

NEWS & LETTERS

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"Human power is its own end"—Karl Marx

WORKSHOP TALKS *Workers not robots*

by Htun Lin

The workplace at Amazon.com is making employees physically and mentally ill according to an explosive exposé in *The New York Times* of Aug. 16.

"Nearly every person I worked with, I saw cry at their desk," said one employee....Even as the company tests delivery by drone and ways to restock toilet paper at the push of a bathroom button, it is conducting a little-known experiment in how far it can push white-collar workers, redrawing the boundaries of what is acceptable."

AMAZON—TURNING PEOPLE INTO THINGS

The Amazon workplace as described by employees is one of constant speed-up, pushing employees beyond their capacity without empathy. Elly Baker, a union leader, responded to this exposé in *The Guardian* (Aug. 18): "It's hard, physical work, but the constant stress of being monitored and never being able to drop below a certain level of performance is harsh. You can't be a normal person. You have to be an above-average Amazon robot all the time."

"Employees' working and personal lives were tracked and quantified, with their movements, productivity and successes or failures being constantly measured, while managers were forced to rate their employees and fire their lowest-scoring workers." The fact that this *Times* article got more comments than any other ever had, revealed its pervasive—and usually unreported—truth about the workplace.

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EDITORIAL Putin's retrogressionism

At the moment when the genocidal Assad regime seems near collapse, Russia's President, Vladimir Putin, has begun targeting the Syrian revolutionaries with intense air and land attacks.

Using rhetoric of "war against ISIS," these attacks have overwhelmingly targeted the rebel groups that are fighting both Assad and ISIS, as well as massacring civilians in the liberated areas, killing hundreds of men, women and children. They have created up to 100,000 new refugees and joined Assad and ISIS in destroying irreplaceable historic sites.

As we go to press, the Assad forces—abetted by Iranian troops, Hezbollah, Iraqi militias, and European fascists, among others—have made minimal gains. ISIS has been the main beneficiary, as Russian air strikes have allowed them to capture a number of villages near Aleppo. The U.S. and other world powers have had little to say.

PUTIN'S HYPOCRISY

Putin has found a formula: to participate in genocide while claiming to be fighting "terrorism." This says everything about the nature of his retrogressive rule, and about the hypocrisy of the U.S. and Europe. Putin's regime is rooted in that hypocrisy.

The collapse of Communism following the 1989 revolts was an opening to create new human relations with the oppressed peoples of the former USSR. (The same opening some here saw as a domestic "peace dividend.") Rather than offering aid to the "liberated" Russians, the bourgeoisie offered vicious Chicago School economics. Strikes were crushed, and life expectancies plummeted in one more brutal episode of what Marx

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ONLINE: www.newsandletters.org

California prisoners battle barbaric U.S. 'justice' system

by Urszula Wislanka

In California the ongoing struggle of prisoners against the U.S.'s barbaric criminal justice system reached a milestone in the effort to totally transform a society in which millions of poor, unemployed and people of color end up in an inhuman gulag.

For decades California prisons put people in solitary (Security Housing Units, or SHU) indefinitely, solely on a guard's designation of a prisoner's status as a gang member. The SHU filled up with prisoners who were never to get out unless they implicated others ("snitch or die").

A settlement, announced on Sept. 1, of a class action lawsuit, *Ashker v. Brown*, abolished "status-based" solitary. All SHU terms will now be determinate and only for specific behavior while in prison.

As the named plaintiffs put it in their statement:

"This settlement represents a monumental victory for prisoners and an important step toward our goal of ending solitary confinement in California, and across the country. California's agreement to abandon indeterminate SHU confinement based on gang affiliation demonstrates the power of unity and collective action.... Our movement rests on a foundation of unity: our Agreement to End Hostilities. It is our hope that this groundbreaking agreement to end the violence between the various ethnic groups in California prisons will inspire not only state prisoners, but also jail detainees, county prisoners and our communities on the street, to oppose ethnic and racial violence. From this foundation, the prisoners' human rights movement is awakening the conscience of the nation to recognize that we are fellow human beings.... We

celebrate this victory while, at the same time, we recognize that achieving our goal of fundamentally transforming the criminal justice system and stopping the practice of warehousing people in prison will be a protracted struggle. We are fully committed to that effort, and invite you to join us."

—Todd Ashker, Sitawa Nantambu Jamaa, Luis Esquivel, George Franco, Richard Johnson, Paul Redd, Gabriel Reyes, George Ruiz, Danny Troxell

There are over 3,000

prisoners kept in solitary confinement in California, over 850 for over 10 years just in Pelican Bay! This despite international recognition that solitary confinement of longer than a few weeks is a form of torture.

AN HISTORIC STRIKE

An important beginning was the historic 2011 hunger strike, which brought to the world's attention the torture committed in U.S. prisons. The prisoners worked hard to overcome the racial enmity fomented by the guards who ramp up racial.

The "short corridor" at Pelican Bay State Prison was designed to isolate the unbroken prisoners from even their own racial group. The men of the

short corridor, however, created, out of their proximity to their prison-designated enemies, an opportunity to overcome those divisions.

When they called for outside support for their hunger strike, they expressly requested that images used in publicity include all races. The logo (see graphic, p. 10) they created for the strike was of hands of all colors grasping each other.

Their demand in the 2011 hunger strike that they be "validated as human" is not a denial of race. It is a

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Philosophic basis of News & Letters

by Terry Moon, Managing Editor, *News & Letters*

Dear Readers,

As we publish this last issue of 2015 in the celebration of our 60th year of publication, we want to share the philosophic basis of this newspaper.

Karl Marx wrote in the Introduction to the *Grundrisse*: "The concrete is concrete, because it is a combination of many objects with different destinations, i.e., a unity of diverse elements. In our thought, it therefore appears as a process of synthesis, as a result, and not as a starting point, although it is the real starting point."

News & Letters could be seen as a "unity of diverse elements": workers, women, prisoners, Blacks and other people of color, youth, people from other countries, the differently abled and LGBTQ people all speaking for themselves; philosophical and theoretical articles; and columnists writing of our life and times from different perspectives. These articles may have different goals, opinions and ideas; and the result, an issue of *News & Letters*, may appear to be a finished product, or a synthesis of those elements. But in reality, each issue is a summing up of the current reality and a new starting point for work and thought.

WHAT MAKES A PAPER MARXIST-HUMANIST

The philosophic basis of *News & Letters* is crucial in shaping each issue. It is what makes a paper one that is Marxist-Humanist rather than merely "Left."

To Marxist-Humanism, the Absolute means above all the revolutionary society that abolishes capitalism, breaks down the division between mental and manual

labor, and builds social foundations on totally new human relations. And *News & Letters* was a conscious effort on the part of the founders of News and Letters Committees in 1955 to begin a paper from the Absolute, knowing that it could be Absolute only in its completion within a revolution in permanence. Because neither the paper nor the organization could be the Absolute, they are endowed with the impulse to transcend, to self-develop, to strive for the Absolute.

Raya Dunayevskaya, the founder of Marxist-Humanism, gives a view of the form of *News & Letters* in her document of May 28, 1987, titled "July 1984 to June 1987" (#10985):

"Now let's get to the reality of the single dialectic in philosophy, in organization, no matter what its form, in paper, no matter what its frequency. The real point is the form, and this is meant not as a contrast to content, but form as a Universal directly related to philosophic moments:

"What distinguishes us from any other paper? How did that form as well as its soul—Marxist-Humanism—result in abolishing the distinction between a theoretic organ and a popularization in a newspaper form? And how did that change the relationship between inside and outside?"

"Worker-intellectual; theory-practice articles; with each form have a little of the other in it; Readers' Views, national/international; spontaneous actions as Leads as well as editorial type of leads."

This is not to say that the form of *News & Letters* continued on p. 2



Urszula Wislanka/*News & Letters*

To transition or not to transition?

by Adele

Review of *Blood and Visions—Womyn Reconciling with Being Female*, edited by Autotomous Womyn's Press (2015).



Some internet commentators refusing to read this 65-page zine have automatically denounced it as "anti-Transgender." In reality, the pseudonymous writers say that it is *not* intended as any statement about the experiences of *all* Transgender people, not even all female to male ones. Rather, these are the intense, painful, personal stories of young butch and "gender non-conforming" (GNC) Lesbians who experienced great pressure from society, their own LGBTQ communities, and medical and therapy professions to identify as Transgender men. Some had medically transitioned and explain that this did not ease their feelings of gender dysphoria, even when their dysphoria was physical.

As the writers explain, "the trans community contributes to backlash against itself when it refuses to acknowledge that there are problems, that not every person who comes out as trans or transitions is really finding themselves." And "If trans dudes and butch, 'masculine' and otherwise unconventional females are going to coexist, we need to talk about this shit."

The writers describe being incessantly labeled as Transgender instead of as butch by members of their Queer communities, none of whom were Transgender. They could not find role models in other butches since the only ones they met were also transitioning. The possibility that they were Transgender seemed at first to explain their feelings and offer a better way of life.

FOR THEM, THE SEXISM DISAPPEARED

They describe how passing as male eliminated the daily humiliations our society heaps upon women. They were suddenly treated as competent and intelligent and allowed to speak without interruptions or put-downs. They were treated as complete human beings, not sex objects. This was especially important for those who were sexual assault survivors. At the same time, people, including LGBTQs, now reacted with admiration instead of hostility to their butch appearances and mannerisms and to their displays of romantic affection.

However, they state that in making themselves more socially acceptable, they were only conforming to a "masculine" role in place of the equally false "feminine" role that everyone had previously wanted them to play. For them, going further socially and medically into transition served as a distraction from dealing with trauma and stress caused by oppression. While they acknowledge that other people may find other solutions, they began to find healing through the difficult process of detransitioning. The writers share the ways that they cope with their dysphoria through meditation, exercise, and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy.

WOMEN WORLDWIDE

by Artemis

The Empowered Fe Fes (slang for females) is a project of Access Living, a Chicago-based social justice agency run by and for people with disabilities. This group of young women discusses issues affecting their lives such as reproductive justice, sexuality, domestic violence and discrimination. Along with demonstrating for their rights, they have created educational projects around these issues with dance performance and a documentary. Their latest, "Take Charge!" is the first guide to reproductive health and self-advocacy by and for women with disabilities. It tackles misconceptions about the sexuality and self-determination of women with disabilities and does not present the elimination of disabilities as the goal of healthcare.

* * *

In El Salvador, the gangs that control much of the country are attacking, raping and killing teen girls who refuse to date a gang member or do favors for the gang. Sometimes the girls go missing and are not found. Girls attempt to survive by not leaving their homes except to go to school, or by attempting to emigrate to the U.S., often alone. Before they reach it, they are often caught by Mexican officials and returned to El Salvador, or are raped and murdered along the way.

* * *

In Seattle, Wash., the Ada Developers Academy—named after Ada Lovelace, who invented the first computer code long before the invention of the first computer—the U.S.'s only tuition-free school for women in software programming, began its third year. The school is important in teaching women confidence in their skills and in providing diversity in the creation of new technology. New students are not required to know anything about coding because the school's philosophy is that learning to be a computer programmer has a lot to do with learning how to learn, as well as to envision and create new things.

EXPANDING WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A WOMAN

They define detransitioning not as about adopting "feminine" mannerisms but as about just being oneself. This can be hard to do when you are in public, being judged relentlessly by others, but the writers assert that being butch, "gender nonconforming," or even a former female to male is not "masculine." Instead, they emphasize that they expand the idea of what it means to be a woman.

The writers strongly caution readers to not make them into "political ammunition" for their theories, not even feminist ones. They say that it is important to allow detransitioners to analyze their own experiences, feelings, and choices, which are diverse, and to create their own political theory. They tell allies to read many detransitioners' stories. They do not necessarily "regret" their transitions, which were often survival strategies and a step towards finding themselves. They do not want to be seen as dupes, casualties, or cautionary stories but as survivors.

The writers say that the most important way they can find healing and affirmation as detransitioners and as butch and GNC women is by forming community. This are also role models for women like themselves. They provide websites where detransitioners can share their stories as well as ones that celebrate butch and GNC women.

Blood and Visions has been so eagerly received that it sold out almost immediately and is on its second printing. It is a milestone in a very important conversation by a diverse and insightful group of women struggling out of oppression and marginalization.

Letter to our readers

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can never be changed. It changed through the years when Dunayevskaya was alive and we have changed it as objective events demanded.

As new movements arise we want to make sure we carry the voices—and therefore the thoughts—of new activists in the LGBTQ movement, for example, or the revolutionaries emerging from the movement for people with disabilities. We are never satisfied that we have enough voices involved in struggle speaking for themselves, which we comprehend as a form of theory; or enough development of the philosophy of Marxist-Humanism. We are determined to improve with the help of you, our readers.

News & Letters does not stand alone. From its inception it has been inseparable from News and Letters Committees. The paper was created to help the organization by creating a forum for those involved in struggle to speak for themselves unseparated from theoretical and philosophical development. To Dunayevskaya, listening to the voices from below was where the job of the theoretician "first began." Furthermore, someone seeing their own words in the paper alongside those of others—from different countries tackling different problems and oppressions—means their self-development too.

NEEDED ORGANIZATIONAL PROJECTION

Organization was always a key aspect of *News & Letters*. As Dunayevskaya wrote on May 11, 1987, about "The Organization, the Paper, the Book" and how "All Equal Philosophy of Marxist-Humanism": "Projection of Marxist-Humanism had been narrowed in our concept both between philosophy and organization, and organization and paper. This could throw us off the rails of our uniqueness if each one of us doesn't immediately work at a very serious self-critique."

This 60th anniversary of both our founding and the first issue of *News & Letters* has reinvigorated our determination not to separate organization from paper and philosophy, something that will be central to our discussions as we prepare for our 2016 Convention in May.

We recognize that philosophical work is not only a matter of presenting a piece by Dunayevskaya on page four. It is something each column, lead, editorial and Draft Perspectives tries to accomplish. Presenting the voices from below in that context is needed for the life, of the paper, the organization and the philosophy as a living body of ideas, and therefore for the movement.

BECOME A WRITER AND PARTICIPANT

Let's start anew on the projection of the Raya Dunayevskaya Archives now that they are online and available to almost everyone, keeping in mind her critique of narrowing the concept of the relationship of organization to both philosophy and the paper.

We cannot do this either alone, or isolated. We invite you, the reader, to join in working for a new society built on new human relationships by writing for this unique paper, by arguing, by working out your ideas, by coming to News and Letters Committees meetings and joining in a series of discussions beginning soon in every local on: "The Philosophic Comprehension of History Illuminates Today's Crises: The Revolutionary Archives of Raya Dunayevskaya."

Taking a stand on reproductive justice

Terry Moon/News & Letters

Parenthood



Chicago—On Sept. 29 and Oct. 10 people, predominantly women, came out by the dozens in several demonstrations to support Planned Parenthood against attacks and not only by anti-abortion fanatics. Some well-funded crackpots created a video full of lies (see "Editorial: Planned Parenthood under siege," Sept.-Oct. 2015 *News & Letters*), which the U.S. Congress took as their opportunity to launch not one but two investigations of the organization. Republicans are determined to destroy our right to control our own bodies, including abortion and birth control, or even just healthcare. But we are fighting back and what was clear at our demonstrations was that we and Planned Parenthood have a whole lot of support.

The action on Sept. 29 was at a park on the North Side of Chicago on a busy street corner at rush hour. Called by one woman using facebook, about 50 of us came to show support for Planned Parenthood. What was crystal clear was the tremendous response from passersby to our "Honk if you support Planned Parenthood" signs. At times the noise was deafening! Both women and men honked horns and gave us the thumbs up sign or a raised fist.

As one demonstrator said: "I've been to a lot of demonstrations, and none got the kind of honking and raised fists and waves of people driving by that this one did. People in car after car showed they cared and were happy to see us out there. The Republicans may have overplayed their cheating, lying hand on this one."

The actions on Oct. 10 were part of a national movement to counter anti-abortion bullies who were set to protest clinics all over the U.S. They were at three Planned Parenthood facilities in Chicago.

At each site here, we overwhelmingly outnumbered the zealots. These rallies were organized by two women, Elizabeth Harrison and Eleanor Shoshany Anderson, also using social media. They "wanted people to know that we represent a silent majority," a majority that is starting to speak out and demonstrate. Groups there included Access Living, LGBTQ groups, FURIE, and News and Letters Committees.

There is no question that feelings ran high as fanatics tried to bait those of us supporting reproductive justice. One long-time pro-choice activist who must have been in her mid-70s responded to a male fanatic's comments about the video by telling him: "Your pants are on fire, and you know what's going to burn first!"

—Marxist-Humanist participant

Participate in a series of discussions on: The Philosophic Comprehension of History Illuminates Today's Crises: The Revolutionary Archives of Raya Dunayevskaya

Archives come alive when a new problem confronts the world. We see something different because of what a new generation is facing.



Our look at the Revolutionary Archives of Raya Dunayevskaya and Karl Marx can help us comprehend and act on today's problems such as catastrophic climate change, counter-revolution coming from the revolutions of the Arab Spring and the unprecedented refugee disaster it created, racist police murders plaguing Black communities, the attack on women's reproductive rights and the widening gap between the super-rich and the poor.

See page 9 for a local near you to find out when, where and how to participate.

UAW workers vote down Chrysler deal

Detroit—The chasm between rank-and-file auto workers and their bureaucratic leadership has been growing for decades as dramatically revealed by the overwhelming rejection of the contract negotiated by the United Auto Workers (UAW) and Fiat Chrysler.

UAW President Dennis Williams had expressed complete confidence that the proposed contract would be ratified. But 65% of Fiat Chrysler workers voted it down, forcing Williams to renegotiate.

Chrysler's 40,000 workers approved the second contract, but only after the UAW bureaucracy cut the voting period from a week to two days, giving less time for the opposition to mobilize than for the first vote.

The two-tier wage system was the biggest target of the workers' opposition to the original contract. This concession forced from the workers during the bankruptcy proceedings in 2007 has always rankled them, because it violated the long-held union principle of equal pay for equal work.

ANTI-UNION TWO-TIER SYSTEM

Second-tier entry-level workers were making \$16 to \$20 an hour, compared to \$29 an hour for veteran workers. It was a source of dissension among the workers who live with this disparity every day. This was loudly and clearly expressed by UAW delegates at the pre-contract conference held in Detroit.

The way this was dealt with in the first contract did not go far enough for the workers. Second-tier workers would get a wage raise, but would not get the same as veteran workers. This was not acceptable.

There were other problems for the workers, who demanded more information about future plant production plans, healthcare and corporate investments. Workers would also get a \$3,000 signing bonus upon the contract's approval.

The contract which workers forced to be renegotiated had significant improvements: Second-tier workers will get full wages in eight years, and second-tier workers with four years service will be paid full wages at the

end of this four-year contract. Those workers with two years service will get an \$8 per hour wage increase by the end of the contract.

There is also no change in healthcare, and veteran workers get two wage increases of 3%, plus two bonuses of 4%. The new profit-sharing formula is \$800 for every 1% of North American profit margin. Veteran workers get a \$4,000 signing bonus, and entry workers get \$3,000. The contract includes \$1.7 billion in pension funding, and a commitment that \$5.3 billion would be invested in U.S. plants.

Forcing Williams to renegotiate resulted in a much-improved contract and shows the power of a strike, which the workers were prepared to do. They pressured both Williams and Fiat Chrysler to make those improvements.

—Andy Phillips

Latina worker speaks



Editor's Note: Agricultural workers in the San Quintín area of Baja California have been waging a struggle for decent wages and working conditions. They organized a work stoppage and have forced the growers and state government to bargain. Women are integral to the struggle. Below we print excerpts of an interview with agricultural worker Lucila Fernandez obtained by our sister journal Praxis en America Latina (www.praxisenamericalatina.org).

San Quintín, Baja California—I am 36 years old, and originally from Oaxaca. I am Mixtec and came to the San Quintín Valley in 1990 as a child laborer at the age of 11. I spent many years living in the labor camps of San Quintín. I married and started a family.

I became an activist in the community of Santa María los Pinos, which was formed in 2003. I had lived in another community, named Triqui after the Triqui people, who are used to fighting for what they want.

When we arrived here we found there were no schools. So all the mothers gathered and started to fight. From the first day the mothers invited me I wanted to join. It was a very difficult fight in a community that was enclosed in a wire mesh fence with guards. We asked: Why could the agricultural enterprise decide when we could come into our community, our houses, and when we could leave? We began to fight not only to have schools, but to have our rights.

The struggle took three years, including the imprisonment of several *compañeros*. There were detentions almost every day. It was a struggle for a single school, but for us our children are a priority.

We were faced with a government that did not represent us, that supported the decisions that the company imposed upon us. But we said we must have a school. We took land and created a school. The government Institute for Development and Housing then issued an arrest warrant for me. But the struggle continued—mostly women—and now this small community has an elementary school, a kindergarten and a secondary school.

In the years since, I have been involved in issues such as health and violence. I joined with fellow workers who went on strike for wages and decent working conditions. Many women have participated in this struggle, yet often we are not seen or mentioned. But here we are, and we are walking together with the men.

My motto is to bring forth the voice and the needs of women. The struggle is not alone a question of labor rights and law, but also the needs of women. When we talk about women, we are talking about the whole family. When women are together we talk about what hurts and affects us and realize that we suffer the same difficulties: our needs, our exclusion. Bringing the voice of women and the needs of women is not only about labor law, but as well the need for women to have timely and guaranteed healthcare.

There have been advances, though not great ones. There is more inclusion of women. We do not want to be the same as the men, but we want respect for our rights. Most important is that people turn to San Quintín and we can say, "The workers are here, we live as agricultural workers and we demand our rights." A wage can take away our hunger, but our rights are also a matter of everyday life. Women must be heard—all the workers must be seen and heard. Yes, a decent salary, but all our everyday social demands are part of life.

Dismantling Detroit public schools

Detroit—On Oct. 19 Michigan Gov. Snyder outlined his legislative agenda for the continued dismantling of the Detroit Public Schools (DPS) and the isolation of Detroiters from Detroit public education.

Snyder proposes to split DPS into two: one, Detroit Public Schools, would hold the debt but have no physical assets or operational functions. It would collect the millage that Detroiters approved in 2012, and send all of it to creditors. The elected school board would remain symbolically over this neutered entity.

A new second entity, Detroit Community School District (DCSD) would run the education program and receive state funding. It would be controlled by a seven-member board, three appointed by Detroit Mayor Dugan and four by Snyder.

With the Education Achievement Authority (EAA) created in 2011, Snyder would have two school districts in Detroit that he created and controls.

Snyder says there is \$515 million in DPS debt—he neglected to say the state created it. He plans to take \$100 million more from the millage revenue for "investments" in DCSD, and expects another \$100 million in liabilities by next June 30. Thus the Snyder plan puts a \$715 million debt load on the millage revenue.

SCHOOL FUNDS GO DIRECTLY TO BANKS

Detroiters approved the 2012 millage renewal explicitly for the operation of schools to educate children. Snyder's plan is of questionable legality, because it diverts that millage revenue.

He predicts Detroiters will renew the millage in seven years in order to finish paying the debt. But if all the money goes to creditors, that giant sucking sound of Detroit property taxes going to Wall Street may not generate a pro-millage renewal.

Snyder's plan would create a five-member Detroit Education Commission (DEC) that would have power over the DPS, DCSD, EAA and charter schools, run school enrollment activity, assess each school's performance, close schools that were deemed inadequate and open new schools.

Snyder will triplicate his control over Detroit schools by expanding the Financial Review Commission (FRC) that quietly runs oversight of the City of Detroit finances. The Mayor and City Council President are statutory members. For DPS oversight, Snyder would pull the latter two off that aspect of the commission and put two more of his people on it.

OUTSIDE CONTROL OF SCHOOLS

What it means is that Detroiters would have no say in any aspect of the education of their own children. Further, the very assets that generations of Detroit citizens built up and own would be shifted to Snyder's agents. Even if proposed legislation continued legalistic ownership to Detroit citizens, it permanently takes away the rights of our ownership.

This is important because the Snyder entities (DEC and FRC) can not only close schools, but the DEC can open schools. Snyder says that they could be DCSD or charter schools. He says that his DEC appointees would be "agnostic" on which system is better.

But when Snyder's Emergency Managers took over Highland Park and Muskegon Heights schools, they shut them down and chartered all schools in those cities. No doubt Snyder's "agnostic" appointees to the DEC will worship at the shibboleth of privatized education.

—Elena Herrada

How not to defend schools

Detroit—The Detroit Federation of Teachers (DFT) held a rally to support school boiler operators, their fellow union members. Under proposed budget cuts each operator now responsible for one site would cover up to five. This holds great risks to everyone in aging school buildings. Yet at an Education Town Hall the day before, convened by State Representative Sherry Gay-Dagnogo, not one person mentioned the rally.

One member of the powerless elected school board said, "I never thought I'd see the day when I'd refuse to pay union dues, but the Michigan Federation of Teachers has been in bed with the school takeover by the state and charter operators in poor and Black school districts. What are our choices here, charters or cults?"

FEEDING ON THE CARCASS

"Cults" refers to former DFT President Steve Conn, who ignored teachers, staff, students, parents—all but the tiny minority of teachers sympathetic to his organization, By Any Means Necessary. Recently removed from office, Conn now fights for his job instead of for Detroit teachers and students.

Most city public high schools, recently renovated with millions of taxpayer dollars, are now run directly by the state, by officials under investigation for corruption. Reform is desperately needed, but the proposed empowerment zones will empower only the governor, the corrupt officials, school contractors and charter operators.

—Susan Van Gelder

WORKSHOP TALKS

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At Kaiser HMO too, we're tracked and measured obsessively. It's an assembly-line mentality. Workers are mere appendages to the machine. Individuals' lives are sacrificed at the altar of the company. Kaiser is like Amazon, where the running joke is: "When it came to work/life balance, work came first, life came second, and trying to find the balance came last."

HEALTHCARE OR SELLING—IT'S THE SAME

Amazon sells things. At Kaiser, we're supposed to deliver healthcare. Yet in both shops the bottom line is king—even healthcare has been transformed into a commodity. Marketing health insurance as a "product" lords over the concrete delivery of healthcare.

At Kaiser we have a company union like in China. The union rep, now with the new title "Labor-Management-Partnership Liaison," sits across the table next to the boss, like a tribunal, during disciplinary hearings for "attendance violations" like calling in sick, using your contractual sick time, even with a doctor's note.

Amazon carries this lack of empathy further with workers who get sick. When they return, still recovering from miscarriages or cancer treatments, they are told they will be put on a performance monitoring program. Without improvement they are invited to leave and are told the place would be more productive without them.

One thing Kaiser obsessively monitors is "customer satisfaction." They collect "satisfaction-survey" data that rates our "empathy" level towards the "customer" (we don't call them patients anymore). These metrics are a cover-up for a total lack of empathy. We're told to always wear a toothy grin even while we're simultaneously hitting the patient at bedside with a huge co-pay bill, or serving them an eviction notice that says they've overstayed their welcome. If they refuse to leave, there is an additional bill at the rate of \$3,900 per day!

EMPATHY ENDS WITH CAPITALISM

Healthcare is *not* a product. It cannot be reformed under these deformed conditions where both workers and patients are treated as objects, with no real empathy, and where scientific data is used for deception. Empathy is hardly possible under capitalism, where health insurance marketing is a predatory sport.

Workers everywhere suffer work-related mental anxieties and physical stress under what Marx called the "despotic plan of capital." The working conditions at Amazon and where I work are eerily similar. Indeed, working conditions in the U.S., as across the world, are becoming similar to that of Chinese manufacturers like FoxConn. Marx's concept of socially necessary labor time means there's a global standard for despotic control of production.

Write for N&L. See contact information, p. 9.

FROM THE WRITINGS OF RAYADUNAYEVSKAYA

Editor's note: At a time when Black masses have once again put U.S. "civilization" on trial, and when retrogression in thought, including in the Left, remains a major barrier to revolutionary change, we present excerpts from "The Needed American Revolution: Philosophy and Reality," Part IV of the July 1969 Draft Perspectives of News and Letters Committees, written by Raya Dunayevskaya under the title "World Crises and the Needed American Revolution" (#4365 in the Raya Dunayevskaya Collection, which is now online in its entirety at www.rayadunayevskaya.org/).

With the sole exception of Marx and Engels, the possibilities of a social revolution in the U.S. have always been greatly underrated, if not totally disregarded. Presently the anti-Vietnam War movement is so total in its admiration of the daring life-and-death struggle the Vietnamese have and are carrying on against U.S. imperialism, that its own achievements are looked upon as aids of a very minor significance. There is no doubt, of course, that the greatest blow to U.S. imperialism has been and is being administered by the Vietnamese. But, while the anti-Vietnam War movement here is not the decisive force, there should be no doubt about its achievements. First is the expression of solidarity with the Vietnamese and against our own government. Secondly comes the compulsion of Lyndon B. Johnson to take himself out of the presidential race, and the decision of Richard Nixon to present himself as a veritable opponent of that war in order to be able to win the presidency. Thirdly is the refusal to consider the tokenism Nixon has decreed of "withdrawal" as anything but a fraud and the continuing pressure for the withdrawal of all U.S. troops.

Above all these concrete achievements stands the birth, as a result of this struggle and its participation in the Black revolution, of a whole new generation of radicals. The youth may have neither the force nor the proletarian cast of the Black rebels, but the 1960s have made it as different from the Joseph McCarthy-Barry Goldwater youth of the 1950s as earth is from the moon, though we are now landing on it.

BLACK MASS REVOLT, which has been a continuous phenomenon in America, has assumed an intensity in many new forms since its spontaneous modern rebirth in the Montgomery Bus Boycott, 1955-56, and youth sit-ins in 1960, and in organizations as varied as the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and the Black Panthers. In the ghetto upheavals from Harlem, New York, to Oakland, Calif., from Watts in Los Angeles to the entire length and breadth of the U.S., the revolt goes on. By the present intensity as well as by its historic nature, it has disclosed the Achilles heel of corporate America. Thus, there is no Establishment claim, from affluence to democracy, from non-colonialism to education, much less from labor to housing, that Blacks have not been able to give the lie to—and gotten the world's ear for the truth. Nor is it a question only of showing poverty amidst plenty. No one is going begging. Rather, it is a matter of displaying mass self-activity, mass creativity, and revolutionary will and daring even when allies from the majority whites are rare enough to come by.

Whether it be the Black revolution, the youth revolt, women's liberation or the anti-Vietnam War movement, there is no doubt about the revolutionary forces actively working to uproot the old, the imperialist, the existing exploitative society. Even the white working class that is supposed to be "integrated" into the "system," and surely is racist all too often—nevertheless, even it has shown new activity not only in strikes, but also in voting for Blacks, especially to union posts in those factories where Black caucuses were active. In a word, even white labor, skilled and unskilled, associated itself with Blacks as the genuine force against the labor bureaucracy.

WE'RE NOT TRYING to say that America is on the eve of a social revolution. What we are saying is that the U.S. economy is not free from crises, its politics is fought internally as well as externally by Third World liberation forces. Objectively, everything, from the nuclear arms economy to the runaway inflation; from the imperialist misadventures, both as far away as Vietnam and as near as Latin America, to the Vietnam War which the majority of the American people oppose; and from the erratic behavior of the stock market and creeping unemployment—not so creeping among



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

revolution" was sufficient to have it—let us never forget that all these myth-makers, headed by Mao Zedong, may cast a seemingly unbreakable spell on the youth. But, even where unbreakable, a spell is only a spell, and cannot replace reality. What can break the spell is revolutionary philosophy that meets the challenge of reality.

Never was the task of philosophy more urgent. Never was the dialectics of liberation in reality so in need of a dialectical philosophy. Never was the break between theory and practice more ominous, and the need for a unity of philosophy and revolution more indispensable to the freedom struggles the world over. The needed American revolution is the one force that can unlock world revolution, and not only because the USA is the mightiest imperialism and its disintegration frees the forward movement of humanity, but because the revolutionary forces here are not merely subordinate to the Third World. Rather, they are facing a developing revolutionary situation and philosophic release.

"**WHY HEGEL?**" (that is, why dialectics?) "Why Now?"¹ (that is, why is it presently impermissible to separate philosophy and revolution?) reveals the need for philosophy if we are to achieve a revolution that will not sour, as every revolution, from the Russian through the Chinese to the African, has soured. *Philosophy and Revolution* discloses the obstacles that lie on the path to revolution, not only the dominance and militarization of U.S. imperialism, but also empiric thought that satisfies itself by naming a single imperialism as "Enemy No. 1," refuses to look at the totality of the world crises, insists on seeing only the external enemies, thereby failing to discern the internal revolutionary forces in each country.

No one can seriously speak of American revolution unless it centers around the color Black. The failure to do so previously is precisely why the possibilities of American revolution were discounted. Even when radicals finally got to writing "theses" on the question of American revolution, they were invariably abstract. It wasn't necessarily due only to U.S. might, financial and military, and now nuclear as well. Rather, it was due to two very different types of subjective factors. One was the blindness to the vanguard character of the Black masses in any developing revolutionary situation. The other was the self-declared vanguard party's lack of a total philosophy.

Thus, during World War II when there was no doubt at all about the militancy of Negro revolt, when

1. As published, Part I of *Philosophy and Revolution* was titled "Why Hegel? Why Now?"

Black masses, youth and the needed U.S. revolution: philosophy and reality

Blacks, where there is no less than 20% unemployment among Black ghetto youth—speaks of a ripening objective situation of crisis.

At the same time, though the movement of revolt is always played down as a "tiny minority," even such journals as *Fortune* have had to admit that the same surveys that show that Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) can count its members only in a few thousand, show it influences close to a million in all youth rebellions. And when it comes to the Black revolution, far from being able to attribute it all to "outside agitators," there is no doubt in anyone's mind that, despite the fact that the Black militant organizations hardly have mass memberships, there is no concrete event in the ghetto that doesn't, in its spontaneity, involve the Blacks as a people.

NO, THE WEAKNESS of what is referred to as the "New Left" is not so much in numbers as in lack of a total philosophy. Just when the masses are in motion, the leaderships are in disarray. The recent split in SDS (which is by no means all negative, since many, in disgust, are moving to genuine Marxism) has shown them behaving in as unprincipled and, *in thought*, as retro-

gressionist a manner, as the PL'ers (Progressive Labor Party members) they were expelling. The positive, even in that, could be gleaned from the desire for "confrontations" with the Establishment. If they have nevertheless fallen under the spell of Maoist sloganizing—whether that be "power comes from the barrel of a gun," or the abstractions of "dare to struggle, dare to win," under the fatal illusion that all nuclear giants are "paper tigers" and therefore "to will"

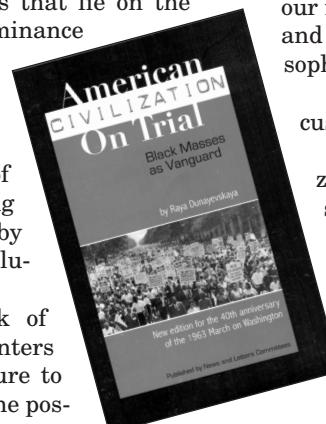
their mass outburst, in 1943, right in the midst of war, was equaled by only one section of the white proletariat, the miners, who went out on general strike, we had to fight, and fight hard, against the concept that the 1943 upheaval was but a variant of the defensive struggles against the Ku Klux Klan at the end of World War I. And when, in 1947, the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) decided finally to write a thesis called nothing short of "The Coming American Revolution," the Negro is not even mentioned as a revolutionary force. And when *News & Letters* started, and so did the Montgomery Bus Boycott, it was considered a "joke" that *Marxism and Freedom* had placed that event on the level of the Hungarian Revolution. The fact that the SWP now goes to the other extreme, and, as against a refusal to consider the Negro as a National Question, behaves as if Malcolm X had been a combination of Lenin and Trotsky, only shows that dialectics remains as strange to them in 1969 as in 1943 when, on the one hand, they failed to see the Blacks as Subject, and, on the other hand, saw neither the Stalinist break with the dialectical structure of *Capital*, nor the transformation into opposite of the Russian workers' state into a state-capitalist society.

EMPIRICISM CHARACTERIZES THE U.S. LEFT, from SDS to the Black Panthers, however, not because that is central to "Anglo-Saxonism," but because it is a world retrograde step in the new world stage of capitalism—state-capitalism, and the administrative mentality this produces even among revolutionaries. Not only do they think they can solve with "plans" what can only be solved by mass actions, and not only do they cling to elitist concepts in relationship to the proletariat whom they will "lead," but, though youth, they also look down at youth who haven't "signed up"—hence, SDS's rapid reversal from its origins as a spontaneous, anti-vanguardist movement to its present elitism on ever narrower foundations. When we referred to retrogressionism appearing in thought, even among revolutionaries, at sharp turning points in history, we quoted Lenin on the horrors of war "*suppressing thought*," which is the way the existing capitalism keeps its hold on the opponent movements, and not merely its own decayed ideology. Moreover, though under 30, they aren't as "new" as they think. The fatal flaw in all U.S. radicalism, old and new, was the lack of dialectical thought accompanying the lack of comprehension of the revolutionary forces at hand for the American revolution.

In a word, if the American Revolution, so needed to unlock the World Revolution, is to move from the possible, to the probable, to reality, we must know how to find *new beginnings that are yet rooted in what Marx himself projected*. News and Letters Committees, who first re-established the American and Humanist roots of Marxism, have, from the beginning, been active in the Black Revolution because it was both central to the American revolution and inseparable from the philosophy of revolution. This preparation to meet the challenge from below on both the theoretical and practical levels makes it now imperative that it be developed, in all its ramifications. This is why the Resident Editorial Board has put a deadline on the completion of *Philosophy and Revolution* in 1970. Along with it continues our immediate activities, again both in the class, Black and youth struggles themselves as well as on the philosophical level.

Thus, the projection of a pamphlet on Black Caucuses, such as the one at Mahwah.²

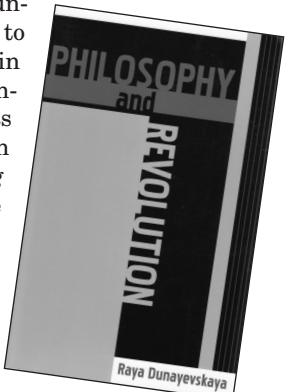
Thus, the growth of Marxist-Humanism, organizationally among the youth, has already made it possible to present a resolution on "Racism and Class" at the SDS convention, which clearly separated itself from both caucuses.³ In the future months, the youth will no doubt continue to function both on the student level and in alliance with the proletariat, as well as part of the anti-Vietnam War movement....



The discussion on these concrete proposals will take place at the respective sessions [of the 1969 national gathering of News and Letters Committees]. Here they are mentioned only in order to exemplify the type of tasks Marxist-Humanists set themselves on the immediate level and which yet show that, far from being "the small coin of concrete questions," concreteness is used in the full Hegelian-Marxian sense of comprehensive, total dimension that has gained reality.

2. "Black Caucuses in the Unions" by Charles Denby is included as an appendix in *American Civilization on Trial: Black Masses as Vanguard*.

3. "A Discussion of Racism and Class," a resolution submitted to the 1969 national convention of SDS by 19 SDS members, is included in the Raya Dunayevskaya Collection, #4582.



PHILOSOPHIC DIALOGUE

by Ron Kelch

The shocking images of neo-fascist Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's Hungarian border guards brutalizing thousands of Syrian refugees—many asking why they were forsaken by the world in their fight for a multi-ethnic democracy when the Arab Spring spread to Syria—has put the global capitalist/statist system on trial. Refugees, asserting that it is not borders but their humanity that matters, reveal the hollowness of Europe's claims it adheres to the most basic human rights and has regard for international law.

When 900 refugees perished off the coast of Libya in April due to Europe's calculated neglect, Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi rightly called it our day's Srebrenica. A Europe that prides itself on having learned better, must face the fact that fascism and ethnic cleansing didn't disappear with World War II. The slaughter of over 8,000 men and boys at Srebrenica is etched in European consciousness as part of the re-emergence of ethnic cleansing in Bosnia twenty years ago.

News and Letters Committee's principled support of struggles for a multiethnic society then and now stands out from most of the Left. (See *Bosnia-Herzegovina: Achilles Heel of Western Civilization*, hereafter referred to as *B-H*.) "World in View" columnist Gerry Emmett recently revisited the discussion of Mihailo Marković. Marković (1923-2010) was part of a Marxist humanist movement in Yugoslavia in the 1960s and 1970s questioning prevailing Marxism. After the collapse of the Yugoslav state in the 1980s, he became central to the nationalist Serbian regime that, in the 1990s, committed war crimes, including mass rape, genocide and ethnic cleansing.

In "Our Right to Exist: Bosnia and the Marxist Humanist Archives,"¹ Emmett raised the question: Though we criticized Marković's transformation into opposite and strongly opposed him politically when he became an ideologue of national socialist, Serbian fascism, why have we never clarified our differences with his Marxist humanism? I further want to ask: Why didn't we work out our specific differences over Marx's 1844 Humanist Essays, upon which Marković's Marxist humanism also relied?

MARKOVIĆ VS. DUNAYEVSKAYA

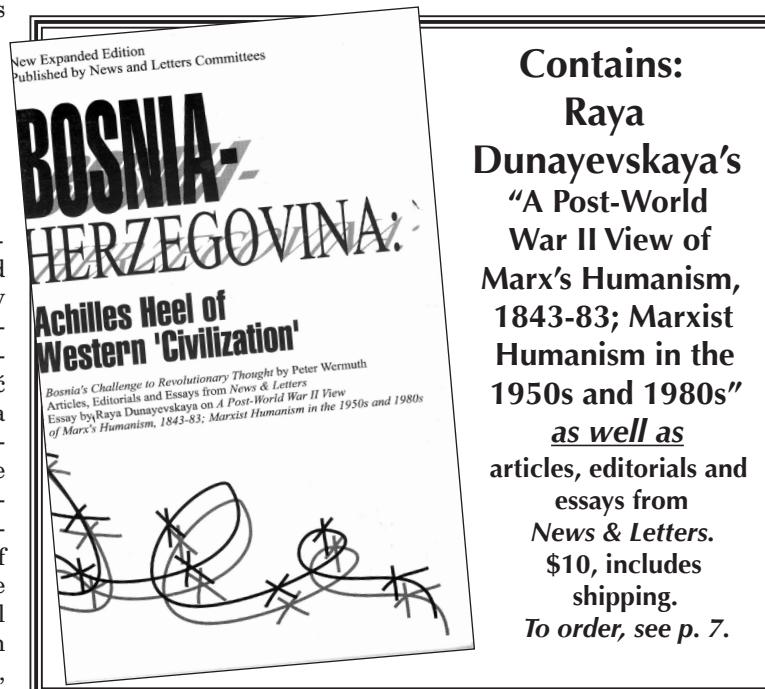
Emmett writes that while the need for a philosophic critique of Marković was discussed, none materialized. Sharply contrasting Marković with Raya Dunayevskaya on methodology, Emmett refers to her 1987 essay included in *B-H*, "A Post-World War II View of Marx's Humanism, 1843-83; Marxist Humanism in the 1950s and 1980s," which summarized Marx's humanism for a Yugoslav audience. Emmett shows how such a critique can begin:

Marković: "Many followers of Marx have misinterpreted his method and construed it as a more or less closed methodology... But for Marx dialectic was primarily a weapon of social criticism, a means of explaining existing social reality that would immediately point the way to revolutionary action." (*Socialist Humanism*, 1965)

RD [Dunayevskaya]: "The self-development of ideas cannot take second place to the self-bringing-forth of liberty, because both the movement from practice that is itself a form of theory, and the development of theory as philosophy, are more than just saying philosophy is action. There is surely one thing on which we should not try to improve on Marx—and that is trying to have a blueprint for the future."

These quotations are rich in difference. Here I'll just point to the philosophic difference between "immediacy" in Marković versus the development by RD of philosophic categories adequate to encompass spontaneity, different cultures and forms of development, and non-state forms of collectivity. Without this development Marković fell into the most hideous kind of blueprint making possible.

Emmett initiated a multi-faceted discussion on



Contains:

Raya Dunayevskaya's "A Post-World War II View of Marx's Humanism, 1843-83; Marxist Humanism in the 1950s and 1980s" as well as articles, editorials and essays from News & Letters. \$10, includes shipping. To order, see p. 7.

not a mere means but the first necessity of life. Human species essence never "directly merges" with any particular stage.³ Yet it is important to recognize that this idea of freedom is an unchanging universal that particularizes itself in ever new ways in the course of human development.

In other words, Marx's concept of species being is open to all the new ways freedom particularizes itself through new human relations. From within each human being comes the need to be needed as a human being, that is, recognized as the architect of one's life activity. Marx hones in on alienated labor confronting private property that makes "worker's own life-activity" something sold and "only a mere means ... to exist" (CW, 9:202). But from the start the woman/man relation is the most fundamental (CW, 3:295-6) in revealing whether a human being is needed as a human being. When Marx witnessed global capitalism's colossal expansion of wealth through the slave trade—a new, especially brutal and specifically capitalistic form of racialized slavery—the self-activity of Blacks in the U.S. to reclaim their humanity as free, conscious agents of their life activity became the vanguard of the idea of freedom for a new international workers' movement.

THE SELF-DEVELOPMENT OF IDEAS

Dunayevskaya associates Marx's concept of human essence, which encompasses multiple aspects of the drive to be needed as a human being, with Hegel's "self-bringing forth of liberty." The "self-bringing forth of liberty" is a shorthand expression for Hegel's appearance of philosophy "...as a subjective cognition, of which liberty is the aim, and which is itself the way to produce it" (*Hegel's Philosophy of Spirit*, para. 476). In other words, the "self-bringing forth of liberty" would involve explicitly engaging new freedom movements with the universal of self-determining free, conscious activity as the first necessity of life. This universal did shape the whole of Marx's life of revolutionary theory and practice, including a key principle to envision and realize freedom in a post-capitalist society. When Marx explicitly returns to this principle to guide a post-capitalist future in his 1875 *Critique of the Gotha Program*, projecting the principle is what sets a specifically Marxist organization apart from all other tendencies (CW, 24:87).

Both reports are available in "Post-Plenum Bulletin #1" and mine is also available online at ronkelch.wordpress.com

3. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works* (International Publishers: New York) vol. 3, p. 276, further referenced as "CW" with the volume number and page number in the text.

Behind Marković's turn to fascism was rift with Marx's humanism

Dunayevskaya's encompassing "philosophic categories" vis-a-vis Marković. My focus is to continue with the contrast between Marković's view of Marx's methodology as "immediate...revolutionary action" and methodology that insists "the self-development of ideas" doesn't take a back seat to "the self-bringing forth of liberty."

In his 1844 Humanist Essays Marx criticized views like Marković's even as he intimates Dunayevskaya's. The second view of methodology resonated strongly with Dunayevskaya's chapter in *The Power of Negativity: Power of Abstraction* from which I got the form for my report to the Plenum on "Marx's Self-determination of the Idea as Organization."

THE SELF-BRINGING FORTH OF LIBERTY

Dunayevskaya's 1987 essay looked to encompassing philosophic categories already in "Marx's Humanist Essays" (B-H, 105). In *Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution* Dunayevskaya further pinpointed that the source, the precise moment of "self-clarification" and birth of the "self-determination of the Idea" of Marx's Historical Materialism came early on in the Essays with the concept of "Alienated Labor" (125). Alienated labor, says Marx, has turned human life activity into a mere means to life. This violates humanity's species essence or species being: self-determining, free, conscious activity that is

From the start (1844) the self-development of the idea of Marx's Historical Materialism and the "self-bringing forth of liberty" were bound together. Marković and others are oblivious to how the idea of freedom itself, with which Marx begins, undergoes a dramatic self-development already in the 1844 Essays. In his contribution to *Socialist Humanism*,⁴ Marković stops halfway with the "positive" in "the annulment of alienated existence," citing Marx on communism or "practical humanism" through the "annulment of private property" and "atheism" as "theoretical humanism" (86). Marković certainly recognizes that Marx saw communism in terms of "negation of the negation" (CW, 3:306), criticizing Stalinism for rejecting this "key principle" (90).

Even though communism is the positive that comes out of the necessary negation of private property which exacerbates alienated labor, this "negation of the negation" is not enough. This "practical humanism," too, has to be transcended for "self-deriving...positive humanism" to "come into being" (CW, 3:342). Communism as "the appropriation of the human essence through the intermediary of the negation of private property... [is] not yet the true, self-originating position but rather a position originating from private property..." (CW, 3:313). By itself communism is merely an "intermediary" either on the way to, or in the way of, the full realization of the "human essence" in reality.

Self-determining, free, conscious activity as the first necessity of life is the irreconcilable, absolute opposite to alienation and does not stop at any particular stage of development. Without explicitly recognizing just that, one is subject to becoming identical to what one opposes which, in the case of communism, is just another form of property, collective instead of private. What Marx simply noted, that it is "a real advance to have at the outset gained a consciousness of the limited character" of communism (CW, 3:313), demands to be brought front and center if humanity is going to avoid still another barbaric transformation-into-opposite like Marković's.

Because Marx began from the absolute opposite of alienation, he addresses the crucial question of our day which has seen so many revolutions transform into their opposite: "what happens after revolution?" For Marković, Marx's humanist "dialectic was primarily a weapon of social criticism, a means of explaining social reality that would immediately point the way to revolutionary action." In that mode one likewise never gets fully beyond one's opposition to social reality, never fully comprehends how human species being positively generates that social reality anew.

Specifically human development, "real species consciousness," can only be realized when "negation of the negation" becomes a "self-referred negation" where each one experiences reality as the self-movement of the idea of freedom that is always open to the new (CW, 3:342). As our time confronts global capitalism's multiple crises and absolute threats to humanity through a drift into fascism, terror, total war, or ecological apocalypse, no halfway dialectic will do. There is no substitute for re-creating Marx's original philosophy of a new humanism.

4. Published in 1965, *Socialist Humanism*, an international symposium edited by Erich Fromm, is a classic reference to many Marxist humanist thinkers. Marković's contribution, "Humanism and Dialectic," summarized his return to Marx's early work. Raya Dunayevskaya's contribution, "Marx's Humanism Today," is available at: <http://rayadunayevskaya.org/ArchivePDFs/3565.pdf>.

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1 To see Gerry Emmett's talk, send \$5 to our Chicago address (includes postage) and order Post-Plenum Bulletin #1.

FROM OKINAWA TO YEMEN: MILITARISM, IMPERIALISM, REVOLT

On Oct 13, after weeks of 24-hour protests that interrupted construction and constantly delayed the entrance and exit of U.S. marines to their new base at Henoko, the governor of Okinawa, Japan, Takeshi Onaga, ruled the construction illegal. Onaga routinely finds some technical legal issue to stop construction, and a week or so later Tokyo overrules him. Yet protesters take it as a sign they are having an effect. "If the people's interest keeps growing, the government will give up," one insisted.



Although the majority of Okinawa politicians and intellectuals quoted in the media express worry that not building a 33rd U.S. military facility on the 875 square mile island would imply bad faith and would put the Japan-U.S. alliance in jeopardy, protesters believe it is important to challenge U.S. power. As military trucks go in and out of Henoko accompanied by Japanese security guards, people on loudspeakers chant "Marines Out of Okinawa" and "Close All Bases."

**Buddy
Okinawa**

Shahrokh Zamani, a founding member of the Paint Workers Union in Tehran, Iran, was an outspoken communist labor activist who fought all his life to better the conditions of his fellow workers. He was arrested for the first time in 1993 and was targeted often for his activism and imprisoned. He was last arrested in June 2011. In prison he showed good spirits to his prison mates and was supportive. He died in Rajae Shahr Prison in Karaj, Iran, on Sept. 13, found in his bed with blood in his mouth and a blow to his head. Many believe he was murdered. He was serving an 11-year sentence. He was an inspiration to all involved in the labor struggle and his memorial turned into a protest.

<https://freeshahrokh.wordpress.com/>
London, England

REPRESSION IN RUSSIA

The situation in Russia is getting worse. The hysteria of propaganda against "external and internal enemies" is escalating, as well as pressure on opposition and civil society in general. All opposition rallies in the center of Moscow are now forbidden; organizers of Boris Nemtsov's murder are protected by the state (while everybody knows that they are people of Putin's Chechen vassal Ramzan Kadyrov); the TV continues attacks on all critics of the regime, particularly targeting "The May 6th Committee"—which defends those arrested in big anti-Putin demonstrations—as "traitors and foreign agents," etc. And now the government has launched a new military intervention—in Syria, where Russian rockets are killing opponents of Assad's regime and civilians under the pretext of "fighting ISIS."

But possibilities of activities are not yet totally destroyed. It is still possible to work with Praxis Research and Educational Center, Memorial, and the Russian Confederation of Labor. Now a book on the history of workers and the trade union movement in Russia will be published soon; seminars on the politics of the labor movement and democratic Left continue. Plans are also underway for a conference in Tbilisi, on the history of the labor movement and Socialism in Georgia. There may also be a symposium devoted to the anniversary of the anti-war Kienthal conference of 1915.

**Dissident
Russia**

"Counter-revolution in Middle East shows crisis of humanity" (Sept.-Oct. N&L) shows the human forces of liberation in three regions/countries: the Iraqi people, the Kurds in Turkey and the Syrian masses. Practically, the article tells about the coming together of "the Kurdish forces with elements of the Free Syrian Army—an opening for a potential deepening of the revolution on both parts." But what points to unity not only in practice but in theory is that the three forces are struggling for a world with new human foundations, against religious sectarianism and for human unity and freedom. Their universal aspirations help us understand why the article concludes, "It is not a question of simply judging events by their multiethnic character, important as that is, but of the relation of subjects of revolt to a philosophy needed to overcome the terrible retrogression we see today." We need to go further on this relation of movements from below with a philosophy of revolution in permanence capable of encompassing them.

**Reader
Mexico**

As the bombings intensify in Yemen, dozens of messages have been pouring into my facebook and email: "Tell the world that the situation is unbearable in Yemen, Afrah! The killed ones had mercy from Allah, but we, the living ones, are going through a slow death. Tell the world, Afrah!"

Such messages made insomnia my new best friend. It's really a cruel world. Most of the "world" has been bought by Saudi money; even our president, Hadi, was bought by Saudis' money. Each missile and each rocket fired at Yemen is done with the blessings of Hadi. How can we, poor activists, journalists and bloggers, face the Saudis' power/money/dominance/hegemony machine? What ordinary people in Yemen and from Yemen—who are shattered around the world—what they feel most painfully is how it is to be abandoned, not only by the "world," but also by their own president, Hadi. The Saudis promised to give the UN big money to address the humanitarian plight in Yemen with one condition: that it's to be distributed in the Saudi-Hadi liberated areas only. Let the rest of the country starve to death! Who can hear Yemenis? Who can hear their outcries? Who can save Yemen? Who?



**Afrah Nasser
Sweden**

TRANS PEOPLE AS SUBJECTS

Nov. 20 marks the 17th International Transgender Day of Remembrance (TDOR), to remember people who were murdered or committed suicide since TDOR 2014 for being, or being perceived as, Transgender or gender non-conforming (GNC). Transgender people and their supporters participated in the Philly Trans March on Oct. 10. I will attend the event at Chicago's TGLBQ community space. Transgender people continue, too slowly, to gain rights. Argentina's Buenos Aires is the first provincial government in the world that set aside at least 1% of its jobs for Trans people. But Malaysia's highest court ruled that cross-dressing is illegal under Sharia law; and Palatine, Ill., Township High School District 211 only allows Trans high school students access to private locker room space, which is in defiance of the Office of Civil Rights ruling that students have unrestricted access to the entire locker room. An Association of American Universities survey found that about a quarter of Transgender and GNC students are sexually harassed, while Trans people are executed in Iran. Clearly, we all must continue to

READERS' VIEWS

work to increase acceptance and full human rights for Transgender people.

**Elise
Chicago**

As a newly transitioning Transgender woman, I had encountered rude comments but several days ago I was confronted with my first official act of transphobic discrimination. I went to the post office to cash a money order. You need two photo IDs. Now, my appearance as a Transgender woman is much different than my appearance on my old ID. The clerk looked at me, looked at my ID, called me sir, and then said he would have to consult his supervisor. When she came back, I was told that since my signature on my ID card and on the money order didn't match, they would not cash the money order. It wasn't the signature that was the issue, it was that I am now a woman. Rank discrimination.

**Transgender reader
Queens, New York**

FIGHTING SEX TRAFFICKERS

Another Tribal woman, Sheila Lou St. Clair, has gone missing in Duluth, Minn. Sheila has been a friend and supporter of Hildegard House, a haven for abused and trafficked women. Now her friends fear for her life. The traffickers have been killing women who rebel against them, usually by drowning them in the waters of the Great Lakes. There are criminal gangs operating networks of forced sex-slaves, mostly Native American women, from Duluth along the Great Lakes to the east coast. What has happened to the world and to journalists who might ferret out the truth about what is happening?

**Hildegard House supporter
Duluth, Minn.**

The Democratic Presidential candidates' debate just a few days earlier had no noticeable impact on the People's Climate March. It is true that they contrasted starkly with the Republicans' commitment to lying about climate change, but none of them went further than Bernie Sanders' reformist call "to transform our energy system away from fossil fuel to energy efficiency and sustainable energy."

**Marcher
Chicago**

An unworthy op-ed disguised as a news article appeared in *The New York Times* Sept. 21, "When Radiation Isn't the Real Risk"—and it won an award, Nuclear Hotseat's "Numb Nuts of the Week." In the article the International Atomic Energy Agency, well known as a nuclear power booster, claims that "no one has been killed or sickened by

[Fukushima] radiation," bundling 1,600 deaths into one cause, "stress." And Dr. Mohan Doss, by advancing hormesis—the fraudulent idea that small amounts of radiation can be good for you—is denying science

that was settled by Alice Stewart in 1957, nearly 60 years ago. Dr. Timothy Mousseau has been studying the insects, birds and mammals of Chernobyl and Fukushima, for years. They are not known to be stressed to death by evacuation orders.

**January
Chicago**

RACIST F.B.I. HEAD

In what appears to be a deeply racist statement, F.B.I. Director James Comey tried to shut down any critique of police for the slaughter of Black men, women and children. Even he had to acknowledge that he was basically pulling it out of a part of his body that was not his brain since he had no data, that is, no actual facts to back up his statement. That didn't stop him from falsely claiming that recent criticism of the police is directly tied to an increase in crime. Why? Because according to Comey, cops don't want to be caught on tape doing something naughty that might go viral. Wow, what a great view he has of the police if the plea and demand that Black Lives Matter, so terrifies them of some possible added scrutiny that they stop doing their jobs. Sorry, Comey, the Black Lives Matter movement opened a door that you are not going to be able to close.

**Angry Women's Liberationist
Chicago**



STUDENTS DISREGARDED

There is a blatant disregard for the education of Black, Latin@, immigrant and working class students here in Detroit. It seems as if, in this post-Industrial Age, there will be less need for workers, so the first to get disregarded are the students. No one is willing to admit the failure of the charter school concept, as students are not graduating more educationally prepared.

Another aspect that is totally missed is the aspect of technology and its effect on literacy. We are quickly becoming a non-reading society, which is okay if you are consigned to the sector of society not expected to contribute creatively. The rush to get tablets to second graders will be a detriment to learning, creativity and imagination. Businesses are really invested in this promotion because it creates either contracts or tax write-offs.

**Subscriber
Detroit**

THREATS TO THE PLANET

Regarding "Horrors of Hiroshima linger 70 years later" (Sept.-Oct. N&L), the fear of nuclear war has tormented all my life. One of my deepest wishes and concerns is that the world should be freed forever from this horrible threat to all life on this planet. I would love to contribute in any way I can to ridding the world of these weapons of madness and hatred before it is too late.

**Ramakuma
Fairfax, Calif.**

CAROL DUNN CARTER

Carol Dunn Carter, long-time friend of News and Letters Committees, died in Detroit Oct. 5. Born in Iowa in 1924, she came to Michigan in 1949 to care for her cousin's baby. She continued to care for children until she married William Edward Carter, who died in 1989. She met News and Letters Committees through her activities with the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) in the 1960s. Carol was passionate and continuously active in the fight for social justice, and active until a stroke several years ago sidelined her.

**Susan Van Gelder
Detroit**

ON BECOMING PRACTICING DIALECTICIANS

I was interested in seeing the complete document that was excerpted in the Sept.-Oct. 2015 *N&L*, "A revolutionary attitude to Archives" (#10348 in the Raya Dunayevskaya Collection). I found the subtitle, "The Process of Becoming 'Practicing Dialecticians,'" helpful. Precisely *that* process is what tracing Marx's last decade and Marxist-Humanist development is all about. The preceding section called "Becoming Practicing Dialecticians" spoke to the task of Marxist-Humanists in creating a new form for *N&L at that moment*. The challenge is practicing dialectics at every moment.

Eugene Walker
Mexico City

There are other movies inspired by the 1971 Stanford prison experiment. All of them focus on the abstract ethical issue, and not on the need to uproot completely this capitalist society. They stress how good people turn evil, almost affirming that "humans are evil by nature." Naturally, this is a bourgeois way of thinking, for it implies that, as people are evil by nature, there is nothing else we could do. "Philip Zimbardo and Marx's Humanism" (Sept.-Oct. *N&L*) contrasts the "ethical issue" of the experiment with a wider view of humanism, and then goes to Marx's 1844 philosophic writings. However, it is a little confusing, since it jumps from the experiment to Marx without developing the latter's ideas to a more comprehensible form. This made Marx's quotes feel a little forced, like if we had the Stanford experiment and Marx next to one another, without one coming dialectically out of the other. Anyway, the text opens new possibilities to understand the struggle of prisoners for human treatment.

Activist
Mexico

The commentary on Zimbardo brought out the fundamental link between the dispositional good nature of people and Marx's concept of humanism and made it quite accessible. I'm



about halfway through [Zimbardo's] *The Lucifer Effect*. I recently read *The Falseification of Afrikan Consciousness* by New Afrikan psychologist Amos Wilson. Wilson wrote about the power of the rulers to define or diagnose various kinds of behavioral characteristics, particularly those that do not comport with the

prescribed social norms of capital relations. We have narrow, self-serving definitions and diagnoses stemming purely from innate dispositions of an individual. The tragedy of that kind of definition/diagnosis is that the system of capital relations is never called into question. Zimbardo takes up where Wilson leaves off in bringing to the fore the need to include the impact of the situation and the system on an individual's behavior. Zimbardo is advocating that in order for a definition or a diagnosis to have credibility it must include a holistic analysis.

Faruq Represa, Calif.

In the document of Dunayevskaya's printed in the Sept.-Oct. *N&L*, she uses the surprising expression "The Dialectic of the Party" to describe the book she intended to write. What a dialectic of development that title, that concept, underwent in the two years she worked on the book. Now that her Archives are online one can seek that in Vol. XIII. The development was far too deep and extensive to show in a short note, but one can get an indication of the distance she traveled in the title she finally arrived at in 1987: "Dialectics of Organization and Philosophy: The 'party' and forms of organization born out of spontaneity"

Marxist-Humanist Archives fan
Los Angeles

In issue after issue of *N&L*, we have seen an analysis of how things are evolving in Greece. One of the first articles that I remember was "Greece: Postmodernism in Power" (March-April *N&L*). We published a Spanish translation of it in the May-June 2015 issue of our paper *Praxis en América Latina*,

before the July referendum. We received some critique for publishing it. Some people were still "astonished" by how Syriza had been able to "challenge" the European powers. They also complained about the criticism of Althusser, Laclau, Varoufakis and others all together as post-Marx Marxists (in Dunayevskaya's pejorative sense of this concept). Since that essay, the position of *N&L* has been clear: Syriza is not the masses. To beat capitalism, we need a much wider philosophy of liberation than that of Althusser, Laclau and company. And how things have turned out since then—Syriza actually betraying the masses! It is not that *N&L* "predicted" what was about to come, but that it is rooted in a strong philosophy of human liberation.

J.G.F. Hector
Mexico City

●

VOICES FROM BEHIND BARS

I have been receiving *N&L* since 2002 and each one gets better. *N&L* is my distraction to the prison industrial complex. As a Black man, I appreciate your coverage of the Black Lives Matter campaign. All lives matter, no one disagrees with that, but the reason an emphasis has been put on Black Lives Matter is that Black lives never mattered in the mainstream media or to the average citizen. If Black lives did matter, we wouldn't have to say it. The Eric Garner situation is proof that Black lives don't matter; and do I need to say more regarding Mike Brown and the others who lost their lives to racist, blood-thirsty pigs? When Black Lives Matter, activists will stop saying it. When Black Lives do Matter is when the racist pig establishment will be held accountable for eradicating Black and Brown people.

Prison rights activists in Wisconsin prisons

Most likely portions of this letter will be illegible due to officers over-stamping some people's mail with a non-transparent stamp. Ever since I came to Pelican Bay-SHU, everyone I have written to has written me back stating that they couldn't read portions of my letters due to these security hous-

ing unit stamps. My mom told me that they stamped my *one-page* letter *four* times, and she couldn't read it. What if something happened to me and I tried to tell her, but she couldn't read my letter due to these excessive stamps? No doubt these officers deliberately use these stamps to keep us silent.

Prisoner
Crescent City, Calif.

I like how "California prisons' punitive 'wellness checks'" (Sept.-Oct. *N&L*) let us hear the voices of prisoners speaking for themselves, the universality and humanity of their struggle. One of the most important contributions of *N&L* is to conceive prisoners as a revolutionary subject—with women, Black

Reader
Mexico

people, youth, workers.

I write this letter to request a year subscription to *N&L*. I would also like to thank you for the hard work and dedication y'all put into the struggle around the world. Know I really appreciate the solidarity.

Prisoner

Camp Hill, Penn.

I am being released in September. You can send my *N&L* to my new address, enclosed. Thank you for your time and help.

Getting out

San Antonio, Texas

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

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by Raya Dunayevskaya

- Marxism and Freedom: from 1776 until Today**
Foreword by Joel Kovel \$24.95
- Philosophy and Revolution: From Hegel to Sartre and from Marx to Mao** \$24.95
- Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution** 1991 edition.
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Pamphlets published by News and Letters Committees

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by Andy Phillips and Raya Dunayevskaya \$8.00
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11-12/15

Voices from Chernobyl chart disaster

Voices from Chernobyl: The oral history of a nuclear disaster by Svetlana Alexievich (Published 2006).

"I am not married to sorrow, I just choose not to look away." —Terry Tempest Williams

These oral sketches create an unforgettable mosaic of emotional and intellectual impressions: love, friendship, heartbreak, anger, self-justification, guilt, bitterness, nostalgia, lost lives and resignation. The mother of a daughter with extreme mutations, whose surgeries began when she was two days old, said, "The ones like her don't live, ... But she didn't die, because I loved her."

Among Belarusians, only the best informed and most distrustful of the Soviet government panicked in April 1986 when the day rained fallout from the equivalent of many Hiroshima-style bombs. A child remembered the weather in Minsk after the faraway explosion, "There was a black cloud and hard rain."

People heard that there had been an accident at Chernobyl, but the May Day celebration was upon them and nobody wanted to miss it. Celebrants noticed that the rain puddles were shiny yellow and green as though painted, but that was not a reason to cancel the festivities—Minsk's best May Day ever. But many, even those not yet born, lost their innocence.

Heartbroken young women and dying men, the liq-



Aerial view of Chernobyl burning.

EDITORIAL

continued from p. 1

termed so-called primitive accumulation. At the same time, first Boris Yeltsin, then Putin, were given free rein to destroy Chechnya, killing at least 150,000 people.

The new Nobel Prize winner for literature, Svetlana Alexievich, described the mood in today's Russia this way: "People are disappointed at the 20 years that have passed since the collapse of the Soviet Union. It was we, the 'elite,' who wanted perestroika, but people stayed silent. It turns out now, when Putin began to speak their language, that people chose the past instead of the future. It is the most terrible discovery of the latest years. Of course, Russian television perverts people. Journalists of Russian media should be tried for what they are saying."

THE PULL OF RETROGRESSION

Putin made his retrogressive aims clear in Ukraine. The seizing of Crimea led to the suppression of the Tatars, who suffered genocide under Stalin. Their non-violent resistance is slandered as ISIS-inspired. The occupation of industrial areas of eastern Ukraine has suppressed workers' self-activity. Today the occupied parts of Ukraine are plastered with images of Stalin and czarist symbols, while attacks on Jews, Roma, and LGBT people are encouraged by the Russians.

The suppression of workers, the crushing of revolution—these aims are hardly alien to bourgeois society, including bourgeois liberals. But they are a particular inspiration for the growing European neo-fascist movement, from the French National Front to Hungary, in which the far-Right Fidesz party contends for power with the neo-Nazi Jobbik party. All praise Putin's "defense of traditional values."

The U.S. right wing, from Patrick Buchanan to Donald Trump, has very kind words for Putin as well. They appreciate his opposition to "multiculturalism," secularism and internationalism. (As for the part of the "Left" that tailends this horror show, they are beneath contempt.) Despite temporary alignments, the seeds of world imperialist war continue to proliferate in this reactionary soil.

THE IDEA OF FREEDOM

Putin knows that the U.S. and other powers are in no hurry to see the overthrow of Assad if they can't be the ones to manage the transition. He knows the depth of their hypocrisy. We are seeing the day of the naked emperors.

Syrian revolutionaries understand this. The Local Coordinating Committees (LCC) state: "Russian troops are now openly fighting alongside the army of the dictator. Despite international consensus that the attacks have not targeted ISIS positions, we have yet to see any forceful condemnations regarding the killing of civilians, and this leads us to believe that the international community is tacitly approving of these attacks..."

"The LCC calls upon all revolutionary forces and factions to unite by any means and respond to the Russian aggression. We further call upon the international community to uphold its moral and legal responsibilities regarding the strategic direction of current events in Syria" (Oct. 2, 2015).

The people are not going to turn back. What Putin wants to kill is the very idea of a free, multiethnic, revolutionary Syria—but that idea of freedom, the essence of humanity, will persist.

uidators, comprised several of the sketches in Alexievich's book. Two-week rotations for cleanup of the nuclear reactor turned into six months, and their acceptance of Party leadership was tempered when they realized they had been sent as necessary sacrifices—not that they didn't understand, but just that all illusions were destroyed. One radioactive laborer complained, "I can't take my little boy in my arms."

Repeatedly the men cited their ideals as Slavs or Communists, who didn't think of themselves except as part of a necessary whole to be preserved even at the cost of their lives. As they died, their fantastically loyal wives tried to protect them. One of the wives explains not only the 10-year ordeal of watching the unspeakably gruesome death of her husband, but trying to shield him from, one by one, the deaths of his comrades and attempts not to bring him a mirror, which in the end he demanded.

A man and wife, teachers, contributed to the mosaic with illuminating descriptions of how radiation affected students still well enough to be at school on some days. "They are constantly seeing someone or something get buried." They describe children who aren't "like the kids I taught 10 years ago." They don't play or fool around, but faint if they have to stand for more than 15 minutes. Children who can't be surprised or made happy, "always tired and sleepy" with pale, gray faces. "If they fight or accidentally break a window, the teachers are pleased." These children don't get yelled at, can't remember a five-minute-old lesson and are "growing so slowly."

Philosophical essays on various topics comprise an important part of the mosaic; some explaining people's change of heart as they resigned themselves to the consequences of years of excess radiation. The book includes observations by children who spent most of their lives in radiating environments or had been evacuated.

They had poignant memories: "Since the year I was born (1986) there haven't been any boys or girls born in our village. I'm the only one." The sparrows and May bugs disappeared from our town. "My plants are there, and two albums of stamps, I was hoping to bring them with me. Also, I had a bike." "I had a friend, Andrei. Yulia, Katya, Vadim, Oksana, Oleg, and now Andrei. The whole sky is alive for me now when I look at it, because they're all there."

Says the compiler of these voices, Alexievich, "These people had already seen what for everyone else is still unknown. I felt like I was recording the future."

As one of the voices says, "... Lazarus ... looked into the abyss. And now he's alien, he'll never be the same as other people, even though Christ resurrected him."

—January

Killing Mockingbird

The publication of Harper Lee's *Go Set A Watchman* is the source of such consternation that in their state of discomfiture, commentators are contorting language and logic to dismiss and denounce it. Despite what one might surmise from the statements of those who are outraged by the resurfacing of Lee's first, previously unpublished, novel, she is neither dead nor dotty.

If literature, like all art, is, at its best, meant to point to who we are and challenge our notions of who we think we are, the measure of our ability to take up this challenge and to read critically can be found in the news, as well as, and this is very much to the point, in our hearts and our everyday comings and goings.

America deals officially with race with *To Kill A Mockingbird* and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. In our current historical moment, Black people's response to the living experience of America is the simple statement *Black Lives Matter*. It is a mantra, a prayer, an incantation whose power may be judged by what's reported in the news. A simple statement of what would seem self-evident, it is defiant, definitive, affirmative.

As James Baldwin said in 1963 in a talk to teachers, "[T]he crucial paradox which confronts us here is that the whole process of education occurs within a social framework and is designed to perpetuate the aims of society...The paradox of education," he goes on to say, "is precisely this—that as one begins to become conscious one begins to examine the society in which [s]he is being educated. The purpose of education, finally, is to create in a person the ability to look at the world for [oneself], to make [one's] own decisions...But no society is really anxious to have that kind of person around."

So Black parents are right when they protest the inclusions of both *Huck Finn* and *Mockingbird* because of its repeated use of the "n" epithet. In fact, the national reading of both novels is a ritual misreading whose function is to assuage tender feelings of whites when looking at race, reaffirm white supremacy, enshrine law and American culture as fundamentally good and

Prisoners speak on

Hugo 'Yogi' Pinell

It pains as well as angers me to hear that Hugo "Yogi" Pinell was set up by prison guards and assassinated. I agree that he was assassinated, because I was at that prison for over a decade and several weeks before my departure to another SHU there was evidence of the setup being put in motion.

For some strange reason officers decided that they were gonna start packing non-white inmates up and transferring them to C-Yard, stating that they need to make room for eight whites from another prison. In my entire time at CSP-S this has never happened and we all knew something was up.

When a person receives threats, officers remove him from the yard and place him in the hole pending investigation, but this did not happen. Instead Pinell was left in harm's way and, just to ensure the attack, they transferred in eight hostile whites.

It was clear to me and everyone else what truly happened leading up to the assassination of our brother. I would like those concerned to request all the movement logs as well as incoming transfers and explanations from CSP-S for the bed movements. They don't just do those things for no reason.

—Prisoner observer in Pelican Bay

* * *

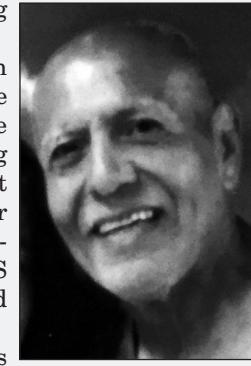
It killed me inside to see Big Brother Yogi's obit in the last issue of *News & Letters*. I left him in B3-SHU/Step Down Program just days before his murder. He was an idol and father figure to me and I was very protective of the Good Brother and faced much repression and hate from the guards for my relationship with Big Yogi.

When all turned against me, Hugo Pinell stayed by my side. He shared his food with everyone, no matter race, gangs, or hate group. If you were hungry, he fed you. When others spoke hate, he spoke peace. He was the strongest man I've ever known.

Forty-five years in a tomb with running water, yet when I last spoke with him, his mind was as sharp as a needlepoint! While I started losing my mind in solitary, Big Yogi saw I was cracking mentally. He is the person who told me to seek mental help. I'm in long-term mental health treatment right now because of ... the real O.G.'s advice.

Well, I'll always have you in my heart, loved one. If there's a heaven, I'm sure you're there. You'll see comrades W.L Nolen, Howard Tole, Brother George and Jonathan Jackson again! Yogi told me Brother W.L. Nolen taught him to always help, never hurt.

—Missing Brother Yogi in Vacaville, Calif.



to instruct as to America's inviolable sanctity. The reading is meant to be the end of any discussion.

On a national level, too, many readers have not allowed themselves the maturity to read the satire in Twain's *Huck Finn*. When an explosion occurs and the news bearer is asked if anyone is killed, he responds "No" but that a n——r was killed. Those who respond to "Black Lives Matter" with "All lives matter," have blinded themselves to the humanity of Black people.

Mark Twain became increasingly pessimistic. A sort of *The Prince and the Pauper*, but set in Missouri in 1830, Twain's *Pudd'nhead Wilson* would do well as a replacement to *Huck Finn*, until such time as his more subtle challenges to our country on notions of white and black can be read and understood universally.

In a strange twist, this peculiarly willful myopia, dare I say evil, is strangely and devastatingly realized in the adamant non-conjuring of the Black body. Muslim has become the new Black. Latino is the new Black. Courtesy of presidential hopeful Jeb Bush, who clarified his "anchor babies" statements, we now understand that Asian is the new Black.

All of this points to the need for a discussion about performing blackness and the spectacle of blackness, which, it has been painfully exhibited, remains immovable, but has been changed and challenged by the Obama presidency, as well as by many of us in our daily affirmative actions.

Go Set A Watchman is not an unfinished manuscript. Lee's decision to have it published now might well be seen as the act of a hoary sage. Why should we not see it as the deliberate arrangement of a writer who can no longer stand to have her second novel read as a fairytale? Lee is 89 and in her life's last chapter. The final chapter came too soon for Sandra Bland, for Freddie Gray, Trayvon Martin, little Andy Lopez and Tamir Rice. I would like to think that Lee feels we can no longer afford the luxury of fairytales whose cost is blood.

—C. Safos

Canada's election: a sense of uncertainty

The general feeling about Canada's federal election is that of events spinning out of control, and a deep sense of foreboding; a perception that the "old" Canada that most Canadians saw as a basically moderate and easy-going place, is coming apart. Much of this comes from 10 terrible years of Prime Minister Stephen Harper's reign and also from the brutal pressures of globalized capitalism.

The campaign that elected Justin Trudeau as the new Prime Minister has been the longest in Canadian history, 79 days, while the customary time limit has been 35 days; and those days have been filled with scandals and general stupidity. It was impossible to predict the outcome of this very close race. In Canada's system of voting, with three and sometimes four parties competing in each riding, less than 50 votes can determine a local outcome, and a Prime Minister can be voted in by a significant minority of the popular vote. Still, two-thirds of Canadians wanted Harper out.

Many had hoped that Tom Mulcair and the New Democratic Party (NDP) would form the next government—they have been the official opposition since 2011. He made the same fatal error that many on the left make; he moved from left to center, thinking it would make him more electable. His main base of support was among Québec voters, who hoped that Québec would be a factor for change in Canada. That support melted away when Mulcair abandoned his principles.

The Green Party has been insignificant, as its leaders avoid issues of labor and social inequality. The Bloc Québécois (BQ) has belatedly grasped that having a strong presence at the federal level could bring them the leverage to improve conditions, and that the question of Québec sovereignty, a factor in Canadian politics, is not so much about abstract culture, but about attitude to life.

Stephen Harper has been characterized as both Canada's Richard Nixon and its George W. Bush. His 10 years in office have been a stream of retrogression and misdeeds. The tar sands project in Alberta is his baby, as are the XL Pipeline, the "bomb trains" and other petroleum projects, especially in Alberta. This resulted in revolt there and regional antagonism across Canada.

He opened up Canada to looting of its resources and land by big business and played repressive games with immigration and identity politics. He strengthened the monarchy, which interfered in Canada to keep him in power. His "anti-terrorism" laws are worse than the ones in the U.S. He cut funds for environmental research and in his Nixonian secretiveness imposed gag orders throughout the government. He even withdrew Canada from the Kyoto Protocol in 2011. He opposed marriage equality, cut healthcare funding and social programs, and involved Canada in foreign wars.

Newly elected Justin Trudeau may not be much better. He is seen as inexperienced and an intellectual lightweight. His Liberal Party, in power in Québec and Ontario, is giving away those provinces' resources to big business. Though he campaigned on a promise to increase government spending, in the last few days a scandal revealed that those monies are for infrastructure for oil companies. The co-chair of his campaign, Dan Gagnier, was exposed as a lobbyist working behind the scenes for mining and oil companies. Also, Trudeau, like Harper, plays divisive games with identity politics.

Now that Trudeau has been elected Prime Minister, with a majority government, we know the crises will continue and people will not take to this passively. At least Harper is gone. Canadians want deep change, and the striving for a new Canada and Québec will take new forms. Today is a day for opposition to the present society and for new beginnings.

—D. Chêneville, PJ, ti-Ouistiti

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Land struggles in Honduras

In 2011, I was in a delegation to Honduras. We were present at a protest march along a major highway next to the Palmerola air base, the U.S. "unsinkable aircraft carrier" in the center of the country. It was June 28, the second anniversary of a military coup d'état carried out by Romeo Vasquez, a Honduran Air Force General trained at the U.S. Army School of the Americas near Atlanta, now renamed Western Hemisphere Institute for Security and Cooperation. The protest was called by popular resistance organizations comprised mostly of Afro-Hondurans, Indigenous Hondurans and Honduran campesino farmers.

One of the main problems facing these groups, both before and after the coup, is that corrupt governments issue multiple titles to the same plot of land. Also, there is an unenforced law that says if land goes unused, the Honduran state is supposed to buy it and resell it on credit to farmers who need land. Finally, there is not much recognition of the fact of Indigenous peoples' original ownership of all land in the Americas and of what that necessarily implies.

Instead, wealthy individuals and corporations are allowed to use Honduran land for export industries, mostly to the detriment of local communities. Many also have private armies and intimidate people into selling their land. The sum of the problems is a formidable barrier to people's ability to acquire and hold land with which they could produce for themselves.

Yet the popular organizations have been able to hold land through defying eviction orders. They have acquired land through direct actions—such as blocking highways and access to mines and cropland. As would be expected, resistance is often met with violence.

Our delegation also went to a remote farming town called Rigores which was under an eviction order. A few weeks earlier, about 100 homes had been burned by the military and police. Many of the townspeople were sleeping outside or huddled in a small community center. As the delegation was viewing the wreckage, soldiers arrived at the edge of town. Smoke was already rising over the horizon, but upon seeing our group, many with cameras, the soldiers approached us slowly, acting cool. One of our delegation was able to engage the commander in conversation over the questionable legality of the eviction, stalling until media could be

Rally against murders of Trans people of color

New York City—Over 200 Trans people of color and allies rallied in downtown Brooklyn on Aug. 25 at an emergency rally called by Black Lives Matter, Fierce, Sylvia Rivera Law Project and the Audre Lorde Project. We were there to confront the fact that over a dozen Black Trans women have been murdered in the two weeks preceding the rally. We held up posters with the names and photos of some of those killed. Others held up handmade protest signs, which denounced the murder and also the attacks on Trans people by the cops and other repressive forces.

Speakers included: Trans people of color from their organizations as well as from Black Lives Matter; a well-known Trans poet and community organizer; Trans women of color; Black cis men who united their rage over the murder of so many Black people with the rage of the Trans community over the murder of so many Trans people, especially Trans women.

Unity was evident in the clapping, singing and cheering during the rally. The speeches were powerful and were accompanied by frequent applause. The crowd repeatedly chanted "Black Trans Lives Matter."

It was a powerful testimony to the growth and maturity of Black Lives Matter, which broke with a certain transphobia and homophobia and embraced Trans people as a natural ally in the struggle for human freedom and justice. The fact that so many showed up on such short notice was impressive, showing the possibilities for ongoing revolutionary activities in both the Trans and cis communities.

—Natalia

alerted. Shortly after reporters arrived, the soldiers left.

We stayed for several more hours, speaking with people in the town. One grandmother became tearful, wondering whether soldiers would return after we left. I realized that racial and class privilege might sometimes be commanded to further liberation, but always as blunt instruments with limits that are unclear. Audre Lorde's words came to mind: "The master's tools cannot dismantle the master's house."

Popular attention and support ensured that Rigores was not destroyed again and many houses have been rebuilt.

Replicating small successes like in Rigores will be a function of the level of participation in popular struggle and of the army's ability to inflict terror with impunity. As long as the U.S. keeps funding the Honduran police forces, that ability will be very strong, unless people in the U.S. and other countries can effectively transform society including their governments to emphatically reject systems of domination.

—Buddy Bell

QUEER NOTES

by Elise

In September the Roland Emmerich film *Stonewall* was protested for rewriting the history and downplaying the essential role Transgender and Transvestite people of color played in the 1969 rebellion which began the modern Gay Rights Movement in the U.S. *Stonewall* portrays an invented Gay white character, Danny Winters, as the one who threw the first brick that started the rebellion.

* * *

A Tunisian teenager was sentenced to a year in prison for homosexual acts after being held in custody for six days without access to an attorney and forced to have a "medical" anal exam. Amnesty International and local Queer rights group Shams denounced the barbaric treatment of the teen and are calling for decriminalizing homosexuality in Tunisia.

* * *

Boston's TOD@S Collaborative launched a Domestic Violence awareness campaign, "Celebrating #QTPO-Clove" (Queer Trans People of Color love), to increase awareness of domestic violence in LGBTQ communities of color. Ads on buses, bus shelters, trains and radio, print and social media describe healthy relationships and give resources for victims of domestic violence.

* * *

The LGBT youth group "Children 404's" membership on Russian social media site VKontakte reached an all-time high of 75,000 despite Russia's ban on LGBT groups just one day before. "Children 404," run by journalist Yelena Klimova, works for the rights of Russia's GLBT community and provides counseling to youth.

* * *

If Salt Lake City Mayor Ralph Becker, Councilman Stan Penfold and Equality Utah have their way, 900 South St., near the headquarters of the anti-GLBT Mormon church, will become Harvey Milk Street, named after the assassinated San Francisco Supervisor who was the first openly Gay person elected to public office in California. If Harvey Milk St. becomes reality, it will join Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. and Rosa Parks Blvd. in Salt Lake City, thwarting the Mormons, who had excluded African Americans from its male priesthood until 1979.

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Prisoners battle injustice system

continued from p. 1

deepening of what it means to be human. As we said in our 2012 pamphlet "We want to be validated as human".¹

"In contrast to the gang worldview of other-as-enemy, the hunger strikers at Pelican Bay and other California prisons reach for a new universal, asserting the fundamental dialectical connection of one human being to another as a human being."

California Department of Corrections (CDC) reported that 6,600 prisoners participated in the first hunger strike.

Over 12,000 participated in the second hunger strike, Sept.-Oct. 2011. In 2013 the prisoners called for another

hunger strike; this time CDC admitted that there were over 30,000 who participated.

PRISONERS' FAMILIES JOIN THE STRUGGLE

Prisoners' inspiring non-violent action shined a light on torture committed right in the U.S. as public opinion turned around with condemnation in the mainstream press, even statements from Sen. John McCain, held in solitary as a POW in Vietnam.

The prisoners convinced their families to support them publicly. Some family members worried that if they spoke out the CDC would retaliate against loved ones inside. The families came to understand that it was the prisoner's choice to join the hunger strike, that they were doing it for everyone.

California Families Against Solitary Confinement (CFASC) is a new, eloquent dimension of the movement expressing the thoughts and feelings of those they love to the media, legislators, courts, and especially in support of each other.

Partly because the families' voices were so powerful, the movement spread. Lawsuits were filed. Many demonstrations, talks, community events, teach-ins, etc., were held throughout the state. Following the lead of the prisoners, CFASC organizes across racial lines.

AGREEMENT TO END HOSTILITIES

In 2012 the prisoners, determined to continue the fight, came out with a historic Agreement to End Hostilities. It called on prisoners to not allow the prison to set one group against another.²

What is exciting about the movement is prisoners acknowledging each other's humanity. The prisoners are not asking to be set free, they admit that some did terrible things.

Their message—to nurture one's humanity, not to reduce others to a thing—speaks to the inhumanity that plagues the whole society. A "thank you" card from a prisoner we visited reads:

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

The movement does not seek spectacles or stop at confrontations with authorities. It seeks to change the minds of ordinary people.

WE SPEAK IN MANY VOICES

There are many different voices within and supporting the Prisoners' Human Rights Movement. Many groups participate in the monthly actions on the 23rd of each month. There are more documentaries, more plays like *If the SHU Fits*, more vigils, prayer meetings, demonstrations not just across California, but all over the country—Boston, Philadelphia, etc.—and even international support from Mexico, Guantanamo and Palestine. There are still those who want to get legislation through, starting with banning putting minors in solitary. The settlement of the class action lawsuit is but one venue, one expression of the movement.

Now that hundreds of prisoners long held in the SHU are being released from solitary, there are mixed reactions. On the one hand, the relief, gratitude and flowering of those who can at last see the sun and have a first contact visit is overwhelming.

On the other hand, guards have not been a party to the settlement. Some are predicting a dire rise in violence and doing everything in their power to cause prisoners to explode. They "accidentally" open doors to cells

1. To order *Pelican Bay Hunger Strikers: We want to be validated as human* see page 7.
2. This has been tried before, as one long-time prisoner recounted to us, and guards have always found a way to set prisoners against each other again. This time was different. For a full text of the *Agreement* see <http://newsandletters.org/pelican-bay-prisoners-aim-to-end-hostilities/>.

housing prisoners whom the guards deemed enemies of each other, expecting them to fight. They have not.

At Pelican Bay SHU the so-called "wellness" checks have become torture as guards open the loud metal doors to each unit, stomp through the hallways, bang metal batons against the metal doors, etc. (see "California prisons' punitive 'wellness checks,'" Sept.-Oct. 2015 News & Letters). Prisoners there have been deprived of sleep for over two months, increasing stress levels and health problems, including thoughts of suicide these checks are meant to prevent.

There are some hints that attitudes among guards may be changing. We heard reports of administrators and some guards looking forward to receiving prisoners who have been released from solitary. They know it will have a calming effect in their prison, as those prisoners have a great deal of credibility and they are serious about the

Agreement to End Hostilities.

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE HUMAN

The challenge to what it means to be human remains the bedrock. Here are a few of the things we heard when we visited Pelican Bay in August:

• All hunger strikes were rough to participate in. But it was a fight we had to take.

• My colon collapsed during the hunger strike. I have a colostomy bag now and can't sleep because I can't get meds to keep my gas under control, but it was worth it!

• The hunger strike created a bond between prisoners. The Agreement is holding in the SHU, no incidents. I dropped my prejudices. The guards were sure that when they let Nortenos and Surenos out on the yard at the same time, they would fight each other. But they don't!

• I've stayed in the SHU because my moral beliefs (not debriefing) are precious to me. The media (PBS documentary "Solitary Nation") is focusing on how solitary victimizes people: cutting themselves, etc. I do see strong men break—we are buried alive in here. But we are not all like that. We are very sane, we have self-respect.

• When you're in prison, you change. I tried to stay who I was before I came here. But I was young, self-centered. After all this time you no longer think just of yourself, but all the others, too, including those outside and those who will come here after you.

• The hunger strike humanized prisoners. My family and others got a whole new outlook on the criminal justice system. Many young people make bad choices and California throws them away. People aren't born with the tools to be good parents and make good decisions. Does that mean you don't value those people and put them in SHU for 30 years? We got time to think. The Agreement to End Hostilities gave us power. When prisoners come together as people, we are much stronger.

The principles that make it possible for prisoners to resist CDC's pressure to tell on others are the definition of what it means to live life as a human being. It is a recognition that every individual act is at the same time a social act; that even in the most dire circumstances, I don't forget that I live as a social being, a human being.

That new concept of what it means to be human is what enables prisoners to resist the guards' current efforts to worsen conditions. By resisting forced isolation, prisoners reestablished their connection to one another and asserted their essential humanity. That is a beginning of a revolutionary reorganization of society.

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Stop Rikers cruelty

New York City—Over 100 people attended a midday Manhattan hearing on proposed new draconian restrictions at the city's notorious Rikers Island (called by many New York's Guantanamo) concerning visiting rules, packages and especially demands by prison authorities to roll back limits on the use of solitary confinement.

In particular the Department of Corrections is demanding: visits be restricted to family members alone and only family members without criminal histories; any packages sent to prisoners from outside come from "official vendors" (meaning Amazon, basically); that restrictions on the punitive use of solitary confinement, enacted earlier by the Board of Corrections, be rolled back, giving the correctional staff unlimited power as to how long prisoners can be held in segregation.

The hearing was conducted by the Board of Corrections of the City of New York. One person after another representing prisoner advocacy, civil liberty, religious, Trans and advocacy groups, as well as family members all testified, unanimously, against the proposed rules.

One ex-prisoner, who had served time in Rikers and state prisons, stated that the visiting rules at Rikers were infinitely worse than in state prison. Another ex-prisoner testified that she was beaten up by guards and left unprotected to be raped by other prisoners. A woman said that she was forced to have sex with a guard or be thrown in solitary confinement. A former Rikers employee from the mental health department testified as to the severe mental impact that prolonged solitary confinement had on prisoners, and noted that at Rikers it is the norm to place mentally ill prisoners in solitary confinement, sometimes without justification.

There were speakers from News and Letters Committees, Sylvia Rivera Law Project, the Jail Action Coalition, which organized the mass turnout at the hearing, the Osborne Society, the Fortune Society, the New York Civil Liberties Union and others.

The overall tone was one of passionate indignation. The hearing lasted for several hours. Representatives of the Department of Corrections were invited to attend, but none did so.

—NYC Prisoner advocate

Flint water crisis

Flint, Mich.—When the article, "Pricey Water in Flint" was published in the Sept.-Oct. News & Letters, tests revealing doubled and tripled lead levels in our tap water had not come out. Now Michigan's Governor Snyder, the mayor of Flint, and health and environmental experts are pointing enough fingers to block out the sun, jumping to distribute bottled water and free filters to residents and scrambling to reconnect Flint's water supply to Detroit's, at a cost of \$12 million. It will take at least three weeks to flush Flint River water out of the system.

The governor, mayor and emergency manager, as a way of saving money, had signed off on a plan to use water from the Flint River while a new pipeline to Lake Huron is completed. The state legislature, closing the barn door after the horse has been stolen and poisoned with lead, voted not only the \$6 million requested by the Governor but an additional \$3.5 million for lead testing and remediation. The City of Flint will have to pay \$2 million of the \$12 million.

Residents and activists had been protesting since April 2014 when Flint tap water began to look like ginger ale but with bad smells and taste. All parties assured them that the issues were purely cosmetic, although they did admit to using a large amount of chlorine to combat coliform bacteria. The City of Flint, unlike Detroit, did not add anti-corrosive chemicals to the Flint water system. In early September a research team from Virginia Tech reported that "Flint has a very serious lead in water problem." The corroded iron pipes used lead solder that leached into the water supply. The corrosion even destroyed chlorine and allowed bacteria to grow.

Pediatrician Dr. Mona Hanna Attisha, who studied lead levels among Flint children, released a report in September comparing lead levels from Flint children this year, compared to earlier results when water from Lake Huron was used. The percentage of kids with above-average lead levels had nearly doubled and in some areas, tripled.

When her report was released, the state admitted its own data confirmed her findings! State officials were well aware of the problem because it had collected 100 samples of Flint water in the last half of 2014 which showed elevated lead levels. Lead poisoning damage, most severe in infants and children, is irreversible, causing lifelong learning and behavioral issues.

Infrastructure failures are not limited to Flint, but include cities all over the country and pipelines like the Enbridge Company's oil pipelines under the Great Lakes, which has the potential to disastrously contaminate the world's largest supply of fresh water.

—Dan B. and Susan V.G.

Letter from Mexico**Ayotzinapa's new point of departure?**

by J.G.F. Héctor

Sept. 26 marked one year since the forced disappearance of 43 students from the normal school Raúl Isidro Burgos, as well as the murder of another six people in Ayotzinapa, Guerrero, by the Mexican state. The crime was remembered at protests not just in the main cities of Mexico, but worldwide. The demands from the demonstrators were clear: the government must present the 43 missing youth alive—since it knows where they are—and punish all the offenders.

Two days before the mass demonstrations, the government held a meeting with the families and surviving students from Ayotzinapa. It turned out to be useless. The parents and schoolmates insisted that the quest for the missing students should continue, supervised not by the government but by a commission of international experts. The Mexican state, at most, agreed to keep on searching, but guided by its absurd investigation hypotheses.

PARENTS WHO NEVER GIVE UP

First, we must say that if the government accepted a new dialogue with the parents from Ayotzinapa—after almost a year of practically ignoring them—it was not due to “good will.” Rather, it was the parents’ uncompromising actions and thoughts—revitalized recently by the results of an international independent commission investigating the Ayotzinapa case, and the wider, deeper support from the masses—that forced the government to meet with them.

Secondly, the persistence of the Ayotzinapa families is not merely an effort to unveil the scientific truth of the forced disappearances of their children. It is a longing for, indeed a search for, a new kind of society in which the state doesn’t disappear or murder youth, the government and the criminals don’t work together, and there would be an authentic, autonomous justice system—briefly, for a non-capitalist, human world.

This constitutes the universality of the movement for Ayotzinapa. The meeting at the end of the Sept. 26 demonstration in Mexico City clearly showed this. The speakers were parents from Ayotzinapa and activists in other social justice struggles throughout the country—that is, subjects of social transformation. This is no coincidence or a mere political or pragmatic strategy. Instead, such a confluence of participants speaks to us of the historical urge to reconstruct society based on the voices and actions of all the people from below.

EMANCIPATORY VISION

How can we begin to achieve this? On several occasions these revolutionary subjects have spoken and written to this point: We need to get organized. This is crucial. Equally crucial is asking what kind of organizations are we supposed to build. We are not referring to the specific forms or structures that such organizations should adopt, but rather asking what emancipatory vision is needed as we construct them.

In its fullness, such an emancipatory vision means working out a philosophy of human liberation, a dialectic of revolutionary transformation, rooted, of course, in the actions and ideas of the masses in motion. This is the historical task to which revolutionary organizations should commit.

YOUTH IN ACTION

by Natalia Spiegel

Students at Montreal’s McGill University set up a tent city on campus at the beginning of the school year to dramatize McGill’s stalling on its pledge to disinvest from the fossil fuel industry. Divest McGill member and organizer Kristen Perry said that, after three years of lobbying, “They have chosen not to act despite the urgency of the climate crisis.”

At the end of September, more than 200 students at the College of Art in New Delhi, India, rallied, marched and sat-in at their school, protesting an outdated curriculum, shortage of teaching staff and lack of sanitation. The school’s administration is refusing to meet with the students.

Students at Westmount High School in Westmount, Quebec, Canada, formed a picket line outside their school and chanted “Free the Teachers” to protest work-to-rule orders for teachers that students argued would eliminate valuable after-school programs. Some teachers also joined in the protest.

In Beirut at the end of August thousands gathered at Martyrs’ Square and Riad Solh Square, shouting “You stink!” to protest the paralyzed Lebanese government’s inability to collect the garbage. If trash is removed, it is often dumped in streams, the ocean or illegal landfills. The protesters were viciously attacked by security forces with live ammo.

Voices from People’s Climate March

Chicago—Hundreds of people joined the People’s Climate March here on Oct. 14. It was one of 170 events in 47 states demanding serious action to stem climate change as the world’s nation-states prepare for their climate talks in Paris starting Nov. 30. Nationwide, many thousands of people participated, including 1,000 each in Seattle and Miami.

The rallying cry was “Climate Justice!” Unlike many climate change protests of the past, this one featured a strong presence of Black, Latin@, Asian people and workers.

Climate justice was understood by many to include opposing environmental racism, exploitation of workers and many other forms of injustice. As always, there were many young people.

WORKERS ARE CLIMATE ACTIVISTS

The march stopped midway at the Haymarket Memorial, the site of the May 1886 rally for the eight-hour workday that became symbolic of both the repression of the labor movement and May Day as a revolutionary labor holiday. There, one of the speakers was Adriana Alvarez, a McDonald’s worker from Cicero, who said: “We have to worry about our children’s health and our own health, but we can’t afford healthcare and health insurance with the wages we make. That’s why low-wage working families and people of color have to do something about this.”

Participants held a broad range of views about what is needed to achieve climate justice. While some marchers praised President Obama’s executive actions to reduce carbon emissions, many others stressed the need for a much deeper transformation of the economy, and often of the whole society. Here is what some of the marchers told *N&L*:

A disability rights activist: Climate change and pollution are causing more disabilities that we can prevent. I see it in people I work with in the inner cities, the number of kids with breathing problems, asthma, seizure disorders, things that are related to toxins. There are still kids who have lead poisoning from paint. It’s ridiculous that this year we still have this problem.

A woman from Oregon: In Oregon we have all kinds of fires and very little rain, and that’s usually not the case. Our state is burning up. The Paris summit is about to happen. I’m here to make them listen to the people who want to be heard.

Brandon N.: We’re messing up the planet with fossil fuels. The poor are harmed the most. Pollution brings things like asthma. I have asthma myself. My mom thought it was partially because the world was

Defend Maati Monjib

At press time, Maati Monjib, publisher of the Arabic edition of Raya Dunayevskaya’s Marxism and Freedom, is on hunger strike in Morocco. Richard Greeman of the Victor Serge Foundation sends an update.

My friend and colleague, Maati Monjib, the embattled Moroccan historian and human rights activist, has once again begun a hunger strike to protest being denied the right to leave Morocco to attend an academic conference, this time in Norway. Prof. Monjib has been under attack since April, when he became President of “Freedom Now,” which defends the rights of Moroccan journalists.

The Maati Monjib International Support Committee was formed under the Presidency of Abdellah Hammudi and scholars from Africa and the Middle East.

Monjib has taught in the U.S. and participated in conferences throughout Europe, North Africa and the Middle East. He is known for his articulate defense of democracy, human rights and internationalism. He is professor of African History at Rabat, and directs the Ibn Rochd [“Averroes” in English] Center.

Monjib has been under constant attack since last April when he and other journalists founded “Freedom Now.” The Monarchy immediately deprived their Association of legal status by simply refusing to process their application, and, as its President, Monjib has been the object of a systematic campaign of outrageous personal and political slander in the press by political parties close to the Throne.

On Sept. 16, he was blocked at the Casablanca Airport on grounds of “National Security” and prevented from flying to an academic forum in Barcelona, whereupon he began his first hunger strike. On Sept. 19, the Ministry of Interior published a denial that Monjib was barred from leaving the country, but accused him of financial irregularities, a blatant attempt to turn a political case into a criminal case!

For the full update and how to support Monjib, see newsandletters.org/support-maati-monjib-update/.



getting more polluted. The wealthiest people are the ones who benefit the most from consuming fossil fuels.

A youth: It’s going to be difficult to reverse the really unequal status quo. We aren’t just facing climate issues because we haven’t figured out how to use alternative energy. People have significant interests in using coal and profiting off the things that ruin the planet. Right now most things in our society are determined by the priorities of the people who are profiting off of things. We need to be prioritizing what is best for most people. We should restructure the economy, our political system, all of our public institutions, and stop privatization.

♪

Many are still trying to work it out, but feel that there is something deeply wrong with a society that is trapped in growth for growth’s sake, and that is still built around fracking, mining and burning oil, coal and natural gas, decades after science showed how catastrophic that is likely to be for humanity. Pretty much everyone agreed that the oil and coal companies and others who profit from fossil fuels are the enemy—implicitly going deeper than the official slogan, “To change everything, we need everyone.”

—Franklin Dmitryev

The Raza wants theory

I have been enjoying your paper and especially its coverage of Latin America. Your prison coverage is also welcoming. My idea is that *News & Letters* include some coverage of the Chican@ nation. It is almost as if Chican@s do not exist because hardly any publications by the U.S. Left ever give coverage. This must change.

Dialectics is not just for whites or Blacks in U.S. borders. Your paper covers and applies dialectics to the Black struggle, but perhaps *News & Letters* should dig deeper and bring Dunayevskaya’s thought up to date and apply her thinking to the Chican@ struggle. Is this possible?

Chican@ people are the fastest growing segment of oppressed nations inside U.S. borders, yet few groups ever dig their analysis out of the 1950s; but the social reality and social forces in U.S. borders do not look the same. Marx taught us that nothing stays the same, and yet people’s analyses of Chican@s do not reflect this.

The Raza needs theory—a theory which includes the struggles within U.S. borders today, not simply a theory which shows them how to support other people’s struggles. Of course we all have the same oppressor, but there are issues that are unique to our existence, which we need to learn in order to overcome. Nationalism of the oppressed is applied Internationalism after all.

I look forward to seeing *News & Letters* grow and develop its analysis on the contemporary Chican@ nation. La Lucha Sigue!

One thing people could do is order this new book which gives a glimpse of today’s Chican@ struggle: *Chican@ Power and the Struggle for Aztlán* at: www.prison-censorship.info/chicanopower, written by Chican@ prisoners.

—Jose

Kurds rage at Erdogan

Chicago—On Oct. 13, three days after bombs killed 102 people at a peace march in Turkey’s capital of Ankara and mangled over 400 more (see article, p. 12), protesters gathered in Chicago to express their rage. The crowd, largely ethnic Kurdish immigrants from Turkey, formed a picket line near the Turkish consulate to inform passersby about this massacre. With signs and chants we condemned the complicity of President Erdogan in the mass atrocity.

One picketer said he disliked the sign that said “Fight ISIS,” even though he was all for fighting ISIS—his concern was that Erdogan would hide behind that slogan to continue to attack Kurdish militants.

A young woman holding a sign reading “Peace Will Win” said that peace marchers had gathered right in front of the Ankara Central railroad station, where you could expect security to be heavy on an everyday basis. Yet for a march of Kurds who were demanding an end to escalating army attacks on Kurdish communities and groups like YPG, security was lax enough to allow hundreds of people to be killed and wounded.

She also pointed out that Erdogan’s party had lost support in the June election, and that in the new election some of his supporters would cheer attacks on Kurds. “About 30% of the people in Turkey are Kurds. But if that decides where you stand, what side of the line am I on, with my Kurdish mother and my Turkish father?”

—Bob McGuire

WORLD VIEW

by Eugene Walker

Two recent dates shape the reality of Yemen: Sept. 21, 2014, the Houthi takeover of the capital, Sana'a, and March 26, 2015, when Saudi Arabia, in coalition with other Arab states, launched an air bombardment of Houthi-controlled areas.

SAUDIS' MURDEROUS AIRSTRIKES

We start with the Saudi Arabian war coalition's murderous bombings. Its terror war from the air, including cluster bombs, its blockade of the Yemeni port of Aden where food enters the country, and now its occupying ground troops, has been a seven-months-long campaign of death and human suffering. While claiming to be a war against Houthi fighters, the result is a war on Yemen's civilian population, dying by the thousands, displaced by the millions. Every day brings news of a new atrocity, like the more than 70 members of a wedding party killed in a village by the Red Sea, or the 13 workers killed at the Al-Sham water-bottling plant in Hajja.

How responsible is the U.S. for this carnage? The Obama Administration has provided military intelligence and logistical support for this bloody campaign. It is the main supplier of bombs and fighter jets. To this can be added the U.S. drone program in Yemen—more than a decade of warfare from the skies.

Yemen, the poorest country in the Arab Middle East, is now facing a severe lack of water and food. Its population has nowhere to flee, facing bombing above and repressive threats from below. Here is where the



Those being attacked, killed and terrorized in Yemen are civilians, including women and children.

Deadly war waged on Yemen's civilians

Houthi's action of Sept. 21, 2014, enters. On that date they seized Sana'a and deposed the unpopular government of President Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi. Hadi had been Vice-President under long-time authoritarian ruler Ali Abdullah Saleh. Saleh, in power for more than three decades, first in North Yemen and then all of Yemen after unification, had been challenged by Yemen's 2011-2012 Revolution, a part of the Arab Spring. The Houthis, a repressed Shia minority that had launched several civil wars against Saleh beginning in 2004, had taken part in that intifada.

OUTHIS' REPRESSIVE RULE

In deciding to occupy Yemen's capital and to force Hadi to flee in September 2014, the Houthis were first greeted in a hopeful manner. But this soon evaporated. The Houthis formed an opportunist alliance with their former oppressor Saleh. Then, while promising open consultation with Sana'a's masses, instead the Houthis began to impose their own brand of narrow sectarian rule, including further oppression of women. The possibility of a broad coalition, born in the spirit of the Arab Spring revolutions, was never given a chance. The Saudi Arabian Coalition proceeded to launch its war and, as one resident of Sana'a noted: "There is no stability, there is no electricity. There is destruction everywhere, and poverty in every single house."

Within this cauldron of war and destruction, other forces are active: al-Qaeda's Yemen branch, al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, as well as ISIS. One or another of these Sunni sects has directed suicide bombings of Shia mosques, killing dozens. Iran lends support to the

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Houthis, not for purposes of social transformation, but in its rivalry with Saudi Arabia.

The Yemeni masses are struggling to find a way out of this multi-sided war of terror, bombs from the air, occupying foreign troops, and U.S.-sponsored drones. The revolutionary promise of Arab Spring for Yemen's masses is now manacled by counter-revolutionary action and thought and by civilian deaths.

South African protests

In mid-October, students at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, sparked the biggest student protests since the end of apartheid. Protests over a proposed 10.5% fee hike, which would exclude many poorer students from higher education, spread to at least ten other universities. While Higher Education Minister Blaze Nzimande proposed a 6% hike, students demanded no hike in fees and Nzimande's resignation.

Students defied the wishes of some protest leaders and marched on the ruling African National Congress headquarters in Johannesburg. They were met by riot police firing tear gas. At least 29 were arrested.

While anti-apartheid freedom songs and chants were used, one student protestor told both fellow students and the ANC leaders that "The honeymoon of 1994—when we were told that we were free—is over."

In April students at the University of Cape Town forced the removal of a statue of racist imperialist Cecil Rhodes from campus. They were making the point that the right to an education has been paid for many times over, whether by entombment in Rhodes' diamond mines or by any of the other cruel and exploitative means by which bourgeois "civilization" was built. They are asking what human liberation truly means.

For now, University officials have agreed to no immediate fee hike and to further negotiations. —G.E.

Mexico's 'La Migra'

The U.S. pays Mexico millions of dollars to prevent Central American asylum seekers from reaching here. Mexico sends hundreds of immigration agents to its southern border states to round up refugees and deport them back to their countries.

Immigration police have conducted thousands of raids: capturing Central Americans who ride freight trains heading north, swooping into bus stations and hotels, stopping buses on highways. More than 100,000 will be deported this year.

While promoted as a program to "protect the human rights of migrants," in reality it is a police-military operation that endangers their lives. First, those deported face out of control violence in home countries full of gangs, drugs and corruption.

Second, the atmosphere in Mexico is now one of open season on Central Americans. Gangs kidnap refugees and demand ransom from families. Women are raped and forced into prostitution. Youth are forced into the drug trade. The poisonous climate against Central Americans has led to attacks on refugee asylum centers.

The U.S. also bears its share of responsibility. Besides using Mexico as its police enforcer, the U.S. has been isolating Central American youth who do make it to our borders, throwing them into deportation centers without legal representation, and deporting them by the tens of thousands.

NEWS AND LETTERS COMMITTEES

Who We Are And What We Stand For

News and Letters Committees is an organization of Marxist-Humanists. It has always stood for the abolition of capitalism, both in its private property form as in the U.S., and in its state property form calling itself Communist, which appeared as the Russian Revolution was transformed into its opposite. That regression anticipated the next stage of development—the age of state-capitalism. We stand for a society of new human relations, what Marx called a new Humanism.

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

Raya Dunayevskaya (1910–1987), founder of the body of ideas of Marxist-Humanism, was Chairwoman of News and Letters Committees from its founding to 1987. Charles Denby (1907–1983), a rank-and-file autoworker, author of *Indignant Heart: A Black Worker's Journal*, was editor of the paper from 1955 to 1983.

The articulation of the relationship be-

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We aim to continue to develop Marxist-Humanism and make it available to all who struggle for freedom. In opposing this capitalist, racist, sexist, heterosexist, class-ridden society, we have adopted a committee form of organization rather than any elitist party "to lead."

We participate in all class and freedom struggles, nationally and internationally. As our Constitution states: "It is our aim...to promote the firmest unity among workers, Blacks and other minorities, women, youth and those intellectuals who have broken with the ruling bureaucracy of both capital and labor." We do not separate mass activities from the activity of thinking.

Send for a free copy of the Constitution of News and Letters Committees or see it on our website: www.newsandletters.org.