justice, low education and low aesthetics. We do not wish to return to the situation preceding the economic crisis....Society has started to discuss the real issues. Everything is expressed and everything is open. Now is our chance."<sup>4</sup>

The vision of Syriza and similar tendencies revolves around substituting Keynesianism and the welfare state for neoliberal austerity. While it is true that the policy of austerity can undermine whatever weak economic recovery was going to take place, a Keynesian



Popular assembly in Syntagma Square, Athens, Greece, May 5, 2012.

pro-growth policy cannot solve capitalism's structural crisis. It adds to the ever-increasing debt burdens of states, putting downward pressure on the rate of profit, whose decline is the cause of the structural crisis.

As disastrous as austerity has been—keeping the working classes of Greece, Spain, Ireland, and other countries in depression conditions—the European Union's dictates are not just a matter of neoliberal ideology. They reflect the dominance of Germany over the Eurozone, the dominance of finance capital over political and economic institutions, and above all the class war capital is waging against labor, driven by the low rate of profit.

## THE DECISIVE FALLING RATE OF PROFIT

Since the structural crisis of the 1970s, the usual solution has not been sufficient, that is, recession's destruction of capital, with decreases in capital investment and in production, layoffs and bankruptcies. That has been supplemented with an all-out attack on the wages and conditions of workers, destruction of unions, and the neoliberal form of capitalist globalization, pitting the world's workers against the poorest paid and most oppressed, whether in China, Honduras, or Bangladesh. Even so, the U.S. and many European countries are still mired in a fifth year of massive unemployment, high debt, and continuing housing crises. State intervention may ameliorate these problems but has been stunted by politics, not because the money could not be found, but precisely because of the desperation of the capitalist class to push down the working class.

Fortune 500 companies are making record profits,<sup>5</sup> but the decline in the rate of profit remains an overriding determinant, and is manifested in corporations hoarding piles of cash instead of investing it, or putting it in speculative financial instruments. This has resulted in slow or negative growth, growing debt, unemployment and foreclosures.

**Since the rate of profit is the ratio of surplus value to total capital, its decline is a manifestation of the dialectical inversion at the heart of capitalism, the domination of dead over living labor: living labor is the only source of value, but at the same time capital needs to keep growing and squeeze labor hours to a minimum.**

European institutions have tried one half-measure after another to try to paper over the debt crisis and to build what they call a firewall around Greece, but the storm clouds keep gathering. About \$91 billion in euros has been pulled out of Greek banks in three years, and the pace quickened after the May election. The risk of Greece leaving the Eurozone is high.

That threatens to knock over more dominos, with unpredictable repercussions for financial markets. The more that international capitalists fear that certain countries may be forced out of the Eurozone and/or default on debt, the higher the risk of bank runs and the higher the interest rates they have to pay for government bonds, in turn increasing the risk of default.

Even French banks may be in trouble, and the European Union as a whole is living in fear of what is being called its own "Lehman moment"—or even a "Lehman moment" for the global economy—at a time when economies are already weakening in Europe, the U.S., China, India and Brazil. The strength of the disintegrative forces in Europe increases the chances of both

- "We - Occupy Athens Manifesto," <http://interoccupy.org/we-occupy-athens-manifesto/>. Spain's *indignados* express a similar attitude: "It is not the crisis. It is the system."
- "Fortune 500 Companies Made Record \$824 Billion Profit In 2011," May 7, 2012 *Huffington Post*.

revolution and fascist counter-revolution.

Eurozone leaders are struggling to save their monetary union by turning it into a fiscal and political union. Some resist because nations would have to yield sovereignty to institutions dominated by German capital. But it was left to a Wall Street executive to express the brutal capitalist truth: the point is to impose German-style "discipline" on all Europe—that is, "reformed pensions...wage restraint and greater labor-market flexibility."<sup>6</sup> In other words, the point of greater European integration is to drive down wages, working conditions, job security and social services.

The choice offered to the working class is depression through market chaos, or planned depression through the intensification of continental-scale state-capitalism. The history of the last century shows that state-capitalism is unable to undo the rate of profit's fall, and that the last Great Depression led to world war. We cannot afford another.

It is crucial to raise a banner of the masses abolishing capitalism by creating their own organs of power, as they have begun to do, and developing them in such a way as to begin to take control of production and the labor process right within the workplace.

At the same time today's movements need to be cognizant of the worldwide strength of the counter-revolution. Solidarity and revolutionary cooperation must be every bit as international as the capitalists' class war against labor, and every bit as multidimensional as the resistance to reaction on all fronts.

Furthermore, each movement needs to recognize both that self-emancipation is the task of the masses alone, and that their self-development demands the release of what movements are already implicitly reaching for: so new a relationship of practice to theory as to forge a unity of philosophy and revolution.

6. Steven Rattner, "The Euro's 11th Hour," June 9, 2012, *New York Times*.

## Mali's contradictions

The fracturing of Mali and the demand for self-determination of the Tuareg people in the north continue (see May-June *N&L*), but with grave contradictions. The National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA), the coalition that has fought for independence and a new country, Azawad, joined forces with Ansar Dine, a Tuareg-led militant Islamist group whose primary objective is not an independent state in the north, but rather to impose sharia law over all of Mali.

**The MNLA and the Tuareg people are paying the price for this alliance. Ansar Dine has taken over the historic city of Timbuktu and imposed sharia law. Now all women must be veiled and no smoking or drinking is permitted. Resistance has quickly been repressed as in the northern city of Kidal where women and children attempted a march to oppose sharia law. Ansar Dine men in pickup trucks attacked the demonstration.**

In Mali itself, after a military coup deposed the elected President, the coup was replaced by interim president Dioncounda Traore. However, he was attacked and beaten, and is being treated in France, the original colonial power. The disarray within Mali now matches the disarray in the north. These events are taking place while a devastating drought is occurring across the Sahel (a belt stretching from the Atlantic to the Red Sea) putting the lives of millions in several West Africa countries, including Mali, in great danger.

Within West Africa as a whole, there is strong resistance to the dismemberment of Mali and recognition of Azawad. West African military chiefs have troop commitments from Nigeria, Niger and Senegal for possible action. At present they await an invitation from what remains of Mali's government plus backing from the UN to enter Mali for "stabilization," and then to confront the rebel-held territories in the North if negotiations fail. France and the U.S., aiming to prevent the development of any kind of radical Islamist base, are certain to enter into this fray, possibly with air power.

With this cauldron of contending rebel factions, the Mali government and military, regional powers and France and the U.S., the possibility of genuine self-determination for the Tuareg people as well as for all the peoples of Mali now has little chance of realization.

—Eugene Walker

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## Québec 'Maple Spring' repression

**Montreal**—The *Printemps Érablé* (Maple Spring), named after the Arab Spring, continues in Québec and reverberates throughout Canada in an ever-deepening crisis since the massive Québec student strike began in February. It faces a new wave of brutal repression, whose extreme character accentuates the bankruptcy of Québec's government.

In mid-May Line Beauchamp, Minister of Education, bad as she was, was pressured into resigning, having been determined as too student-friendly, and was replaced by extreme hard-liner Michelle Courchesne on May 14. The Charest government has used injunctions as a repressive measure all along, by which a single anti-strike student or parent may obtain a court order against strikers. On May 15 a student got an injunction against picketing students and teachers at Collège Lionel-Groulx in Ste-Thérèse and police were sent in.

Later that day, a meeting was held at which Courchesne broke off negotiations after less than an hour. Then, on May 18, the Assemblée Nationale passed Bill 78, a law so drastic that it amounted to a declaration of martial law. On May 22, nearly 150,000 marched in Montreal in defiance of its prohibitions.

Bill 78 is draconian: 1. The school semester has been "suspended" (scrapped) at all striking schools. 2. Fines designed to bankrupt individuals and organizations have been imposed for anyone who blocks access to schools. 3. No public assemblies of 50 or more people are allowed without prior police approval.

Furthermore, no masks are allowed, including scarves for protection against tear gas. This also prevents street theatre, a major expression of the movement which requires face paint and masks, including the "AnarchoPanda," a very popular costume character bear who dances, waves flowers, and hugs people.

These are such serious constitutional violations that the Québec Human Rights Commission, the Québec Bar Association, and media commentators—both left and right—plus legal and political groups across Canada, have condemned them as violations of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, as a form of lawlessness posing as law and order.

Though it is clear that the Québec government is not serious about educating the youth, there is another motive. The student crisis is being used to cover a deeper one: government corruption in the transportation and construction industries, overflowing in illegal campaign funding. There has been so much bribery and intimidation in awarding construction contracts involving members of the provincial government, that Premier Jean Charest himself may be implicated.

In October 2009, the head of the Québec Provincial Police, Richard Deschênes, attempted to investigate that corruption in "Operation Hammer." Not only were many witnesses intimidated, even with a witness protection program, his report was also suppressed.

He and others asked for a *Commission d'Enquête*,

a fact-finding commission similar to a U.S. grand jury. After two and a half years of pressure from progressive forces, a commission was established under Judge France Charbonneau. Under her leadership, the commission revealed an astonishing cesspool of corruption.

On June 14 Jacques Deschesneau, former Montreal police chief who was also in charge of an inquest into corruption, told the Charbonneau Commission that he had leaked his own report to the press when he feared that his superiors in the government would suppress it. There is more to come, and it could bring down the entire Charest government and shake the rest of Canada.

Though some student leaders have expressed burnout, the rank-and-file student strikers and supporting teachers and workers have not and are keeping up the fight. Québec students and workers are not easily intimidated, and instead of frightening them, these bludgeon laws and tactics have only made them angrier and more militant. We will see this whole situation in Québec unfold, or perhaps unravel in the coming weeks and months. There is nothing more powerful than the idea of freedom. *Nous Vaincrons!*

—Ti-Ouistiti, P-J, and D. Chêneville

## Occupy the school—keep Lakeview open!



Parents, students and teachers have occupied Lakeview Elementary School in Oakland, Calif., since June 15 to keep it open, just one of five schools slated for closure. Under threat from police and the Oakland Unified School District, the protesters, including Occupy Oakland, nevertheless have created social justice, art, and gardening classes. "We want families and all taxpayers to stand up and tell our country that these buildings are going to be used to teach children," said parent Joel Velasquez to MercuryNews.com, "These buildings belong to us."

## Occupy Movement faces racism

**Chicago**—On June 18, Occupy Chicago held the first of a series of discussions on "The Elephant in the Room: A workshop about dismantling racism in the Occupy Movement."

Discussion was lively, and comradely, among the majority Black, Latino and Native American participants, but represented just the beginning of an effort to "voice the unvoiced." One Latino former prisoner said, "You have to give credit to the white youth who came out to occupy the streets. But we have to bring the struggles together. Our people have been facing these problems for years."

**Winbush, Occupy the South Side:** Race plays a part in so many of the things we talk about—economic justice, political rights, any of the things we've been dealing with in Occupy. You can always dig a little deeper and find that there are racial tones. The loss of jobs helped produce the current crisis, and if you are Black or Latino the legal system will label you to keep you unemployed.

**Visitor from Un-Occupy Albuquerque:** I am from New Mexico. We changed our name to be in solidarity with those communities in New Mexico that have long been "occupied" by the U.S. There was a split over that in Occupy Albuquerque. But we wanted to deal with all forms of oppression.

**Jennifer, Occupy Rogers Park:** I'm disheartened by the people not at this event that I've seen so many times at other events. You can't say you are the 99% when we people of color only make up about 2%.

**David Orlikoff, Occupy Chicago:** Race is a key component of what led to Occupy, the housing collapse. The media and Republican Party narrative is that banks were forced to make mortgage loans to irresponsible Black people and that broke the economy. The opposite is true. Banks spent hundreds of millions of dollars to lobby Congress to change the laws, and then committed all kinds of fraud. Blacks and Latinos have lost about 70% of their wealth since the crash. But they are the scapegoats.

**Wynne:** With Occupy in the fall I felt there was disrespect towards people of color. I noticed a lot of women doing secretarial type work and a lot of white boys talking into bullhorns. When I pointed this out I was told I was a "whiny girl," oversensitive. I come from a working-class background. My mom, after having been a nurse for 25 years, just had her house foreclosed on. There are a lot of white workers struggling—how can we bring them into our movement?

**Marissa Brown, Occupy the South Side:** Looking at my community, I know how good Occupy is, and I can't quite blend bringing this good stuff to the community and the community to Occupy. I'm here because I'd like to bridge that gap and involve more people of color in a movement that could impact them so much. If we don't address this issue of racism we're going to be very limited in how far we can grow.

**Tom Rainey, Occupy Chicago:** I've been active as an organizer in Occupy Chicago. I have thought of myself as a dissident in Occupy, and sometimes have been surprised by how retrogressive some ideas I've heard were. A lot of people don't know the history of revolutionary struggles in America and the relations of race and gender.

We do need to be called out on racism and sexism. I will be Old School and talk about the ideas of Karl Marx. Capitalism tries to separate us by class, race, and many other ways. At every stage of a revolutionary movement we have to face the internal contradictions.

§

That last point is key. It isn't just the fate of Occupy at issue. The real question is: will the current generation that has become active through Occupy be able to carry revolutionary principles forward into the struggle? A genuine challenge to the logic of capitalism is emerging from today's movements. What is still missing is the unity of these movements from practice with the movement from theory, into an overall philosophy that can point the way to a new society.

—Fred Mecklenburg

## A voice from Occupy

**Oakland, Calif.**—I am an anarchist and believe in acting according to my principles, most recently in Stockton on May 31 in a general strike protesting the murders of three Black men—James Rivera, Jr., Luther "Champ" Brown, Jr., and James Cooke—killed by police. The demonstration showed the community, masked up, willing to defend themselves from the police, in solidarity with the families who were standing up.

We sent a message to the police that it's not okay to keep killing. There were people from Oakland, Modesto and other valley towns. I would not have believed it was possible to confront the police on that scale when I lived there as a child.

This was anarchism at its best: mutual aid, solidarity with people who are not trying to organize with a set leadership or bureaucracy, who are coming together to stand up, creating community ties. There was no vanguard rhetoric.

I was radicalized by the student movement in 2009, in the Wheeler Hall occupation at the University of California at Berkeley. There was a build-up to the occupation: people going to classrooms talking about fee hikes. We must have relationships with other people that we would not normally talk to in order to build up towards radicalizing actions.

A revolution, to be successful, has to be about relationships. In Oakland there are tens of thousands of working women who are in abusive relationships. But some of those women become union organizers, the most powerful leaders, who stand up to their bosses.

It taught me that you have to do a lot of hard work educating people about the crisis. Then you have direct actions, spectacles that draw people in, that are an exercise of power, that also show police brutality, the true colors of the administration, etc.

The world we want to live in can exist now. There was an Oakland Commune at Oscar Grant Plaza. People were living their lives differently, having free healthcare, education, food. I want to live in a world where it is an option to have small-scale communities that can organize themselves non-hierarchically. You keep fighting, while living according to your principles.

If we're not actively working towards the world that we want, it makes it a "someday" project. Someday I may not have to live in an abusive situation. But if you're fighting patriarchy, it is right now, not someday.

—Haven

## Vets used and abused

**Memphis, Tenn.**—When the U.S. invaded Iraq in 2003, the military did find weapons of mass destruction in the form of chemical weapons. This was not made public, because the weapons had been a gift to Saddam Hussein from the U.S. Since the canisters still showed they were U.S. government property, they were destroyed, by the cheapest method, in open burn pits.

**The chemical weapons manufactured by the U.S. are not designed only to kill instantly, but also cause long-term damage, even genetic damage to children born later. Soldiers serving in Iraq during the first five rotations guarding the burn pits or downwind of them now all have cancer or precancerous conditions.**

KBR, the firm overseeing the burning, and other corporations that provided contracting work during the Iraq war were so greatly enriched that many believe this was the real reason the U.S. invaded Iraq and why the war lasted so long. Many U.S. soldiers returning from Iraq have stories of witnessing generals taking orders from corporate bosses, of battles being stopped to prolong the war, and of a new disregard for soldiers' lives in the military.

**When veterans return home, they fight a new war with the Dept. of Veterans Affairs (VA), for medical care and disability benefits. While some VA doctors are helpful, others tell veterans they don't really have physical and emotional injuries, even the obvious ones.**

Bureaucrats handling disability benefits do the same thing, because every combat-related injury or illness represents a disability percentage. The VA prolongs for months or years the awarding of disability benefits. This is partly due to massive understaffing, but also done deliberately in hopes that veterans will die before the government has to provide money or services.

Today, more veterans die from suicide than from combat. When veterans cannot be employed and the government refuses pensions and disability, suicide will provide their spouses with survivor benefits, which cost the government less. Providing for their families is a major reason people join the military. All of this has contributed to the fact that, in the U.S., 23% of the homeless are veterans.

Disabled American Veterans (DAV) is a volunteer organization that exists to help veterans fight the VA. But since DAV only helps individuals, veterans and those who care about them need to form a mass movement. It can start with veterans and their families telling their stories. Like any oppressed workers under capitalism, veterans must still fight to be treated as valuable human beings rather than expendable, used-up objects whose sole function was to make money for others.

—Spouse of a disabled veteran

## WORLD IN VIEW

by Gerry Emmett

"None of us believe that peace is so sweet or life so dear that we are willing to sell our freedom at the price of chains and slavery."

These words of a young Syrian woman express the passion that animates the Syrian Revolution now facing the most brutal, determined opposition from Assad's genocidal regime. Its fate—the fate of the people of Syria—will likely determine the next chapter in world history.

There are moments when history turns upon what happens in one seemingly small country. This was true of Spain in the 1930s and Bosnia in the 1990s.

These moments became tests of world politics, and the response to them measured one's attitude to revolution.

Some call themselves "revolutionaries," but will not act in support of the Syrian people. They aren't revolutionaries, they are bystanders.

### REVOLUTION AND COUNTER-REVOLUTION

The impact of the Syrian Revolution is being felt in Israel and Iran. The Iranian government's current attacks on labor point to its fear of revolution spreading to the Iranian masses. According to the Coordinating Committee to Help Form Workers' Organizations, over 60 independent labor activists were arrested at gunpoint June 15 in Karaj. As the government cuts subsidies, Iran's reactionary rulers are worried that the flame of revolution which broke out in 2009 might return, sparked by the Syrian Revolution and intensified by the greater immiseration of the working class.

Israel's reactionary rulers have likewise intensified their drive to define society in their own image, as seen in the May 23 pogroms against Africans in Tel Aviv. People were assaulted and shops looted. Right-wing politicians encouraged these attacks, following Prime Minister Netanyahu's claim that African immigrants "threaten the social fabric of society, our national security and our national identity." Detention camps are being built as prelude to the expulsion of the African refugees, who came mainly from Eritrea and Sudan.

Partly expressions of racism, these claims are also meant to instill the idea in the Israeli populace that the country can detach itself from the world, through fences in the West Bank and Sinai, through missile technology and pre-emptive attacks. The threat of expulsion of Palestinians is implicit. The knowledge that a free Syria would support the Palestinian struggle terrifies Netanyahu, Interior Minister Eli Yishai, Minister of Foreign Affairs Avigdor Lieberman, and their like.

### A 'LEFT' FALLS IN DISGRACE

Unfortunately, at the very moment when it could have greatest impact, a large section of the "revolutionary" movement is disgracing itself by supporting Assad, even, grotesquely, in the guise of an "anti-war" move-

## Syria and the Left

ment by drugging themselves heavily with conspiracy theories. They send endless emails detailing the "truth" about the Houla massacre, for example, claiming that it wasn't Assad's supporters who murdered 108 villagers, including 49 children. No, they claim—against all evidence, against all observers, against the confessions of defectors—it was done by Syrian rebels. Or al-Qaeda, or the CIA... As the massacres repeat, the lies repeat.

### THE TRUE ANTI-WAR MOVEMENT

Their chosen fantasies reveal the poverty of their vision, gnawing at its bone of first negativity.

In the words of Syrian poet Mohja Kahf: "Those who see the Syrian revolution as being initiated by a US-NATO-led conspiracy imply that the Syrian grassroots are nothings, ineffectual, incapable of having ideas, movements, experiences, and vision of their own."

It is the Syrian masses fighting for freedom who are the true anti-war movement. Those Leftists who call for a peace that cannot exist, merely do their part to set the stage for future wars and genocides, as did those who failed to rise to the challenges of Bosnia and Spain.

## Arab spring continues

### Egypt

Egypt's first presidential election presented voters with two bad choices: Ahmed Shafiq, a Mubarak ally, or Mohammed Mursi of the Muslim Brotherhood. Neither candidate has any connection to the working women, the youth, or the mass self-organization that have been at the heart of Egypt's revolution.

This election showed why it is vital not to subordinate the revolutionary demands of Tahrir Square to bourgeois politics. In the end these parties will make very similar deals with world and national capitalism. If this happens, the creative human relationships born of struggle will be rolled back.

### Yemen

In Yemen, the post-Saleh era is also beginning with political parties trying to break down the revolutionary unity of the occupied squares and confine the movement to electoral politics. But one young woman revolutionary described the recent election this way: "People didn't vote for Hadi, but for change. Polling day was like collecting signatures to remove Saleh." Women and youth, in particular, have made great strides during the revolutionary occupations and have no desire to step backwards.

They are also looking outward. In June rallies in Sanaa, protesters chanted, "Bashar is finished like Saleh! Yemen and Syria, we are one!"

### Bahrain

The Arab Spring lives on in Bahrain as well. In May, 200,000 people—the largest demonstration in the nation's history—marched through Manama to show their rejection of a proposed union with Saudi Arabia. Smaller protests happen almost nightly.

The government continues such outrages as the prosecution of an 11-year-old boy for blocking a street.

On June 20, Doctor Saeed al-Samaheji began a hunger strike. He is one of nine medical professionals sentenced to prison terms of from one month to five years for treating demonstrators injured when the government brutally cleared Pearl Square—killing at least four people, injuring many more.

As in Yemen, these protests constitute a real threat to the reactionary Saudi society.

## Mexico: 'Yo soy #132'

**Mexico City**—Into this dismal Presidential electoral season has come a breath of fresh air: a student movement by the name of "I am #132." It arose in mid-May and spread like wildfire in universities throughout the country, with thousands and then tens of thousands of secondary and university students joining on the internet, in the streets in protest, and in general assemblies on campuses.

The movement is independent of political parties and disgusted with what has passed for political discourse, including in the media, and particularly the major commercial television stations Televisa and TV Azteca, which have a near duopoly of the airwaves. These stations are in the pocket of the candidate of the old Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) and his super-well-financed campaign to return PRI to its former authoritarian dominance.

This dominance was interrupted by 12 years of the equally reactionary Partido Acción Nacional (PAN), whose candidate, Felipe Calderón, became President. Calderón's term has seen a failed war against narco-traffickers yielding 60,000 dead, including thousands of innocent citizens, thousands more disappeared, and deepening corruption at all levels of government.

### ENTER THE STUDENTS, PROTESTS BEGIN

Against this chaos entered the students. It began May 11, when PRI candidate Peña Nieto went to the private Universidad Iberoamericana for a staged campaign appearance. He was greeted with a huge protest. Nieto is the ex-governor of the State of Mexico. In 2006 he presided over, and did nothing to investigate, a massive attack by police and federal forces on the militant community of Atenco during which there were mass arrests, rapes of women by police, and two students killed. Now, in the electoral campaign of 2012, Iberoamericana students protested with signs and shouts. Peña Nieto was forced off the campus.

Immediately, television stations and newspapers in debt to the PRI began a big-lie campaign against the students. On one hand, videos shown on TV edited out the protest. On the other, newspapers and the PRI claimed it was organized by "thugs," not students.

### THE BIRTH OF A MOVEMENT

The students took to the internet. A video showed 131 of them holding up ID proving that they were students. The response was an unbelievable mass outpouring of support from all over Mexico. So was born "I am #132," as tens of thousands indicated they wanted to join the 131 who had bravely shown, in this authoritarian nation, that they were students who were declaring *Ya Basta!* (Enough!) Something must change.

**What has happened has been phenomenal. In city after city, protest upon protest, tens of thousands have taken the streets, confronted television stations, and held assemblies on campuses. They are demanding a real dialogue, an authentic campaign. Within the movement are a multitude of opinions and ideas. All oppose Peña Nieto. Some are for López Obrador, the somewhat more progressive candidate. Some call for an election boycott.**

Many want to move far beyond the current electoral campaign—indeed, beyond the question of elections. They have begun serious questioning of where Mexican society is and where it is heading. The presidential election is July 1. As we go to press, many are saying that what is crucial is what happens beginning July 2. The students here have led the way.

—Eugene Walker

## NEWS AND LETTERS COMMITTEES

# Who We Are And What We Stand For

News and Letters Committees is an organization of Marxist-Humanists that since its birth has stood for the abolition of capitalism, both in its private property form as in the U.S., and its state property form, as it has historically appeared in state-capitalist regimes calling themselves Communist as in Russia and China. We stand for the development of new human relations, what Marx first called a new Humanism.

*News & Letters* was founded in 1955, the year of the Detroit wildcat strikes against Automation and the Montgomery Bus Boycott against segregation—activities which signaled a new movement from practice that was itself a form of theory. *News & Letters* was created so that the voices of revolt from below could be heard unseparated from the articulation of a philosophy of liberation.

Raya Dunayevskaya (1910–1987), founder of the body of ideas of Marxist-Humanism, became Chairwoman of the

National Editorial Board and National Chairwoman of the Committees from its founding to 1987. Charles Denby (1907–83), a Black production worker, author of *Indignant Heart: A Black Worker's Journal*, became editor of the paper from 1955 to 1983. Dunayevskaya's works, *Marxism and Freedom, from 1776 until Today* (1958), *Philosophy and Revolution: From Hegel to Sartre and from Marx to Mao* (1973), and *Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution* (1982) spell out the philosophic ground of Marx's Humanism internationally, as *American Civilization on Trial* concretizes it on the American scene and shows the two-way road between the U.S. and Africa.

This body of ideas challenges all those desiring freedom to transcend the limitations of post-Marx Marxism, beginning with Engels. In light of the crises of our nuclearly armed world, it becomes imperative not only to reject what is, but

to reveal and further develop the revolutionary Humanist future inherent in the present. The new visions of the future which Dunayevskaya left us in her work from the 1940s to the 1980s are rooted in her discovery of Marx's Marxism in its original form as a new Humanism and in her re-creation of that philosophy for our age as Marxist-Humanism. This is recorded in the documents on microfilm and open to all under the title *The Raya Dunayevskaya Collection—Marxist-Humanism: A Half-Century of Its World Development*.

Dunayevskaya's philosophic comprehension of her creation and development of Marxist-Humanism, especially as expressed in her 1980s writings, presents the vantage point for re-creating her ideas anew. Seeking to grasp that vantage point for ourselves and make it available to all who struggle for freedom, we have published Dunayevskaya's original 1953 philosophic breakthrough

and her final 1987 Presentation on the Dialectics of Organization and Philosophy in *The Philosophic Moment of Marxist-Humanism* (1989), and donated new supplementary volumes to the *Raya Dunayevskaya Collection*. News and Letters Committees aims at developing and concretizing this body of ideas for our time.

In opposing this capitalistic, racist, sexist, heterosexist, class-ridden society, we have organized ourselves into a committee form of organization rather than any elitist party "to lead." We participate in all class and freedom struggles, nationally and internationally. As our *Constitution* states: "It is our aim...to promote the firmest unity among workers, Blacks and other minorities, women, youth and those intellectuals who have broken with the ruling bureaucracy of both capital and labor." We do not separate mass activities from the activity of thinking. Send for a copy of the *Constitution of News and Letters Committees*.