

NEWS & LETTERS

THEORY / PRACTICE

"Human power is its own end"—Karl Marx

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WORKSHOPTALKS

Roots of Trumpism in swamps of history

by Htun Lin

In 1970, my family emigrated from Burma to the U.S. as stateless refugees following a wave of ethnic cleansing of ethnic Chinese induced by racial and labor strife. Although born in Burma and speaking nothing but Burmese, my sisters and I were considered illegal aliens, as children of war refugees who had fled to Burma from China, which had been invaded by Japan's Imperial Army.

As a child in San Francisco, my teachers taught me the history of Kearney Street—a street in Chinatown named after Denis Kearney, an Irish-American labor activist famous for leading mob violence against Chinese workers who had originally been brought to the U.S. to toil and die while building the Transcontinental Railroad. Racist reaction to these workers who had migrated from a famine-torn China induced the first Chinese Exclusion Act in the U.S. Congress.

TRUMP FOLLOWS OLD RACIST PATH

Trump blames jobs shipped to factories in China and Mexico for the loss of jobs in Ohio and the rest of the Rust Belt. The biggest cause of plant closures and disappearing factory jobs is new technology and automation forced by global capitalist production. But Trump wants to evict Mexicans, like Kearney, more than a century ago, wanted the Chinese out—not over jobs but mainly for "cultural purity."

There is very little new in Trumpism. In healthcare where I work, we would call it "chronic recurrent exacerbation" of a pre-existing malady or condition—the condition of ethnic chauvinism.

The plight of the Rohingya in Burma helps illuminate the past, present and future of refugee crises. Buddhist cleric Wairathu of Burma has incited mob

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VOICES FROM THE INSIDE OUT

Castro absolved?

by Faruq

On Nov. 25, 2016, Fidel Castro passed away. We knew his health was waning; even so it was not a pleasurable moment to hear of the passing of a man who stood up against the imperial power of the U.S. Once the totality of what was being reported hit me, I cut my TV off and got into my bunk.

Before I could fall asleep, I told myself the bourgeois media will have a field day attempting to denigrate Castro. At the same time I asked myself: Will all of their denigration be false? Consequently, the title to a small book—*History Will Absolve Me*—came to mind.

The book was Castro's defense speech at his trial in 1953 for the attempted coup of the Batista regime then in power in Cuba. I read it early on in my orientation period with revolutionary theory, and I was taken with his unyieldingness in speaking truth to power.

WILL HISTORY ABSOLVE CASTRO?

But the question that needs to be answered is: Will history absolve Castro? The reason the question is of great import is two-fold: 1. The urgency of the time we live in where the imperialist camps have placed the world in a state of perpetual war, while, at the same time, humanity is searching for a social order that is the basis of reciprocal recognition of each other. 2. The need to work out a path through

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ONLINE: www.newsandletters.org

Inauguration of neo-fascism faces widespread revolt

by Franklin Dmitryev

The lightning move by Republicans in Congress to prepare to repeal the Affordable Care Act (ACA) or Obamacare—before Donald Trump even took office, with only the vaguest idea of what is to replace it, and with full knowledge that a large majority of Americans oppose the repeal of its most important provisions—gave a sign of how far the new single-party government intends to roll the clock back, with dizzying speed.

The coming months promise a reactionary blitzkrieg by Congress and Trump unrivaled since the post-Reconstruction assault on African Americans and labor. With counter-revolution in the saddle, fascism is gathering its forces to capture state power across the globe.

At the same time, new and continued stirrings of revolt indicate that it will be no cakewalk. Thousands of students walked out of high schools to join protests on the illegitimate president's Inauguration Day. Millions came to the women's marches the next day across the U.S. and the world. The one in D.C. attracted three times as many people as the inauguration. (See coverage, p. 11.) The movement to stop the Dakota Access Pipeline continues and similar struggles have been started; Black Lives Matter continues, the Fight for \$15 minimum wage continues.

'NOT MY PRESIDENT'

In fact, the backlash to all the revolt is what Trump embodied and exploited—as seen in the hate crimes that accompanied the campaign and spiked after the election, and in his ability to direct his Twitter mob in racist, sexist attacks on his critics.

He masterfully exploited white middle-class fears of a future where they are no longer the majority and where their economic position is put in question by automation and globalization, and many men's fears about losing their dominance over women and their own "masculine" identity. That got channeled into scapegoating and hatred of immigrants, Muslims, Transgender people, women, Mexican Americans, African Americans—and pining for a mythic "great" past.

We are supposed to forget about what was truly great in U.S. history—the other America, the freedom struggles. One of the new administration's first acts was to take down government websites on Na-

tive Americans, LGBTQ rights, civil rights, people with disabilities and climate change.

NEVER FORGET THE OTHER AMERICA

Where the high point of freedom in the 19th-century U.S. was the Abolitionist movement of Blacks and whites, culminating in the Civil War, some in the Trump camp have proposed repealing part of the ensuing Constitutional amendments that outlawed slavery and declared equal rights and citizenship for African Americans.

Labor struggles over a century ago won restrictions on child labor, working hours and unsafe working condition; all are opposed by some now in office.

Even women's vote—won by decades of struggle—has been called into question by alt-right fascists.

Trump and the far Right certainly do not understand—and do not want us to understand—that the touchstone of U.S. history is the liberation struggle of Black masses and its relationship to labor and other freedom struggles, from slave revolts to Reconstruction, from the Black dimension in Populism to anti-imperialism and the Garvey movement, from the self-organizing of industrial workers in the 1930s to the Freedom Now movement of the 1960s and Black Lives Matter today. They are desperate to keep Black masses separate from white labor, because turning points in our history have come only when they coalesce.

The most reactionary elements have always set themselves against these movements, from the South's rebellion to defend slavery to the many incarnations of the Ku Klux Klan, which violently attacked Reconstruction and in 2016 endorsed Donald Trump. Incited by Trump's win, lawmakers in five states pushed bills to criminalize protest, including North Dakota's "okay to run over protesters" bill and Indiana's "police can kill road blockaders" bill.

Capitalism's decay has nourished the racist rage festering since the election of a Black president, just as the 1930s Great Depression fed Nazism—which, like Trump, railed against financial and corporate elites but represented them.

FEAR OF A FALLING PROFIT RATE

The mid-1970s economic crisis was a structural change brought about by the fall in the rate of profit. The crisis drove the ruling class to an economic,

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EDITORIAL

Freedom and terror define Syria

U.S. President-elect Donald Trump called Russian President Vladimir Putin on Nov. 14. The next day the Russian military intensified its brutal assault on all the revolutionary communities of Northern Syria. Within a month, Free East Aleppo had been turned into a hell on earth with hundreds of thousands of civilians mercilessly bombed day and night. Bodies of men, women and children lay buried or in the streets.

In that next month the world witnessed unprecedented scenes of genocide. Finally, Aleppo's survivors were forced to agree to being "ethnically cleansed" from their home city by the Bashar Al-Assad regime.

Refugee Lina Shamy described their situation: "Forcing the people to leave their land is a huge crime because it means blowing away their memories, their history and their lives. When we say any solution that may save people's lives is welcomed, that doesn't mean that this solution is going to be fair. It means this is the best among much worse options in this world of injustice."

Many of these civilian refugees now shiver in tents in the countryside of Free Idlib, where they have been subjected to further Russian and regime bombing.

The smoke of destroyed East Aleppo, of ravaged Free Idlib, East Ghouta, Wadi Barada, and other revolutionary communities raises Trump's fascist banner. While President Obama is no friend to the Syrian Revolution, Trump delivered: surrender or death.

TRUMP'S FASCIST BANNER

It will stand as one of history's grimmest ironies that the heroism and self-sacrifice of millions of Arab Spring revolutionaries called forth the inherent racism, avarice and intellectual sloth—the Trumpism—of our bourgeois "democracies." More sharply etched is the way the consistent revolutionary humanism of Free Syrians, expressed thousands of times over, was met by the ideological dissolution of much of the Left into racism and apologies for genocide.

This collapse of human values is not something that can wait to be addressed. The ideological pollution expresses itself as the genocidal negation of human freedom, of humanity itself. When we shouted "Syria!" we meant this exactly. Trump's election has placed the question of the negation of humanity at the center of debate.

Meanwhile, the supposed target of these attacks,

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Syrian women as force and revolutionary Reason

by Terry Moon

"I love Syria, and my soul is here. We didn't start the revolution so that we can up and leave, but when it gets to the point where they're going to kill my whole family and I am the reason why, I would leave my mother but I will never forget her. And my mother stays inside my soul until she is free. And my mother is Syria."
—Souad Nawfal, Raqqa, Syria

Don't be confused. The Syrians had a revolution—one they are still fighting—it is about freedom. Those fighting for freedom are not terrorists; they are not religious fanatics. If you can't tell the good guys from the bad, look at the women, who are almost always the first to act.

WOMEN CONFRONT ISIS

This is seen in the woman who made the statement that begins this column. Souad Nawfal is a teacher who, after Raqqa was taken by ISIS and they kidnapped a Jesuit priest friend of hers, stood alone in daily protests for two months in front of the local ISIS headquarters. She was harassed, spat at, hit, bumped by cars. She said, "Every day they'd point a Kalashnikov at my head and threaten to shoot me. I'd tell them, 'Do it. If you kill me first, then the second bullet has to go to Bashar's head.' That'd irritate them."¹

Her signs, penned to harass and embarrass ISIS, read: "Our revolution was begun by honorable people and is being stolen by thieves!" "Release all detainees!" and "Muslims spilling the blood of Muslims are sinners!" "These banners," she stated, "Have kept me company, they have given me strength, they remind me that it is important to keep doing what we are doing until we are free."²

Also in Raqqa in March 2012 women formed Jana, whose purpose was to make it possible "for women to stand side-by-side with men in creating a country for all Syrians." They created jobs for women: baking and passing out bread when there were shortages, teaching crafts, creating projects to keep children in schools and setting up ways to share medicines—a necessity because of shortages.³

It was women, also in Raqqa, who, on June 17, 2013, staged a sit-in at ISIS's headquarters demanding the release of those imprisoned. To show

1. "The schoolteacher versus al-Qaeda," by Michael Weiss, now.mmedia.me, Nov. 14, 2013

2. "The Raqqa woman who faced the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria," SyriaUntold.com, Oct. 17, 2013

3. "Jana: Women of Raqqa Reclaim Their Place in Society," SyriaUntold.com, Nov. 30, 2013.

WOMENWORLDWIDE

by Artemis

Latonja S. Richardson, a 13-year-old African-American girl from Jacksonville, Fla., is raising money through social media to send 100 girls to see the movie "Hidden Figures" in January and give each a copy of the book by Margot Lee Shetterly. The book and movie are about Dorothy Vaughan, Mary Jackson, and Katherine Johnson, three of several Black women mathematicians who worked for NASA to send John Glenn into orbit and who were so brilliant they were praised as "human computers." Richardson was inspired by attending the White House Hidden Figures in Space Exploration's advance screening of the movie and wants to show girls that, through hard work and persistence, they can succeed in STEM fields and "not only look at the stars but take the steps to reach for them."

In January, the Coalition of Concerned Mothers, along with Every Case Matters, a similar grassroots organization dedicated to "fighting incarceration of the mentally ill and the killing of Black, Brown, and Red People while in police custody," will visit the Department of Justice. They are demanding information and records regarding the deaths of their children while in police custody and that the killers be tried for murder. They are also demanding enforcement of the Death in Custody Reporting Act and the Arrest Related Deaths program in effect since 2000. If these are enforced, law enforcement agencies could lose funding for equipment and tactical resources if deaths are not reported. They have created an online petition signed by 21 organizations including NOW, Amnesty International, and the AFL-CIO.

In January, 26 mothers detained with their children at Berks County Residential Center in Leesport, Penn., for 17 months (see Women Worldwide Sept.–Oct. 2016) wrote a letter to President Obama asking for an opportunity to present their asylum cases. The letter, signed "Madres Berks," points out that President Obama has recently pardoned criminals and that the mothers' only supposed "crime" is that they had fled violence in their countries of origin to enter the U.S. They state that, if this is wrong, they have already paid for it, and that, due to the stressful conditions in which they are being held, the mental health of their children is deteriorating.

they were fighting the theft of their revolution they chanted the same slogans they had used against the brutal Assad regime: "There is nothing holier than freedom and no worse sin than stealing it!"⁴

WOMEN KEEP REVOLUTION ONGOING

Women kept the revolution going. One group founded the first Syrian women-owned independent radio station, Radio Naseem. Topics discussed were women in revolution, human rights and the dangers of extremism.⁵ In East Aleppo, now bombed out of existence, women created and maintained schools in their basements teaching thousands of children.

4. "Raqqa: Women against Al-Nusra Front," SyriaUntold.com, July 6, 2013.

5. "Breaking the siege of Aleppo," by Leila Al Shami, August 11, 2016 leilashami.wordpress.com/2016/08/11/breaking-the-siege-of-aleppo/

Wombs in Labor

Review: *Wombs in Labor: Transnational Commercial Surrogacy in India*, by Amrita Pande.

Pande, an Indian emigrant, was prompted to write this book because there was almost no research on "India's new form of outsourcing," gestational surrogacy. This differs from traditional surrogacy in that, rather than using an egg cell from the surrogate mother, the fertilized egg implanted in the Indian woman's womb is from both biological parents. India is the first country in the global South to have both national and international customers for this medical industry. It costs one-third of what it does in the U.S. and has no government regulations, but surrogates can earn more than what they normally would in ten years.

WOMBS BECOME A CONTESTED SPACE

U.S. media runs glowing stories portraying it as a win/win situation for clients and surrogates. Academics and activists studying surrogacy have portrayed it in four different ways. Some debate its ethics or morality. Liberal feminists support the right of the woman surrogate to choose to use her own body as she pleases. Radical feminists condemn surrogacy as patriarchal and capitalist exploitation of women. The more recent ethnographic approach studies "the impact of surrogacy on the meanings of motherhood, kinship, and work."

Pande references these viewpoints but studies surrogacy as a form of labor. Her book "goes beyond moral questions to question how a labor market in wombs is created and how the laborers experience this market." She also states: "[B]y identifying commercial surrogacy as labor susceptible to exploitation and simultaneously recognizing the women as laborers, this book complicates the image of the victim always evoked whenever the bodies of third world women are in focus."

Pande doesn't make any prescriptions about what should happen to surrogacy and future reproductive technologies. She does not draw any conclusions about whether it is ultimately good or bad. She instead shows us the many complicated social factors that affect the women and how they deal with them—just as laborers do in other situations.

She interviews surrogates who live at a clinic for the duration of their pregnancy, spending most of their time in bed, getting shots and medical exams and walking around. The level of surveillance seems like what Margaret Atwood describes in *The Handmaid's Tale* and like any factory sweatshop.

SURROGACY: REVOLT OR OPPRESSION?

However, some of the women welcome a chance to rest from their normal physical labor. They are given a high level of medical care, which was not available to them for their own pregnancies. Some were coerced by their families into becoming surrogates; others defy their families to make a decision about their own bodies and income. Some feel that they are turning the tables on anti-natalist government propaganda that preaches that the fertility of their bodies is driving them into poverty.

In the face of a society that confuses surrogacy with prostitution, the clinic personnel tell the surrogates that they are providing a great gift for their clients and providing for their own families. However, they are compared to prostitutes if they attempt to negotiate with the clients for a higher income. Their clients feel they are helping to pull the less fortunate out of poverty, but the money is usually depleted in financial emergencies.

Pande points out that the notion that reproductive and care giving work done primarily or exclusively by women is "natural" rather than a "conscious, social activity" has been used to deny income to women for this work. She also states that surrogates and their clients can form alliances that could lead to "transnational feminism."

Pande's book examines the very complicated real-life experiences of women paid for the biological use of their bodies and places them in a context of labor. It is a valuable contribution to understanding the increasingly complicated future of biological technology.

—Adele

Women in Salamiyah in central Syria organized one of the first protests in their town, a silent march. Assad's thugs attacked it ruthlessly. When it became too dangerous for street demonstrations, the women did something new: "We organized sit-ins inside of our houses where we held banners and statements that presented our political views and our resistance to the brutality of the Assad regime." They got the film of their actions out to the world via social media. Their message was clear: "We want freedom, we want dignity, and we will demand these until the murderer falls and is finally executed."⁶

ASSAD CAN'T KILL 'THE GANG OF GIRLS'

There is much more, but here we can only lastly mention how in the midst of what was to become a holocaust, 24 women and men—mostly women—created an underground newspaper, *Enab Baladi*, whose mission was to tell the truth of Syria and the crimes of the Assad regime. One of these women, Kholoud Waleed, explained, "We're the gang of girls. [Assad] would kill us, but he can't find us." Amazingly the paper continues and you can see it at <http://english.enabbaladi.net/>.

***Enab Baladi* documented one of the worst massacres of the Syrian war when Darayya was sealed by Assad's army whose soldiers went door to door, killing the men, destroying homes and schools, slaughtering entire families, raping and pillaging. We know about it because of their bravery.**⁷

This is a fraction of what Syrian women have done, revealing themselves as force and reason of revolution. As in any revolution, women's self-development is either part of the revolution from the beginning, or becomes a demand through the necessity of breaking tradition and taboos to become a thinker and participant in the revolutionary project.

What Assad aims to destroy is not alone the force of the revolution against him—the living human beings fighting for freedom. He as well wants to kill the idea of freedom, the striving to become whole human beings that is the foundation of all revolutionary uprisings. We cannot let him succeed.

6. "The Women of Salamiyah Turn Houses into Protest Squares," SyriaUntold.com, May 10, 2014.

7. "This 'Gang of Girls' Risks Their Lives to Report From Inside a War Zone," by Christine Asquith, elle.com, May 2015 issue of *Elle*.

Confronting fanatics



Photo: Terry Moon for News & Letters

Chicago—The election of misogynist Donald Trump for U.S. president made all the difference as over 500 angry women and men gathered downtown to counter the well-funded fanatical anti-abortion so-called "March for Life" (read March for Lies). We came out in such numbers because there was a stark realization that a right we had taken for granted might be snatched away.

Unlike other years, most women came to the rally by themselves or with a few friends rather than with a women's group or a left organization. As one woman told *News & Letters*: "While two months ago we thought that losing abortion rights will never happen; these rights are inalienable, we fought so hard for them. Who could ever take them away? We've been rebuffed in that belief and it's time to get our feet on the ground."

Echoing her, another young woman said: "I'm passionate about people having choices to end pregnancies. When I went through an unplanned pregnancy, I had the choices and I had access and was able to make decisions for myself. It just terrifies me that some people don't and that's the direction this country is headed."

"I used to be on the other side of the street (with the fanatics)," another young woman said, "I was raised Catholic, I know what the brainwashing is and how hard it is to get out of and how destructive it is. I wanted to be on this side of the street."

What this demonstration made crystal clear is the determination women have to take—and keep—control of our bodies and thus our lives. We're up for the fight.

—Marxist-Humanist participant

Postal workers stop Staples

Organized labor in general, and postal workers in particular, have won a major victory. In the face of an international campaign of boycotts, leafleting and picket lines, the multinational company Staples announced in January that it would no longer be pursuing a deal with the United States Postal Service (USPS) to provide postal services within their office supply stores.

Members of the American Postal Workers Union (APWU) had denounced the deal as a form of union-busting, as it would have allowed employees of Staples—which is vehemently anti-union—to do jobs normally done by postal workers. That would have given the USPS an excuse to reduce its unionized workforce.

WORKSHOPTALKS

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violence and army atrocities against the Rohingya Muslims with demands for their expulsion to “preserve Burmese culture.” The government ignores centuries of Rohingya history within Burma and considers them all Bengali refugees from the period of the 1947 partition of India as British colonialism was departing.

SCAPEGOATING FOR POLITICAL GAIN

The ethnic minority—refugees often fleeing crisis conditions created by the same forces of capitalist competition also suffered by the ethnic majority—is made a scapegoat.

You do not have the luxury of waiting for proper vetting and proper documents if you are like the millions of Syrian war refugees running for their lives with only the shirts on their backs, fleeing death and destruction from bombs and methodical ethnic cleansing rampages like the kind the world has been witnessing in East Aleppo and in the state of Rakhine in Burma. Millions of immigrants are being relegated to the status of stateless refugees.

This condition of being stateless as determined by man-made boundaries of statehood, not unfamiliar to Palestinians, is the inhumanity imposed on the Rohingya for generations.

KKK AND AMERICA FIRST

Trump is merely exploiting existing racism and supremacist ideology, the ideology of “America First.” It is familiar to African-American Representative John Lewis and anyone who survived the Jim Crow era, the lynchings and ethnic cleansing of a time characterized by the 1921 race riots in Tulsa, Okla., which caused mass migration of African-Americans—plights Rohingya and Syrian refugees are reliving today.

Racism and supremacist ideology were central to Reaganism when Ronald Reagan launched his 1980 Presidential campaign with a rally in Philadelphia, Miss., in Neshoba County—well known for the lynching of civil rights workers James Chaney, Andrew Goodman and Michael Schwerner in 1964.

The world is currently undergoing a resurgence in retrogression—an exacerbation of a chronic pre-existing condition—of cultural isolationism, and state-sponsored chauvinism.

Overcoming this spreading epidemic of narrow nationalism would require each of us to recognize the universal ideological affliction represented by particular ethnic separations and accompanying symptoms and diseases arising from local turmoils.

The power of the idea of statehood created these conditions. The power of the idea of human freedom can transcend it.

WORKERS SAY ‘NO!’ TO PRIVATIZATION

Union members said that giving postal work to a private corporation amounted to the privatization of government business. For years, picket lines and protests urged consumers to boycott Staples. Postal workers helped block a merger of Staples with another mega-corporation in the office retail business.

Even as they announced this victory, the APWU called for federal investigations into Staples’ abuses of the privatization scheme and their attempted monopolization of private postal practices. In the end, as union president Mark Dimondstein said, “This victory helps strengthen and steel us for the battles ahead.”

—Natalia Spiegel

Columbia University stalls union victory



Columbia grad students celebrate their NLRB victory while demanding Columbia’s administration honor it.

New York City—Columbia University, unwilling to accept the results of the August 2016 National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) vote when graduate workers at Columbia voted to affiliate with the UAW, now wants to overturn the election. Columbia said the vote should not be validated, and cited what they called NLRB violations.

WAITING FOR TRUMP TO GUT THE NLRB

This is a move familiar to anyone involved in labor-management disputes. But some of the graduate workers, both research and teaching assistants in GWC-UAW Local 1122, are saying the university is using a delaying action this time to stall until Donald Trump takes office. They hope that the NLRB will be altered to the advantage of management, be that universities or other businesses.

The NLRB in the Columbia case ruled that graduate student workers at private colleges and universities have the right to unionize. It ruled that, given the abuse and trampling of their rights by Columbia, the graduate workers there were within their rights. They voted overwhelmingly to unionize.

Graduate student workers are afraid that a NLRB appointed by Trump will take away their right to collectively bargain and force them to accept the poorly paid and demeaning work they did previously. But at a protest in mid-December, graduate student workers by the dozens vowed to continue their fight.

—Natalia

Women prisoners: ‘Shout Their Names’

Editor’s note: Families of prisoners who were declared suicides at California Institution for Women (CIW) continue to speak out. Their effort resulted in a “retirement” of the CIW warden and now a legislative audit of all California prisons’ suicide prevention procedures. Below we print the testimony of the sisters of Erika Rocha.

Geraldine Rocha: Erika was incarcerated when she was 14. She had no other life. In many ways, she was still a child. My sister was everything to me. Although she was older (I was eight when she was arrested), she was my little sister. We fought for her to be moved closer to us. When they found her, the paramedics pronounced her dead, because they saw that rigor mortis was already setting in... She was hanging for three hours and no one came!

...I can’t be saying, “This is who my sister was, this is what she was doing...” I should be saying, “This is who my sister is, this is what she is doing...” She died the day before her parole hearing.

Erika’s other younger sister: My sister was fun. She had severe problems with depression. She was denied help that should have saved her life. She was put on suicide watch and suicided two days after being released from it. She took her life after not being able to get the help she needed...No one should have to hear, after being told that her sister is coming home, that she is never coming home. (To read more about Erika Rocha go to: <http://www.truth-out.org/opinion/item/35834-erika-rocha-s-suicide-under-scores-the-damage-that-prison-is-wreaking-on-youth>.)

Letter from Mexico

Indigenous organize to contest 2018 vote

by J.G.F. Héctor

The year 2017 began with the announcement by the National Indigenous Congress (CNI) that, after a three-month consultation, 430 communities agreed to creating an Indigenous Governing Council from which a woman will run for the presidency of Mexico in 2018. Is this the participation that we can have in this historical moment?

“Our consultation,” a CNI delegate says, “is not like those of the government, who gives you a paper and asks you whether you agree with this or that. Rather, [it consists] in having a dialogue like the one we are having right now. That the people, whether from the CNI or not, tell us what’s the situation they are living in, and what would they like to do [to change it].”

ELICITING VOICES FROM BELOW

Thus the initiative has nothing to do with “taking power” through elections, but with eliciting the voices and actions from below. “It is about using the electoral process as an excuse to build what is *ours*,” another CNI delegate said.

But as important as these actions and voices are as ground for any true social change, something else is needed. The Zapatista Indigenous movement, which has more than two decades of building autonomy from below, has something to tell us about what’s missing.

In “Words on the 21st Anniversary” of its 1994 uprising, the Zapatistas wrote: “Critical thinking is necessary for the struggle...But neither practice by itself, nor theory by itself, is enough. Thinking that does not struggle does nothing but make noise. A struggle that does not think repeats its mistakes and does not get up after it falls.”

Besides the practical, concrete resistance, we need the theoretical, abstract one: critical thought that is in total relationship with revolutionary practice. To think critically would therefore mean to understand not only how capitalism works, *but also the emancipatory possibilities of the movements from below*, so that we can ask ourselves: What comes next in the construction of a new world? How can it become really *new*?

This is the meaning of the CNI initiative. It is an open invitation for us all to become “delegates,” that is, to elicit the voices and actions from below and, *at the same time*, the critical thought about them, in order that practice and theory together give birth to a new society.

FOR EVERYONE WHO SAYS ‘ENOUGH!’

Although the CNI proposal has as its center the ordinary people of Mexico, it is also for other social subjects that struggle for a better country and world: The parents of the 43 Ayotzinapa students, disappeared by the State; political prisoners and their relatives; teachers who want to build an autonomous education at the true service of people’s needs; health workers who want to stop the privatization of medical care; peoples from the country and the city who defend water and land; free media and revolutionary organizations; everyone who says *Enough!* and wants to build a better society.

For all these the CNI initiative has opened a new moment in Mexican freedom struggles. On May 26-27, the Constitutive Assembly of the Indigenous Governing Council will take place, including one man and one woman from every Indigenous community that adheres to the CNI. However, a “permanent campaign” has already begun, to which we are all invited to participate, both with our theoretical and our practical work.

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FROM THE WRITINGS OF RAYADUNAYEVSKAYA

Editor's note: Because of the urgency of the question of how to make new beginnings in such a reactionary world situation, we excerpt two of Dunayevskaya's last philosophical writings, which confront "where to begin." She saw this revisiting of Hegel's Phenomenology of Mind as part of her work on dialectics of philosophy and organization, addressing "the imperativeness of that missing link, philosophy, both as challenge to post-Marx Marxists and as unique contribution of Marxist-Humanism...." The first piece was published in the May 8, 1987, issue of N&L. The second, dated April 3, 1987 (#10883 in the Raya Dunayevskaya Collection), was not completed for publication.

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

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

—Hegel, Preface to the *Phenomenology of Mind*

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

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

It never fails that, at momentous world historic turning points, it is very difficult to tell the difference between two types of twilight—whether one is first plunging into utter darkness or whether one has reached the end of a long night and is just at the moment before the dawn of a new day. In either case, the challenge to find the meaning—what Hegel called "the undefined foreboding of something unknown"—becomes a compulsion to dig for new beginnings, for a philosophy that would try to answer the question "where to begin?" This was the reason for a new revolutionary philosophy—the birth of the Hegelian dialectic—at the time the great

Why Phenomenology? Why now?

French Revolution did not produce totally new beginnings in philosophy. It caused Hegel's break with romanticism. His deep digging went, at one and the same time, backward to the origins of philosophy in Greece around 500 BC and forward as the French Revolution was followed by the Napoleonic era trying to dominate all of Europe.

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

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

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

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

1. See "Lenin and the Dialectic: A Mind in Action" and "The Irish Revolution and the Dialectic of History" in Part IV—"World War I and the Great Divide in Marxism"—of my *Marxism and Freedom, from 1776 until Today*.—RD

2. See George Armstrong Kelly's *Hegel's Retreat from Eleusis* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978], p. 224, and my answer to his critique of my *Philosophy and Revolution: From Hegel to Sartre and from Marx to Mao* in the

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

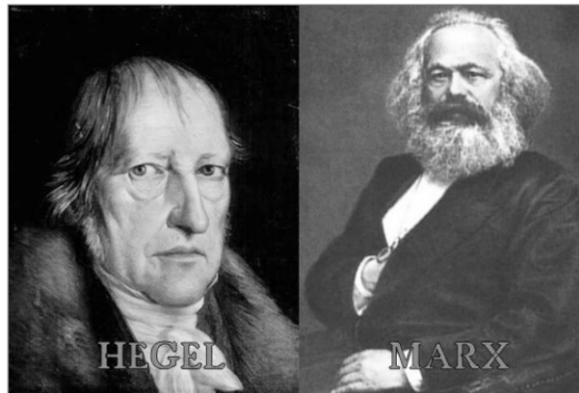
Historic transcendence.

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

Stop. Do you realize how great that is? What a leap? It was not only for Marx clearing his road, his totally new continent of thought and of revolution, but ours? Well, just consider how far in advance it is even of Lenin. Nature is not Practice. And Nature is not Sartrean exteriority. Nature, says Marx, is true essence because you can't separate Nature from Human Nature. And that is why he uses, not as a naturalist, "thoroughgoing Naturalism or Humanism" which would "first alone grasp the act of world history"⁵ and therefore have undergone the transcendence both of religion and thinghood, i.e., mediated by atheism and communism as the abolition of private property, and *only then* would there start "positive Humanism, beginning from itself."⁶

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

new Introduction I wrote for the 1982 edition.—RD
3. From Marx's Doctoral Dissertation, "The Difference between the Democritean and Epicurean Philosophy of Nature," as published in Marx-Engels *Collected Works*, Vol. 1 (International Publishers, 1975), p. 85.
4. From "Critique of the Hegelian Dialectic" in Marx's 1844 Humanist Essays, as translated by Dunayevskaya in the 1958 edition of her book *Marxism and Freedom*, p. 309.
5. "Critique of the Hegelian Dialectic," p. 313.
6. "Critique of the Hegelian Dialectic," p. 320.



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AS OTHERS SEE US

Excerpted from the Preface to the new French edition of *Marxism and Freedom*, from 1776 until Today

by Frédéric Monferrand¹

"Marxism is a theory of liberation or it is nothing"
— Raya Dunayevskaya

Raya Dunayevskaya is one of those individuals in whom the historical and biographical, or to use Hegelian language which she never tired of borrowing, the Universal and the Particular tend to coincide....

In the words of Dunayevskaya herself, *Marxisme et Liberté (Marxism and Freedom)*—which constitutes the first part of a "trilogy of revolution" comprising *Philosophy and Revolution: from Hegel to Sartre and from Marx to Mao* and *Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution*—addresses three main objectives:

1) to establish the "American roots of Marxism," in the context in which the American working class, energized from within by the Black struggle, represents the best chance to rekindle the communist endeavor;

2) To reconstruct the philosophical consistency of "Marx's Marxism" so that it comes to life, from the 1844 *Manuscripts to Capital*, through the idea that history is the history of the efforts of humanity to make itself free;

3) To re-evaluate the centrality of the "Hegelian dialectic" in the formation of a "new Humanism."



[T]he opposition between state-capitalism and freedom defines the coordinates of a global conjuncture in which the whole of humanity finds itself engaged. And "the totality of the crisis" which is thus announced "compels philosophy, a total outlook," which *Marxisme et Liberté* proposes to sketch.

DIALECTIC AND UTOPIA

By "philosophy, a total outlook," Dunayevskaya signifies, at one and the same time, a method of interpretation of historical phenomena and a utopian horizon—something, that is, like a "vision of the world" with a self-developing and liberating scope.

The method in question is none other than the "dialectic," defined as a dynamic way of thinking about contradictions and their historic outcome.

At a time when the Hegelian roots of Marxism are largely repressed, the author of *Marxisme et Liberté* commits herself to reintegrate, as the young Marx did before her, "negativity as the moving and creative principle" of revolutionary theory.

To qualify the dialectic as "method" is not to reduce it to a series of formal laws, such as the "law of the passage of quantity into quality," of the "interpenetration of opposites," or the "negation of the negation," as Engels sought to do in his *Dialectics of Nature*. It is, rather, to present it as a tool which permits us to discern the "negative principle" at the heart of positivity, that is, the apparently unshakable nature of social relations.

The dialectic is, in other words, the logical form of historical movement by which freedom embarks in a dynamic of the negation of the institutions which hinder it, and the creation of a world in accordance with its own essence, and it is in this sense that it represents, as Marx emphasized in *Capital*, a "critical and revolutionary" method.

We understand from this what is at first glance disconcerting: the progression of the first chapter of *Marxisme et Liberté*, where the political sociology of the different actors in the French Revolution leads little by little to speculations on the "Absolute."

In Hegel's *Science of Logic*, the "Absolute Idea"

1. Frédéric Monferrand is a doctor of philosophy. He is writing a book on Marx's ontology and the critique of capitalism and is a member of the editorial board of the magazine *Period*.

The new French edition of *Marxism and Freedom*

'To retake the historical initiative'

designates, in fact, the movement by which different oppositions (between being and thought, necessity and freedom, or theory and practice) which usually structure the way we see things, find themselves supplanted and expressed within a totality.

Then, for Dunayevskaya, in the movement toward totalization of the dichotomies which thought encounters "there is imbedded, though in abstract form, [the idea of] the full development of the social individual," and it provides in this way, the most compelling definition of that freedom for which the Parisian masses strove during the 1790s. By interpreting, following Marcuse's *Reason and Revolution*, Hegel's thought as a sort of philosophical summing up of the French Revolution, Dunayevskaya nonetheless does not intend to turn it into a relic or an object of historical curiosity. She instead sets out to do the opposite, to bring it up to the present.

In fact, as she states in *Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution*, each epoch has to reinvent for itself the revolutionary dialectic, conceived as a process of resolving the contradictions inherited from the past, and the creation of new forms of social relations. This, furthermore, is what Lenin understood when he immersed himself in the *Science of Logic* to grasp the revolutionary potential contained, paradoxically, within the "collapse of the Second International" and the First World War. And it is this effort to grasp the "new society struggling to be born" that the contradictions of state-capitalism impose on revolutionaries:

Our age has seen a successful workers' revolution—the Russian Revolution of November, 1917—which seemed to open up an entire new epoch in the free development of humanity only to end in the counter-revolution of state-capitalism. It is therefore our age that is preoccupied with the question of man's destiny: What happens after a revolution succeeds?

As we see, for Dunayevskaya the dialectic does not only serve a retrospective purpose, but one of reaching to the future. To think dialectically is not only to reconstruct the social, political, and cultural relations of the past from the standpoint of congealing them in the present as contradiction, it is also to seek to clarify the goals of freedom movements, to ask the question of "What comes after?" and to look for "new beginnings." Now, that movement that leads from theory to utopia, from recognizing contradictions to anticipation of their concrete resolution, is identical to that which leads from Hegel to Marx.

From Hegel, Marx in effect would have retained the idea according to which "all of history presents itself as a series of historical stages in the development of freedom." Simply, where Hegel ran up against class prejudice that prevented him from situating the movement of a history of freedom in the self-activity of the masses, which consequently he mystified in the self-development of "Spirit," Marx conceived the historical trajectory of humanity from the point of view of "labor in the process of production," that is, of "the living laborer...against the domination of dead labor." If "Marxism is a theory of liberation," it is such as a "philosophy of human activity," such that the "philosophy can be most fittingly called a *new Humanism*."

Might one say, then, that Dunayevskaya's Marxism is an embodiment of the "theoretical humanism" that Althusser denounced as the last refuge of liberal ideology within historical materialism? Yes and no. Yes, if we mean by "theoretical humanism" a philosophy of history written from the point of view of that meta-subject called "humanity." No, if we mean by that term a social theory that pretends to explain

social phenomena from the point of view of ahistorical properties of "human essence."

Dunayevskaya does not, in effect, attribute an explanatory function, but a critical and utopian one, to the "new Humanism": for her it is not a question of reducing forms of social objectivity to the objectification of human nature, but of insisting on the historical newness that must incarnate the arrival of the free society. As the Soviet counter-example shows, communism can't be reduced to the collectivization of production, it implies the creation of "classless, totally new human relations in life and in philosophy" (*Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution*, p. 192) as well as assuring the individuals involved the free development of their capacities.

This "new Humanism" represents, in other words, the materialist translation of Hegel's "Absolute," the code word for freedom that is conscious of itself because it unfolds in the framework of social relations. It constitutes in this way the yardstick from which to evaluate the present and the principle by which to orient ourselves in social and political struggles which presage the future. Its theoretical benefit depends, then, on its power of practical intervention.



Beyond the historical context of the time in which it was written, and whatever one thinks of the "Humanism" that is expressed there, *Marxisme et Liberté* invites us to reconnect with the strategic creativity of past freedom movements, and to connect resolutely with the historical dialectic which is our destiny in any case, and to supplement the question of "what do we do?" with that of knowing where we want to go. Less than a program, but more than an incantatory call to resistance, this work is an invitation to retake the historical initiative that we have abandoned to capital and to the world that only belongs to it because we have allowed ourselves to be dispossessed.

Translation by D. Chêneville

Trump and unrest confront China

Just weeks after Donald Trump—with Vladimir Putin's help—claimed his Electoral College victory, he put the spotlight on U.S.-China relations by taking a call from Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen, creating the possibility that the U.S. might abandon the "one China" policy. Like Putin's seizing control of parts of eastern Ukraine, raising the question of separate recognition of Taiwan undoes a settled issue among nuclear powers in the post-World War II world.

China insisted on recognition of its sovereignty over Taiwan while never sending troops to take control, since for a generation the island has been most valuable as a prime source of capital, including Foxconn and its factories with a million workers building hi-tech Apple phones and computers. Likewise, when the British left Hong Kong in 1997, China nurtured it as a conduit for capital investment with a "one country two systems" policy until 2047.

As China's President Xi Jinping consolidates power in government, the Party and the military, he has so far reacted most viciously not to politicians in Taiwan or Washington but to citizens calling for self-determination.

Repression of Hong Kong's Occupy Central in 2014—the Umbrella Movement—was carried out on the pretext that the movement demanded independence. In January, veterans of that movement traveling to meet activists in Taipei in Taiwan were harassed and even beaten by thugs in both cities.

Up until now labor activists in Hong Kong have been able to record the increasing militancy of Chinese workers, with almost 20% more job actions over factories that are closing or being sold off and other corporate theft, and the increasing repression of the regime, as in the village of Wukan.

There, villagers won the right to elect their own leaders in 2011 after evicting all the corrupt appointed ones. But in January, nine Wukan villagers were sentenced to prison terms of from two to more than ten years for leading demonstrations for 85 days in solidarity with village leader Lin Zulian, who had been jailed and forced to confess to corruption.

The area of the South China Sea is already volatile, as China has built runways on seven artificial specks of concrete built up on underwater reefs. Resistance at home can spark adventurism abroad. A confrontation between China and what it perceives as a Putin-Trump axis, with the rulers of all three countries facing unrest at home, makes for the most perilous big-power international situation since Nixon tilted to China in hopes that Mao Zedong could extricate him from Vietnam.

—Bob McGuire

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MARXISME ET LIBERTÉ

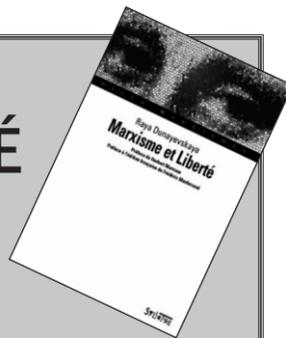
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"C'est bien des modalités d'une rupture révolutionnaire anti-autoritaire et émancipatrice dont discute ici l'auteure."

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Previously published in Italian, Japanese and Spanish and chapters have been circulated underground in Iran, China and East Europe.



ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL CRISES

Nobody knows about the lead poisoning emergency in Northwest Indiana—even though Indiana’s governor, Mike Pence, just became Vice President and recently refused to declare an emergency there. East Chicago is a disaster zone, people are being poisoned every day, but they can’t afford to move away. Pence just repeats the familiar lie that we don’t know that the lead will harm these people.

**Observer
Indiana**

The ideas underlying the blocking of the Dakota Access Pipeline have been powerful enough to inspire thousands of veterans to head to the Standing Rock area to protect the water protectors from the police who serve and protect the exploiters. Some of those veterans are heading to Flint to revive attention to the poisoning of the majority Black population there. Other battles have been inspired, such as the Two Rivers camp in Texas opposing the Trans-Pecos Pipeline. This is on and we are not going away.



**Solidarity activist
Southern California**

In July 1976 the late Lakota columnist for *News & Letters*, Shainape Shcapwe, wrote movingly on a struggle similar to one taking place over the Dakota Access Pipeline. She wrote of Canadian Native activist Nelson Small Legs, who committed suicide to protest the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline. He wrote: “I give my life in protest to the present conditions concerning the Indian people of southern Alberta... in the hope of a full-scale investigation into the Department of Indian Affairs corruption...and the divide-and-conquer tactics present on each reservation....My suicide should open the eyes of non-Indians into how much we’ve suffered....I give up my life in protest to the Canadian government for its treatment of Indian people for the past one hundred years.” Nine hundred people attended his funeral.

Now that headlines focus on Donald Trump’s endless outrages, support for this multi-faceted struggle is essential. Native struggles against capitalist exploitation are grounded in a strong vision of a human-based way of life in harmony with the natural world, a concept that all of us need to internalize.

**Susan Van Gelder
Michigan**

Victory at Standing Rock? I hope so. This movement organized itself, built its own community to meet human needs, material and spiritual, with purpose and meaning. I hope it continues. What seems one day like the impossible turns out the next not to be; like the Fight for \$15 which passed in some cities. We set our own limitations on ourselves when we are solely pragmatic and think: “That could never happen,” or when we try to be too reasonable, see it from the other side as if that’s the fair-minded position to take. This new era doesn’t have to be the end of history. Still, I’m not sure Trump won’t totally undo the struggle over the Dakota Access Pipeline.

**Observer
Midwest**

Defying the first real snow of the season on Jan. 8, hundreds of New Yorkers, mainly women, rallied outside a Planned Parenthood clinic in the Noho district of New York City to denounce proposed federal assaults on Planned Parenthood. The incoming administration’s attack dogs, especially Paul Ryan, announced their plan to totally defund the organization, which currently receives around \$500 million in federal funding through Medicaid reimbursements—none of

READERS’ VIEWS

which is used for abortions. It is used for contraceptives, pap smears, testing for sexually transmitted diseases, etc. The First Lady of New York City, Chirlane McCray, City Council speaker Melissa Mark Viverito, and others addressed the crowd. After the rally, people went into Planned Parenthood’s offices to write letters and call Congress demanding the organization stay well funded.

**Natalia
New York**

The Dec. 2 “Ghost Ship” warehouse fire which killed 36 young people (see article, p. 11) took place near where I live. It situates the encroaching inferno of capitalism’s disintegration.

We can take the easy road and bring charges against the landlord; blame the couple who were underground promoters of an alternative living arrangement; or fault the city inspectors who couldn’t keep up with the backlog of complaints against blight. We can ask why the residents of the warehouse chose to live there. (One said, “It was either there or sleep in the streets,” which is where I find dozens of tent encampments strewn across Oakland on my drive to work.) As capitalism’s crisis deepens, it reveals a tinderbox waiting to fuel the fires next time.

This should also serve as a reminder that the “new” Trump era is also a recapitulation of Reaganism’s trickle-down economics and crony capitalism, restructuring and deindustrialization. Retrogression continues unabated. It is the real “Ghost Ship” from the past haunting the present.

**Htun Lin
Oakland**

ON MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY

My Dream is that one day one will not be prosecuted for feeding a homeless person on the streets of Raleigh and that one will not be charged for putting up a tent for a refugee on the streets of Paris. What a world we live in, where helping a poor and a needy person is a crime.

**Faisal R. Khan
North Carolina**

The nature of the “revolution” sought by Trump and flunkies was clear from the contrast between Black Lives Matter protests and community meetings on Martin Luther King Jr. Day, plus actions like the blockade of the Valero Memphis Terminal to oppose the Diamond Pipeline, on the one hand; and on the other Trump’s urge to erase the very history of the civil rights movement, shown in his Twitter attack on Rep. John Lewis.



**Activist
Southern California**

HEALTHCARE CRISIS

My heart breaks for the millions of people who are covered by the Affordable Care Act who will soon find themselves without healthcare. SHAME, SHAME, SHAME, on the party that claims to be “PRO-LIFE” who are obsessed with fetuses and don’t give a damn about those already here. I am so sickened by this.

**Clinic escort
Chicago**

I can only pray for some humanity to prevail over greed as the Republicans destroy the Affordable Care Act. The power they have over the quality of life and death for 20 million people is obscene. I am lucky to be healthy: the insurance plans I was offered came with a \$5,000 deductible. Who can afford that? We have too many insurance companies making big profits. Everyone should have the same insurance, from the President on down to the next one born. Only the government can achieve that, if it’s done right.

**Joyce
Detroit**

The link between climate change and suicide reinforced my fear that suicides in the U.S. are bound to increase under Trump—not just because of anticipated cuts to mental health treatment, but because of the political-social-economic climate. Within days of his election suicide hotline calls spiked, particularly for Trans teens and adults. The effects of racism, sexism and homophobia aren’t easily mitigated by mental health treatment, though that’s important. Fighting to reclaim our own dignity and worth and that of others is crucial in this new era, every bit as important as fighting for resources. We fight for everything at once because we are whole human beings, not divided parts.

**Observer
Midwest**

TRUMP AND THE ELECTION

Donald Trump’s choices for his cabinet are revealing. Tom Price, his choice for Health and Human Services, is so extreme and openly against women controlling our own bodies—including opposing healthcare coverage for birth control and abortion. We can look forward to The Donald nominating anti-women judges to the Supreme Court and other courts. In the past, abortion-access groups such as JANE arose to fight lack of access to legal, safe abortion.

**Feminist
Illinois**

Jeff Sessions, Trump’s pick for Attorney General, will be attacking women instead of defending us from violence. He falsely denied that the “pussy-grabbing” that Trump bragged about constitutes sexual assault. That is why women came to his Senate confirmation hearing with posters bearing the Justice Department’s definition of sexual assault—which includes Trump’s self-declared actions

**Feminist
Southern California**

In November Republican authorities halted Green Party presidential candidate Jill Stein’s recount of Michigan’s votes. But endemic problems were revealed while alleged “voter fraud” was non-existent.

In Detroit, a large number of voting machines malfunctioned, delaying and discouraging voters. Poll workers misinformed voters: telling a blind woman that she could not have help to fill out her ballot; telling voters to “choose Hillary”; and another poll worker was on hold for 45 minutes trying to correct the voting list, as the woman she was helping was clearly not dead. Half of the ballot boxes’ contents did not match their accompanying records or were improperly sealed.

These revelations will fuel cynicism, especially among youth who think “My vote doesn’t count.” It can reinforce their understanding of how broken the electoral system is, an understanding which needs to develop into concrete visions for a new, human society.

**Voter
North West Detroit**

I could not believe how the #pussy-hatproject took off. You could see them at every demonstration in every country—knitted hats, most of them in shades of pink, made to look like little cat ears. The point was to let Donald Trump, and everyone else know, that women will not stand for being belittled, for being groped, and especially for Trump reducing women to objects for his pleasure.



**Women’s Liberationist
Chicago**

What Dunayevskaya called a “crisis of a nation that transformed the cheap, egotistic, self-centered con-man into ‘a social type’” is now a total crisis as that “social type” has the reins of a national security state and a military capacity of absolute destruction and everything short of that. The gamut of Republicans who denounced Trump as a “dangerous con-man” are now lined up behind the winner. Already, Trump’s pure voluntarism in international affairs, violating a half-century of protocol by directly calling the leader of Taiwan, shows no regard for the fact that China is a nuclear-armed behemoth and an economic powerhouse.

**Observer
Northern California**

BRUTAL ‘JUSTICE’

I’ve just learned the name of the U.S. military base on Diego Garcia, one that was built after brutally removing the people who lived there (see “LALIT confronts colonization of Diego Garcia,” Nov.-Dec. 2016 *N&L*). It is sickeningly and inappropriately named “Camp Justice.” No wonder those who fight against it like *LALIT* only call it the U.S. base and never use its disgusting name—a name that shows no justice at all, but only a racist colonial arrogance. The U.S. and Britain should be ashamed, but anointing a base with that name—a base that caused so much pain and misery and whose land was acquired in such an inhuman and brutish manner—reveals that the U.S. and British governments are incapable of such an honest emotion.

**Terry Moon
Chicago**

WHO READS N&L?

Many of the *News & Letters* from my bundle went to different homeless short-term small housing as coffee table reads in the lobby. Granted, many were eventually borrowed by Case Managers. Regardless, they were very well received and read.

**Bundle dealer
Milwaukee**

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PRACTICAL AND THEORETICAL INTERVENTION

The National Indigenous Congress in Chiapas, Mexico, saluted the defense of the Dakota Nation's sacred territory. Native Americans have been recognized by Indigenous people in Mexico as part of the same crusade they are on for new relationships between human beings and nature. In that sense, the page on the Standing Rock resistance from the Nov.-Dec. 2016 issue of *N&L* is significant. It contains activity articles that let us see the actions and ideas of the people defending the Dakota Nation, and an editorial puts forth the meaning of this struggle. This is the kind of practical and theoretical support that radical activists should give to the movements from below, whose ideas and actions are the only ones that can bring us closer to a totally new society.

J.G.F. Héctor
Mexico City

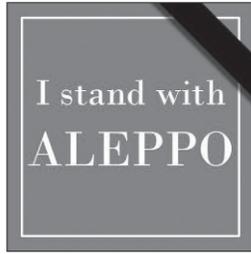
“Organization of thought” comes front and center in bringing out the meaning of the Hungarian Revolution (“Spontaneity of action and organization of thought: In memoriam of the Hungarian Revolution,” Nov.-Dec. 2016 *N&L*). Followers of C.L.R. James and others like the Situationists single out the emergence of freely associated forms of spontaneous organization and direct democracy, the Hungarian Revolution's Workers' Councils. The significance of that achievement, which Dunayevskaya also hails, does not overshadow the Revolution posing the need for a new “organization of thought.” The Revolution posed the need to unite concept and reality because it aimed to not only oppose what is but reached for Marx's positive humanist vision of reality that comes from within.

Ron Kelch
Oakland

People are searching for an analysis of populism given the surreal and scary rifts happening in national politics. How does Marxist-Humanism see it? I remember Dunayevskaya writing in *American Civilization on Trial* about the late 19th-century populist movement, which to her held lots of potential.

Subscriber
Wyoming

SYRIA AND HUMANISM



In Istanbul, many of the people who were protesting against the slaughter of Aleppo have been silent

on the slaughters of Diyarbakir. Those who have heroically fought against the Israeli occupation of Palestine have stood firmly with Assad, preferring to defend genocide if it means protecting Hezbollah and Assad. Erdogan has cried for Syria, but tortured and purged all who fight for Kurdish freedom. Those of my comrades who have stood with Syria have dogmatically held onto narratives that reduce Rojava and the PYD to traitors of the revolution. Those who have stood with Rojava have tried to pit it against the revolution. I'm left wondering, save for groups like News and Letters Committees, what are we doing wrong? Why must everyone engage in selective sympathy? What is politics without empathy? We all bleed red, the tears of every child are the same.

African student
Britain

A few weeks before the U.S. presidential election, the Russian leader Vladimir Putin calls off the genocidal bombing of civilians for a brief second in Aleppo and other areas in Syria. Why didn't the Democrats make the connection? Was it because they realized that they had no moral authority to condemn Trump considering their own abandonment of the Syrian people? After the election, Putin and his man Trump talk on the phone and within hours the bombing of hospitals and other war crimes resume. Trump has aligned himself with the murderer Putin, but if they have a spat, things could change. Think of the Hitler-Stalin falling out.

Curtis R.
Battle Creek, Mich

The armed struggle in Syria has always been in defense of the mass revolution, the civilians reorganizing society. A Syrian friend reminds me of this: “Who ever thought our revolution is only about weapons and killing? Our revolution is about consciously seeking freedom, and all the regime's crime and malice will never kill this thought. The revolution will never die as long as there are living people carrying the idea of revolution.” Whatever rethinking must be done, it's profoundly important to recognize that it can begin from this idea of freedom.

Gerry Emmett
Chicago

The silence, even approval, of much of the Left in the face of the genocidal destruction of East Aleppo has prompted a group of Marxists, including Marxist-Humanists, anarchists and independents to start a Syrian Revolution Support Campaign in Oakland, Calif. Our first meeting is in late January. We want to tell the truth about the Syrian revolution. Contact us to find out more; see the directory on p. 3.

Marxist-Humanists
Oakland, Calif.

INTERNATIONAL CRISES

In response to Mexican President Peña Nieto's decision to sharply raise the price of gasoline, citizens in almost every state of Mexico have organized marches that are blockading gas stations, stopping highway traffic, and on and on. Already the price of tortillas—basic food for all in Mexico—is on the rise. The dramatic spread and power of the protests is an indication of the opposition to the price rise and the deep dissatisfaction and rage, of so many in Mexico. Authoritarian practices of the police and military, violence, drug trafficking, kidnappings, forced disappearances, stealing and despoiling peasant and Indigenous lands, racism, sexism, and corruption matched with impunity—this is the reality of life and labor in Mexico. Many are saying *Ya Basta!* (Enough!). As usual, however, the government continues its destructive path.

Eugene Walker
Mexico City

PRISONERS SPEAK

I'm incarcerated and am a student of Marxist literature. Coming from a disadvantaged background, I can tell you the struggle is real out West. The conscious level of the common man has



to be raised to begin formulating thoughts and ideas that bring into focus our common bonds. A commitment to putting words into action is a must if we are to bring about a concrete change. I've started the process by first changing myself, or rather edifying myself while under lock and key. I need the spark of knowledge to light personal growth and reflect the creed of communism to all within range.

Prisoner
Corcoran, Calif.

Just checking in to let you know that the struggle continues. I've been transferred to a “new” gulag with the same “old” program and ideas. I just want to let you know that we hear your message and can see clearly where Amerikkka is headed. Keep up the fight for people everywhere!

Prisoner
Corcoran, Calif.

I am delighted to learn that your group exists and works to abolish capitalism. Please place my name and address on your subscribers' list. With a change of U.S. leaders, trouble in Europe, China, Russia and India getting “into position,” I am *eager* to learn what a Marxist-Humanist approach is accomplishing. The time is right to redirect present groups!

Prisoner
Iona, Calif.

TO OUR READERS: Can you donate \$5 for a prisoner who cannot pay for a subscription to N&L? An \$8 donation makes it possible to give a subscription plus the Pelican Bay Hunger Strikers pamphlet to a prisoner where it will be widely shared.

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by Raya Dunayevskaya

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Continued discussion of “Prisoners’ Human Rights Movement Blueprint”

What is our true human nature?

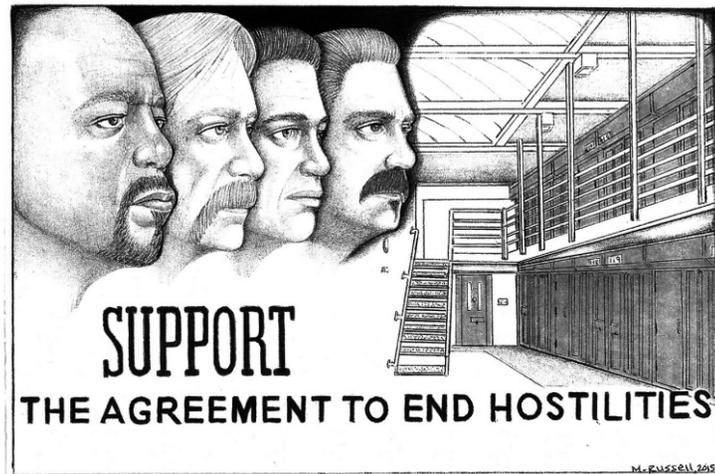
Once you are aware of your true nature, the universe becomes a friendly, supportive nurturing place in which to explore and grow.
—The Toltec Way

I'm a native Midwesterner, who had to journey into this new Jim Crow system as a lost rebel...knowing no other means [by] which to assert meaning to my young existence. It was inside this system that I met conscious Bruthas who helped me learn knowledge of self, rediscover my humanity and affirm my dignity and heritage—a journey that has been an awakening of my humanism...

I want to share the “significance of the PHRM Blue Print with a view of spreading it to other movements beyond prison reform,” as you wrote. I/we (my co-author/signer of the Blue Print) both concur with your insightful points/visions.

Being that we are in mutual agreement with the “Humanism-empowerment,” we're interested in what you believe and suggest the proactive steps that activists can progressively take to:

1. Think/discuss and emulate the humanism that animates the movement?
2. Establish a “voice beyond its expression in the next activity”?
3. Persistently drive to be self-determining as the most concrete dimension of being human?
4. (Sitawa asks of you) what specific grassroots groups/collectives out there do you perceive would



fit in the view of spreading our Blue Print to other movements beyond prison reform”?

He says (I/we concur) “Let's make this be our starting point” and get back to letting me/us know what aspect of the Blue Print are you referring to in this regard?

We look forward to your reply...

—Brutha Baridi



Dear Baridi,

Thank you for your thoughtful reply. I love your quote regarding one's “true nature.” The question of **what** is our true nature—for me, our nature is the drive to freely determine our life activity—and the question of being fully **aware** of that nature, captures the essence of the new sense of concrete I was trying to speak to. That new sense of what is concrete comes to the fore more prominently when a movement looks for a way to continue after achieving an important milestone, as the movement against indefinite solitary confinement did with the settlement of the *Ashker* case.

At first what may seem most concrete is the immediate obstacle to freedom like indeterminate solitary confinement. After a victory, as many find themselves in the general prison population, the experience of fighting for freedom has changed. What I see you asking is how to continue being/becoming what we started to become in the previous fight. In other words, what is concrete is not merely the obstacles “out there,” but also the power of our “true nature” in overcoming obstacles.

One way I would address your point #1 is to further elaborate what is our “true nature.” Many forms of humanism exist in freedom movements today: Black Lives Matter calls for recognition of Black lives as human, women's liberation worldwide demands recognition of women as fully human, the refugees from the myriad wars around the world ask “what about our humanity?” Even the environment is a part of our natural existence, now threatened by activity that disrespects it.

How did we lose what you quote from *Toltec Way*: to experience “the universe...[as] a friendly, supportive nurturing place in which to explore and grow”? One casualty of not being true to our nature is what labor has been reduced to under capitalism. We sell our life activity, our ability to labor. Our labor becomes a mere means to life, rather than an exploration and growth of our true nature. Another aspect of this loss is the destruction of nature, which

for capitalism is only a raw resource to be exploited. Because we are alienated from our own labor, it is not an expression of our life activity, it does not flow from our true nature, it becomes destructive of both our human nature and external nature.

Today, especially with the election of Trump, we are running out of time: we either consciously work out what is our “true nature” or we destroy the planet, either through war or an ecological disaster.

The discussion of humanism is absolutely urgent and open-ended in the sense that it allows concrete connections to other movements, not as a list of issues but as aspects of the same fight. The question I see raised in the Blueprint—how does the power of the humanist idea that animated the movement that won the victory of abolishing the use of long-term solitary confinement continue in the new situation—was also raised by Faruq in discussing the humanism of Frantz Fanon, and by Black Lives Matter founder Alicia Garza at a recent meeting in Oakland (see “Revisiting Fanon,” Nov.-Dec. 2016 *N&L*). Garza sees Black Lives Matter as a re-humanization and asks what happened to the African Revolutions of the 1960s and 1970s whose self-proclaimed humanism ended so badly.

To me, the Blueprint is reaching for a way to not limit the next stage to fighting something “out there,” like the parole board or lack of programming or still inhuman conditions in the general population. A discussion of our “true nature,” in my view, engages the Blueprint's recognition of who we are, based on “The Agreement to End Hostilities.”

The Agreement explicitly breaks with the definition of who “I” am based on what the prison system makes of race. It asserts that the fight against racism, for example, includes recognition of our common humanity. Which brings us back to who we truly are: self-determining beings aware of our true nature, which also demands mutually recognizing each other as agents of our destiny.

The idea of our common true nature is concrete, especially as it unfolds in fighting racism, or sexism, or the attempts to de-humanize prisoners. Our time makes us face who we are. People feel and think that the world as it exists now is unsustainable. They are alienated from it. There is a foreboding and unease about what is going to replace the world as we know it. The anti-globalization movement had aspirations of global human solidarity, yet now fascism and narrow nationalism has arisen all over the world posing as an opposition to globalized capitalism. The U.S. is turning the powers of its highest office over to a fascist nationalist, an open misogynist and racist hater.

Can humanism, the power of the idea of our common true nature, become a beacon for those looking for a different answer? Doesn't it demand thinking through the meaning of our activity as we overcome the myriad obstacles to freedom? Perhaps this is what Faruq meant when he quoted: “...to be able to catch what is significant in your own activity is a life and death question.”

—Urszula Wislanka

The movie *Loving*, Karl Marx and ‘real life’

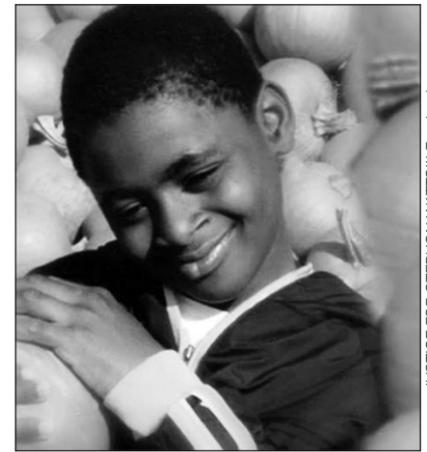
The recent movie *Loving*, on the struggle of a racially mixed married couple in Virginia in the 1960s, may seem a world apart from the need to work out anew Karl Marx's revolutionary philosophy in these retrogressive times. Consider, however, the enduring significance of the 1967 Supreme Court decision *Loving v. Virginia*, that overthrew Virginia's laws against racial intermarriage. It was a critical precedent for the 2013 Supreme Court decision overturning a ban on same sex marriage. The 2013 decision is a reflection of the continuing expansion of freedom that comes from the depths of society and the revolt against its rules governing home and family life, including now bathrooms and gender identification.

The norms of family life are part of everyday life activity that pre-dates capitalism. Marx's concept of freedom emerged in contrast to alienated labor under capitalism, where one's ability to labor is sold as a commodity, becoming a mere means to life. However, Marx's revolution in permanence is the realization of freedom in all aspects of everyday life activity where he singled out as most fundamental the man/woman relation.

Loving should be seen just to revisit some important history, like the dramatic moment when Virginia police charge, Gestapo-like, into the Lovings' bedroom to drag African-American Mildred Loving off to jail. Her white husband, Richard Loving, is a hard-working bricklayer who takes great pride in taking care of his family and finds joy spending time with them. He takes little notice of the big events

Justice still denied

Chicago—On Feb. 1, 2012, Stephon Watts, a 15-year-old African-American autistic boy, was shot dead by police officers in the basement of his home in Calumet City, Ill. His parents had called the



Stephon Watts

JUSTICE FOR STEPHON WATTS!!! Facebook page

police, as they had at least ten times before when Stephon's condition left him inconsolably angry and violent. He was a teen with the emotional turmoil experienced by all teens, but he was limited in his ability to cope with puberty.

The particular officers who arrived that day had been informed about Stephon's autism, and were trained to handle people with disabilities. Yet officers Hynek and Coffey acted with deadly force. They ended their annoyance at being repeatedly called to the scene with an extra-judicial execution.

Former Cook County prosecutor Anita Alvarez declined to bring charges against the officers. She was voted out of office in the 2016 election, but that may not be enough to stop this particular abuse of authority from occurring again. Denied justice in criminal court, Stephon's mother took their case to civil court.

Despite evidence uncovered in the case that the police may have planted a knife to bolster their indefensible murder of Stephon, the Circuit Court found that the police were immune to lawsuits! That decision was appealed, and in July 2016 the Appellate Court of Illinois unanimously upheld Circuit Judge Brewer's decision to allow the institutional murder of people with disabilities by police officers who are annoyed with their jobs. Because Stephon Watts was also a person of color, Black Lives Matter added his name to the long list of people of color murdered by the police.

Our society could respond by creating special service officers trained in social work and crisis prevention, and some communities have done that. But today giving police officers the power to murder people under the color of law seems to be the judicial norm. It is something we must change with direct action, because the law does not offer recourse.

Neither police officers nor prosecutors nor judges nor politicians can be allowed to normalize civil rights abuses by police officers and certainly they must not be allowed to get away with legalizing murder. We must remember their names if we are to remember their victims, and the consequences of infamy should never depart from their lives.

Direct action is needed to “un-normalize” fascist and undemocratic and illegal practices by individuals and institutions.

—Thomas Richard Jackson

unfolding around him, like the huge civil rights marches, including the 1963 March on Washington, and doesn't want to turn his life into a public event. A *Life* magazine photographer is able to charm himself into the family for a moment and catches the Lovings relaxing at home in what became an iconic photo.

Mildred Loving writes for help to the Attorney General Robert Kennedy. He passes her letter on to the American Civil Liberties Union, where a young ACLU lawyer is excited about finding an ideal test case to argue before the Supreme Court. When the lawyer asks Mr. Loving what he'd like to tell the judges, he says, “Tell them I love my wife.” He won't attend the hearing, so neither does Mildred Loving, even though she sees their struggle as much bigger than their immediate family.

Marx's concept of revolution in permanence is of social revolution, in distinction from the political, legal arena and the “point of view... of the state, of an abstract whole, which exists only through separation from real life...” The movement in the human community is constantly overcoming barriers to needing and mutually recognizing the other as one who freely chooses and directs their everyday life activity.

For me, the message of *Loving* for today is: fight like hell when politics and the state interfere with that movement in the human community, but never confuse the legal fight, that spectacle, for reality and for staying human.

—Ron Kelch

Chelsea Manning is not yet free

As the Obama administration had hinted, Chelsea Manning received a Presidential commutation and will be released in May. But Manning deserves much more than a commutation. She is owed a pardon, compensation and an apology.

From 2009 until her arrest in 2010, Manning was in Iraq working as an intelligence officer in the U.S. Army. She was haunted by what she was seeing and hearing about frequent human rights abuses against civilians. She saw a 2007 video showing two separate helicopter gunners who fired on civilians in Baghdad. She may have seen an encrypted video taken from the B-1 bomber involved in an aerial bombing of Garani, Afghanistan, in 2009, which killed 48 adults and 92 children.

In addition, Manning witnessed numerous attempts to help the Shi'a-nationalist Nouri Al-Maliki crush the Iraqis' clamor for new beginnings. She wrote this to *The New York Times* in June 2014:

CHELSEA MANNING'S OWN WORDS

"Military and diplomatic reports coming across my desk detailed a brutal crackdown against political dissidents by the Iraqi Ministry of Interior and federal police, on behalf of Prime Minister Nouri Kamal al-Maliki. Detainees were often tortured, or even killed.

"Early that year [election year 2010], I received orders to investigate 15 individuals whom the federal police had arrested on suspicion of printing 'anti-Iraqi literature.' I learned that these individuals had absolutely no ties to terrorism; they were publishing a scholarly critique of Mr. Maliki's administration. I forwarded this finding to the officer in command in eastern Baghdad. He responded that he didn't need this information; instead, I should assist the federal police in locating more 'anti-Iraqi' print shops."

Faced with the gross intransigence of her superiors, Manning decided she would have to release this information to the press, both the aforementioned videos and a cache of diplomatic cables. She hoped public awareness would be a brake on the conduct she was reading about and watching.

SENTENCED IN ORDER TO SEND MESSAGE

Manning was sentenced in 2013 to 35 years in military prison, which is where she has been since her arrest in 2010.

By early 2014, the northwest of Iraq had experienced so much Sunni disaffection and misery—with no viable alternative to Shi'a domination—that the horrific ideologues of ISIS were able to roll in and conquer all of Mosul by June.

Chelsea Manning, a person who witnessed despicable acts in the so-called "War on Terror" and tried her best to help the U.S. avoid greater catastrophes, will be released from custody in May, but deserves much more.

Manning needs to be respected as a Transgen-



How Chelsea Manning sees herself. By Alicia Neal, in cooperation with Manning, commissioned by the Chelsea Manning Support Network, April 23, 2014.

der woman wherever she is. While she remains in military custody, she needs to be given her medications and all her mail, and to live without being under a torturous system. Chelsea Manning is a profoundly principled person. She deserves to get out of prison now.

—Buddy Bell

VOICES FROM THE INSIDE OUT

continued from p. 1

the multi-dimensional aspects of humanity which are rooted deep within each movement, that is, to the idea of freedom itself.

NEED FOR DIALECTICAL METHODOLOGY

The analysis of Cuba's revolutionary struggle, with Castro serving as El Comandante, must be done through a dialectical method that centers the human being as the social entity. A point of departure is the question Frantz Fanon posited: how to avoid the cowardice of the intellectual who falls into neo-colonialism, creates a new single-party state and a new separation of "brains and muscle."

I don't claim that Castro fits neatly into the category which Fanon set forth. But even a cursory view of the revolutionary struggle in Cuba reveals some parallels. Castro diverted to a one-party state and depended on Soviet aid, which was a form of neo-colonialist relations.

It is important to grasp how a single party and neo-colonialism constitute a separation of "brains and muscle," or to put in another way, a separation of the leaders from the masses who made the revolution. Not to grasp this reality could leave efforts to realize freedom trapped halfway, like so many preceding attempts.

The single-party state has proven to be an oppressive reality for people who have newly liberated themselves. It is erected on the premise of protecting the revolution and advancing the people's interest. However, just as Fanon pointed to the separation of "brains and muscle," the protection of the revolution and the people's interest under a single-party state becomes the domain of a single person or a privileged few who assume they have all the right ideas while the people cannot possibly be trusted with making decisions affecting their lives or their nation.

FREELY ASSOCIATED LABOR IS KEY

It is that kind of thinking by leaders—those who forget that they owe their power to the people—that objectifies people as a mere labor force, rather than agents of freely associated labor. Freely associated labor has, at its core, an unfettered individual human potential. It is a path towards total liberation that has not been tried and has had little philosophical discussion.

We all recognize the accomplishments of the Cuban people when the Soviet Union imploded and material aid was stopped. The masses were asked to exert their full creative potential to sustain the revolutionary process. They responded by making significant strides in the field of biodiversity, which allowed for the cultivation of food crops that fed an economically deprived nation.

Cuba was able to give aid to other developing nations, sending doctors, teachers and some technical support.

However, we must speak to the social conditions from which the aid derives. It by no means fully represents capitalism's complete opposite.

The critical point is the necessity to engage in constructive dialogue, which is an ongoing imperative for us prisoners, where no subject is off limits—be it prisoners' rights, Black Lives Matter, immigration, refugees, etc. To get beyond the half-way process, it is necessary to think critically about what unchaining the dialectic in and for itself truly means. In other words, to allow for the unfolding of the self-determination of the idea of freedom itself, bearing in mind that it is human beings who constitute the social entity of society.

Transgender Day of Remembrance

The 18th International Transgender Day of Remembrance (TDOR), observed in November, commemorated Transgender and gender-nonconforming people who were murdered over the last 12 months just for being brave enough to be themselves. An Australian bridge was decorated in pink, white and blue lights—the colors of the Transgender pride flag. A tree was planted in Bangkok, and a social media hangout was held via the African Queer Initiative Network.

Even U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry recognized TDOR, saying, "Transgender persons around the world are targeted by rising levels of violence fueled by hatred and bigotry. This is a global challenge and we all must do more to protect transgender persons on the basis of equality and dignity."

At the same time the state of Texas is preparing to pass anti-Transgender laws, and a Texas federal judge stalled gender-affirming healthcare for Transgender people under the Affordable Care Act.

It is known that over 300 Transgender people were murdered in 2016. The actual number is unknown, because many countries still do not have laws protecting gender-variant people, let alone recognizing them as a class of people.

Gwendolyn Ann Smith founded TDOR because of the murders of two Transgender women of color, Rita Hester in 1998 and Chanelle Pickett in 1995. The vigil held in San Francisco's Castro neighborhood in 1999 was the first TDOR event to commemorate all Transgender and gender-nonconforming people lost to violence. Ms. Smith's moving writing, *Transgender Day of Remembrance: Why We Remember* can be found at http://www.huffingtonpost.com/gwendolyn-ann-smith/transgender-day-of-remembrance-why-we-remember_b_2166234.html.

—Elise Barclay

Free Mumia!

Oakland, Calif.—On Dec. 9, as part of a National Day of Action to Free Mumia Now and Free Hep-C Meds for All Prisoners, several hundred people gathered in downtown Oakland. Previous international protests had gotten Mumia Abu-Jamal off death row so that his voice for liberation and against the racist justice system couldn't be silenced. In fact, he gained a worldwide audience.

Two issues prompted new activity around Mumia's case: the justice system's recent attempt to kill him through medical abuse, and a recent U.S. Supreme Court decision, *Williams vs. Pennsylvania*, which ruled that a prosecutor cannot later sit as a judge over the same defendant's appeal. This is what happened to every appeal in Mumia's case. This Jan. 4, a Federal judge ruled that Pennsylvania must provide Mumia, who is now very ill, with the latest life-saving hepatitis C medications. After 35 years in prison, mostly on death row and in solitary confinement, Mumia will not be forgotten, because the drive to free him is also about transforming the whole criminal injustice system.

—R.K.

QUEERNOTES

by Elise

In January, Virginia Governor Terry McAuliffe enacted Executive Order 61, which bans state services and contractors from discriminating on the basis of gender identity and sexual orientation. But then far-right Delegate Robert Marshall introduced a bill similar to HR2, North Carolina's infamous anti-Transgender bathroom restriction bill. If the Virginia bill passes, Transgender people will have to use public and school bathrooms according to the gender on their birth certificates instead of, correctly, according to their gender identity. School officials must also report children asking to be treated as gender-nonconforming to their parents or guardians, even if they are closeted to them.

A Transgender boy was kicked out of Cub Scout Pack 87 in New Jersey because some parents complained, although none of the Cub Scouts had objected. Boy Scout officials said that his ouster did not technically violate their belated, reluctantly adopted policy of nondiscrimination based on sexual orientation. But this might spark a debate on inclusion.

Friends and family of the victims of a fire at an Oakland, Calif., warehouse (see "The Ghost Ship fire," p. 11) held a candlelight vigil on Dec. 5. They were remembering those who died, including Transgender people, and were protesting that the police had been disrespectfully using gender pronouns and names of the Trans victims according to their legal documents rather than referring to the dead by the correct gender pronouns and names they had chosen in life.



by Suzanne Rose

In India over the past three years, institutionalized women with disabilities have been documented suffering from forced seclusion, abuse and neglect. Many have been forced into Mental Health Centers. Local disabled persons' organizations have advocated for them for decades. Once a woman enters one of these centers she usually doesn't get out.

The right for the disabled to choose their own care in England has become a casualty of council cuts. They are entitled to a personal budget, which helps them hire caregivers and provides for other care options. The cuts in the personal budget of many people have left many of the disabled unable to make proper choices for themselves or their loved ones.

The U.S. Supreme Court will review a case brought by the parents of an autistic child against his Colorado school district. The parents are arguing that children with disabilities are entitled to an education that provides them a "meaningful benefit," not merely "some educational benefit." Winning could raise the standard of education for six million disabled children. However, it may be hard for already poor school districts to meet those standards.

Transgender African American Kayla Moore, who suffered from schizophrenia, was killed by police in Berkeley, Calif. The officer responding to a mental health call didn't monitor her vital signs while holding her face down for several minutes. Disabled Black people are often violently targeted by police. Many killed have mental health issues that police are not equipped to deal with. The sad thing is that families are often the ones who called police, hoping they could help defuse a difficult situation, because there is no one else to call for help. Instead, many of their loved ones end up dead.

Inauguration of neo-fascism faces widespread revolt

continued from p. 1

political, and ideological restructuring that people now generally call neoliberalism, headed by U.S. President Ronald Reagan and British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher.

Neoliberalism partially destroyed the welfare state, labor unions, and taxes and regulations on corporations in a successful effort to shore up the rate of profit. Large-scale state intervention in the economy never ended, as seen for example in gargantuan military spending, massive subsidies for industries such as fossil fuel, nuclear power, and agribusiness, and the vast expansion of the prison industrial complex, followed in 2008-09 by the bailout of Wall Street and auto companies.

While neoliberalism temporarily bolstered the profit rate, it plunged again in 2007 and remains low historically. Because of Trump's ranting about international trade, his accession to power has been hailed as the end of neoliberalism. In reality he represents very little change in its key features, except a turn away from free trade. Even there, trade agreements are about much more than free trade of goods, and there is little evidence that Trump opposes the empowerment of corporations enshrined in them.

The Carrier deal speaks volumes. While most workers will certainly not get even this amount of attention, it's astonishing that Trump admitted in a speech that he had forgotten about his promise to prevent Carrier from moving 2,000 jobs from Indiana to Mexico until he saw on TV a recording of himself making the promise! He had also said that any company that moves jobs abroad would have to pay.

After the deal, Carrier is still moving 1,000 jobs to Mexico plus getting \$7 million in tax breaks. The other 800 jobs can be moved at a later date when Trump has forgotten again—if they still exist after the automation that the tax breaks will fund. Chuck Jones, the union leader at Carrier, began getting death threats, incited by Trump's Twitter attacks on him for pointing out that Trump exaggerated the number of jobs saved and more will be lost through automation.

Since that deal, Trump has taken credit for every company's announcement that they are not cutting jobs, and companies are playing along to curry favor. However, when it comes to coal and steel jobs, Trump cannot magically overrule capitalism's "creative destruction."

'FOR' THE WORKERS; 'FOR' THE WOMEN

Trump's lie that he is "for" white workers has already turned into direct attacks on the working class, with the harshest attacks aimed at immigrants, Blacks, Latinos and women. Trump, his nominees and Congress are getting ready to end or sabotage Obamacare, Medicaid, Medicare, Social Security—for the workers! They want to gut labor laws—for the workers! Cut taxes for the rich and social services for everyone else—for the workers! Wipe out access to birth control, abortion, reproductive health services, Planned Parenthood—for women!

Repeal of the ACA could result in 36,000 deaths a year. If insurance companies are once more allowed to use "preexisting conditions" to deny coverage, and if Medicaid and/or Medicare is cut, then health insurance and jobs will be put out of reach for many people with disabilities. Many will be forced to live in institutions, while hundreds of thousands of personal care assistants and homecare workers will lose their jobs.

Congress and Trump are moving fast precisely because they know they have no mandate. That so many people voted for Trump is chilling, yet he failed to get a plurality, let alone a majority. Even if we disregard the fact that nearly half of eligible voters did not vote, the millions of people denied the vote because of past felony convictions, the racially biased procedures used to eliminate registrations and make it harder for certain groups of people to vote, the roles of Putin, the FBI and sexism, Trump still only won due to the Electoral College, which was invented by the Founding Fathers to inhibit democracy and above all to protect the institution of slavery.

NEEDED: 'ONE PERSON, ONE VOTE'

The failure to abolish the Electoral College and the Senate's violation of "one person, one vote" is a stain on so-called democracy. The Supreme Court exploited it in 2000 to select George W. Bush as president. But from slavery through Jim Crow to today's mass incarceration and voter suppression, democracy has never fully included the whole population.

The reality is that Trump lost by over 2.8 million votes. Total votes for Republican candidates for the House of Representatives are perennially millions less than those for Democrats. If Senate seats were apportioned by population, Republicans would have only 45% of them after this election. And yet, once Trump's Supreme Court pick is rubber-stamped, the minority party will have single-party control of the federal government and about half the states.



Participants in the Chicago Women's March, Jan. 21.

That is exactly what they have been aiming for since the Tea Party wave of 2010, including their gambit of slamming the door on Obama's Supreme Court nominee Merrick Garland's face and their government shutdowns. Now that they have succeeded, they will work to cement that single-party rule by attacking voting rights and suppressing protest, among other measures.

ENSHRINING THE RULE OF THE 1%

Trump is assembling the whitest and most male cabinet since 1989 and the richest cabinet ever, stuffed with billionaires, several of whom have ties to Wall Street. They are anti-immigrant and anti-Gay; anti-woman and Islamophobic; pro-racist, anti-labor and anti-public education. Many are climate change deniers.

Although the Obama administration, which did more to slow global warming than all other administrations combined, still came nowhere close to what is needed and still pushed the "all of the above" energy policy allowing fatal dependence on fossil fuels, the Trump administration aims to reverse even what Obama did.

Trump's stance on human rights is clear from the blessing he gave to kindred spirit President Duterte of the Philippines and his thousands of assassinations outside of the law. Trump's nominee for Secretary of State, Rex Tillerson, praised for "deep knowledge" of foreign affairs, pretended ignorance in his Senate confirmation hearing about war crimes and human rights violations in Syria and Russia. He did not mention that ExxonMobil, which he headed, essentially has its own armed forces that commit massive human rights violations.

For the home front, the Environmental Protection Agency is to be led by Scott Pruitt, a climate denier who tries to gut all environmental regulations.

Trump's pick for Attorney General is Sen. Jeff Sessions. During a career focused on subjugating Black people, he has made time to attack people with disabilities, LGBTQ people and women.

This decaying system's deterioration of thought has led to the appointment of Lt. Gen. Michael Flynn as National Security Adviser—that is, the person who is supposed to make sense of intelligence reports is a hysterical believer and spreader of absurd conspiracy theories and fake news stories.

RESIST THE IDEOLOGICAL ONSLAUGHT

This is not just about foreign policy. It is about subordinating objective facts and conditions to ideology in all spheres. Facts alone cannot defeat ideology. Fascism doesn't care about facts, science, history, reasoned arguments. What matters is the manipulative appeal to irrationality, emotions and prejudice.

Praise of Trump's victory poured in from most of the world's leading counter-revolutionaries, from Assad to Putin, from France's Marine Le Pen to Hungary's Viktor Orban, as well as a big "heil" at home from neo-Nazi Richard Spencer. A seismic shift of world alliances has put Russia and the U.S. at the center of a grand world coalition of counter-revolution, but it has its limits. When nationalists fall out, war clouds form. Already China is alarmed by saber-rattling such as Tillerson's call to block China from access to islands it has built in the South China Sea.

The Labor Secretary nominee is Andrew Puzder, head of the Carl's Jr. and Hardee's restaurant chains. Two-thirds of their women employees reported facing sexual harassment at work. The Labor Department found at least one wage-and-hour violation in 60% of their investigations at his restaurants. Thousands of fast food workers protested at his chain's restaurants in 26 cities on Jan. 12.

While Trump has said wages are too high and his entire cabinet-to-be opposes raising the minimum wage, the clearest mandate from the election is a living wage. Wherever raising the minimum was on the ballot, it won: Arizona, Colorado, Maine and Washington. South Dakotans defeated a measure for sub-minimum youth wages. Arizona and Washington voted in

sick-leave rights. Because of the movement for a living wage, including protests and strikes in over 300 cities in 2016, the minimum wage was raised in 25 cities and states last year.

More battles are gearing up, such as the move to provide sanctuaries to undocumented immigrants now threatened with mass expulsion. The women's marches are only the beginning of fightback against the Trump/Pence/Congress drive to abolish abortion rights, defund Planned Parenthood and undermine access to birth control.

PHILOSOPHY: THE CRUCIAL ELEMENT

Since Trump's campaign was directed against these movements, it is a diversionary abstraction to say at this moment that there is no difference between the two major parties. That only helps normalize his far-Right racist, sexist politics.

However, fighting the threat of fascism must not be sidetracked into supporting the Democrats or merely defending the institutions of liberal democracy, though they are under attack. Those institutions necessarily bend to economic power and are adapting ever more to totalitarian tendencies. Without a comprehensive philosophy, all the diverse struggles may come together without fighting comprehensively to uproot fascism. Without a revolutionary perspective, the capitalist institutions become the focus, not the self-activity of the masses in motion.

Ideas, philosophy, are the crucial element that would help activism achieve historic continuity, coalesce into a transformative movement, coming face to face with the enemy ideology and not just with its political moves. It is impossible to destroy fascism, the most brutal expression of capitalism, without a revolutionary uprooting of capitalism itself.

Oakland, Detroit march on MLK Day



Martin Luther King Jr. marchers in Oakland, Calif. denounce Donald Trump's racism, the rigged election and police brutality among other issues.

Oakland, Calif.—Several thousand people celebrated Martin Luther King Day on Jan. 16 in various ways. Many denounced Trump, carried Black Lives Matter signs, and opposed militarization of police. The case of Kayla Moore, a Transgender Black woman murdered by Berkeley police (see "Handicap This!" p. 9), is a focal point for Black Lives Matter here.

On the march some carried signs quoting King: "It would be foolhardy for me to work for integrated schools...and not be concerned about the survival of the world in which to be integrated" and "We may have all come on different ships, but we're in the same boat now." Many wanted to express solidarity: Jews speaking against Islamophobia, Filipinas for Black power, and slogans: Love is love, Black Lives Matter, Immigrants make America great, Women's rights are human rights, Climate change is real, This is public health, and #OccupyPublicHealth, etc.

—Urszula Wislanka

Detroit—The 14th Annual Martin Luther King Day Rally and March in Detroit, "From Michigan to Standing Rock, the struggle for jobs, peace and justice continues," drew over 500 people, connecting struggles from fights against neighborhood destruction by property tax foreclosures and residential water shut-offs in Detroit, attacks on public education and the pensions of City of Detroit retirees, to battling polluted water in Flint and reports from the pipeline protest on the Standing Rock Lakota Reservation.

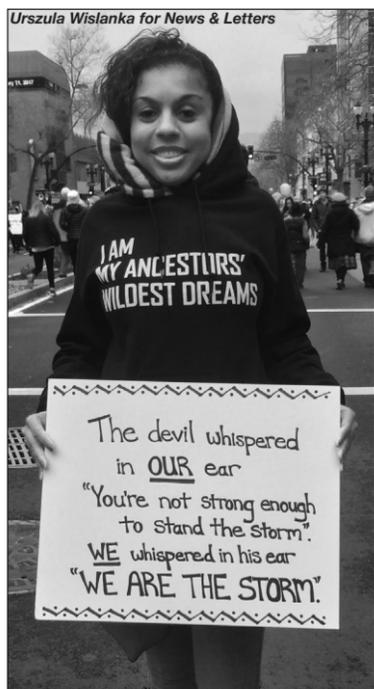
Monica Lewis-Patrick of We the People said, "There is no separation between Detroit water shut-offs and Flint": Joe Jacobs, who is Anishnabe, compared fire hoses and tear gas used against civil rights marchers in Selma, Ala., in 1965 to the military tactics against the Standing Rock Lakota and their supporters.

After the march through downtown, participants enjoyed fellowship and a wealth of readings by local poets, some of them only nine or ten years old.

—Marxist-Humanist Participant

Democracy in the streets votes Trump out!

In Oakland



Urszula Wislanka for News & Letters

Oakland, Calif.—The Women’s March was the largest demonstration in Oakland in living memory—one of several large marches in the San Francisco Bay Area. Experienced demonstrators put the number close to 100,000 and perhaps much more. It was an outpouring of a range of feminist perspectives, immigrants’ rights groups, Black Lives

Matter activists, a special Third World contingent which included Mujeres Unidas y Activas, Gabriela, Alliance of South Asians Taking Actions, Asian Pacific Islander Queer Women & Transgender Community and others.

People put a lot of thought into their handmade signs: “Make America think again”; a quote from Audre Lorde: “I am not free while any woman is unfree, even when her shackles are very different from my own”; from Thomas Jefferson: “When injustice becomes law, resistance becomes duty”; “Respect existence or expect resistance”; “Dissent is patriotic”; and “Trump, the best president rubles can buy.”

People wanted to discuss ideas. We talked about the movement for freedom in Syria. People shared their own efforts to help, such as Syria Charity, a French group formed to support the “Cat man of Aleppo” who used his car as an ambulance since official ambulances were targeted for bombing.

The Women’s March followed demonstrations on inauguration day. The ILWU (Longshoremen) closed the docks for a day.

There was a general belief that this is only a beginning and a palpable desire to build a movement that would make a difference, beginning with respect for all human beings.

—Oakland Marxist-Humanists

In Detroit

Detroit—In spring-like weather the Detroit Sister March circled the Wayne State University campus. Spearheaded by “GO Girls”—an association of women in science, technology, engineering and math and their families—the march was poorly publicized, yet up to 5,000 turned out. Men and Black people were well-represented, as were older marchers, college students, LGBTQ people and young families with strollers.

The only prepared signs were posters by artist Shepard Fairey. Handmade signs covered the spectrum of “women’s issues” including: immigrant and refugee support, environmental justice, Black Lives Matter, defense of healthcare and public education. Unions and Left vanguard parties were notably absent.

Despite the festive and empowering atmosphere, some marchers told how they had already experienced the realities of Trumpism. One who works for the Environmental Protection Agency said they have been told to take the words “climate change” out of their vocabulary. They have a new emphasis on “law enforcement” (which probably doesn’t mean enforcing anti-pollution laws against big corporations). A Latina activist said that at recent demonstrations protesting Trump and defending Detroiters against eviction, the intensity of the police response had noticeably escalated.

People who received *News & Letters* were encouraged to continue the dialogue and send in their own stories.

—Susan Van Gelder

In Memphis

Memphis, Tenn.—On Jan. 21 we joined Women’s March participants across the country and the world to speak out against the misogyny, homophobia and xenophobia stoked during Donald Trump’s campaign. About 10,000 people gathered downtown in front of the Shelby County courthouse, named for the late local civil rights activist, lawyer, judge and author D’Army Bailey.

Bailey’s widow Adrienne addressed the crowd, urging solidarity and action in the face of the Trump

administration’s threats to women’s rights and civil liberties. Rep. Steve Cohen pointed out the need for vigilance in the face of the political threats expected from the Trump administration and the Republican majority in Congress. He compared Trump’s rhetoric to fascist rhetoric of the 1930s and asked us to continue to speak out against Trump’s assaults on commonly shared understandings and values.

The march concluded at the National Civil Rights Museum, which encompasses the Lorraine Motel, site of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The museum’s director, Terri Freeman, spoke to the crowd about the march as a continuation of the civil rights and women’s rights struggles and as a new beginning. She asked us to resist encroachments on hard-won gains and to continue to work for the equality of all.

—Memphis Mike

In Chicago

Chicago—The Women’s March here was so huge that the entire route would have been taken up by demonstrators so the march was cancelled for what was supposed to be a rally instead. Even then all 250,000 of us couldn’t rally either. Instead we walked towards the rally site. When it was impossible for all to get there, we rallied in place or we marched anyway, taking over busy Chicago streets, some making their way to Trump Tower, stopping traffic with our signs, our numbers, our chants, for hours.

It meant something that the women’s marches caught fire. It wasn’t explicit that it was a humanism that brought people out, but it was implicit in all the signs calling out Trump for hate, in the insistence that we were there because we welcome immigrants and refugees, that we know in our bones that Black Lives Matter and police killings must stop and that we want justice for LGBTQ people, people with disabilities, and others.

It was a beautiful day and not only because of the weather, but because of the comradeship. The march projected the kind of America Trump aims to destroy—multi-racial; multi-ethnic; tens of thousands of spirited feminists, immigrants, LGBTQ people being who they are and proud. We were united because we oppose Trump’s inhuman plans for the U.S., but also in what we were fighting for—and the “for” was also what the demonstration itself embodied: the desire for a country that is committed to the well-being of its citizens, the world’s citizens and the planet.

—Terry Moon

In New York City

New York City—Over 400,000 gathered in midtown Manhattan and flooded the streets of the city in a massive repudiation of Donald Trump in his own hometown.

One of the most striking things about the demonstration was the spontaneity of the crowd. The vast majority of protest signs were handmade. Chanting broke out during the march as well. It was a living testimony to the power that women have if we organize and mobilize in our own interests.

The march was overwhelmingly women—of all ages—and included a number of men. There were cultural acts and speakers from the entertainment and political world. When one speaker asked the crowd a series of questions about whether we would accept the new laws of the Trump regime, over and over we yelled, NO!

Throughout midtown thousands of women were carrying signs, wearing pink hats and protest T-shirts, blocking traffic at major avenues. Although there was no formal permission to shut down the streets, the NYPD avoided confrontations with the crowd. However, undoubtedly under orders from Trump, we were not allowed to go all the way to Trump Tower. But enterprising marchers found a way, and surrounded his official NY residence.

Many women were upset by the fact that such a misogynist sexist pig is now in the White House. Others were focused on specific issues, especially the threatened defunding of Planned Parenthood.

A day earlier, the day of Trump’s inauguration, another huge crowd of passionate New Yorkers filled the area close to Trump International Hotel, to protest all that he stands for. They showed that, though Trump is a New Yorker, he in no way represents the values of the people who live here.

More than 25,000 marched. When it concluded, several thousand went to Trump Tower. The sentiments of the crowd were best captured by Cynthia Nixon, a lesbian and star of *Sex and the City*, who said, “Yes we’ve had a setback. But we can see it as a setback or we can see it as a challenge. And where there is a challenge there is an opportunity to show that love, equality and unity can beat hatred and discrimination.”

Hopefully both days will herald the first of many that will confront the Trump regime where it really matters: in the streets.

—Natalia Spiegel

In Nashville



Photo by Angela Callicutt

Nashville, Tenn.—The march here was powerful. Some say over 15,000. Standing on Broadway, you could look across the river at a full pedestrian bridge and people waiting on the bank to get in line. Then looking back across and all the way up Second Ave, there were protesters, activists, engaged citizens as far as the eye could see.

—A.C.

In Los Angeles

Los Angeles—President Trump and his elite cabinet picks personify the advancing stages of capitalism into which we are headed, where the expropriators will themselves be expropriated. Even before over half a million marched in L.A. on Jan. 21, protests on Jan. 20 gave the lie to any claims of popular support for Trump.

In the morning, close to 100 people gathered to block the street in front of LA County Jail, to chants of “Stop the Cops, Fund Black Futures!” Later in the day, three busloads of activists alighted in front of Steve Mnuchin’s Bel Air mansion—a man worth \$40 million and soon to be Secretary of the Treasury. They commenced 20 minutes of street theater on his front driveway/gateway before local police wielding billy clubs came to push the activists back to the street.

—Buddy Bell

The Ghost Ship fire

Oakland, Calif.—At around 11:30 PM on Dec. 2, a fire tore through the Ghost Ship warehouse collective in the Fruitvale district here, killing 36 people. Almost everyone who is part of the music scene here knew people who died, and it has been a terrible shock.

Within a day, the blame game began, focused on the leaseholder and building’s owner who may face criminal charges. But there is more to the story. The Oakland Fire Department had no records of the building, nor of any inspections for over 30 years. City inspectors failed to follow up on complaints. Child Protective Services knew about safety problems but, trying to protect themselves legally, failed to share that information with the city government.

AN ORGY OF EVICTIONS HAS BEGUN

Now an orgy of evictions has begun, with warehouse landlords profiting from the tragedy, evicting artists, non-profits, and others under the guise of “safety,” even though most renters complied with city and state regulations. One safe art space in San Leandro is fighting eviction. In Richmond, supposedly “progressive” Mayor Tom Butt has shuttered the iconic music venue Burnt Ramen, which was not a hazardous place. It seems that it is the people, not the buildings, which are viewed as a “nuisance.”

The Ghost Ship was a rare place where LGBT people and youth of all colors and backgrounds could have a good time and work on art and music. It was especially important to transgender people.

Today young people are faced with massive unemployment, dead-end jobs, a severe housing shortage, poor access to continuing education, and a difficult art scene where their music is often excluded from the mass media and their artwork ignored. The legendary art and music scene has mostly been driven out of San Francisco. The few places left are being taken away.

CLASS AND RACE DIVIDES AROUND

The divide here between those who pander to the wealthy and the government for funding and those who take an independent stance includes the art community. Former industrial areas are a reminder to the wealthy of their crime of deindustrialization and are viewed as blighted. To the independent artists and musicians, they are among the few remaining places that are full of freedom and possibility.

Those who died in the Ghost Ship fire created beautiful and iconoclastic work. In the meaning of their life activity and their sense of collectivity, one could see their quest for universality, which gives us a glimpse of what a truly human society might be like. We think of them and honor their memory as we continue the work for a new, truly human world.

—L. Guru

WORLD VIEW

The Cuban Revolution's dual heritage

by Eugene Walker

With Fidel Castro's passing in November came a wide range of commentary. The 1959 Cuban Revolution represented a great divide in Latin America, particularly in its relation with the behemoth to the north, the U.S. Against U.S. imperialism—from the 1823 Monroe Doctrine, through invasions and occupations of Central American countries, Mexico, Haiti, to counter-revolutionary actions against Bolivia and Guatemala in the 1950s—emerged the Cuban Revolution led by Castro, Che Guevara, and their small band of revolutionaries—with the crucial support of thousands of Cubans in the countryside and cities.

MASSES AS REASON VS. ELITISM

The defeat of the Fulgencio Batista regime, the movement to abolish capitalism, and first steps to construct socialism were all welcomed by Cuba's masses and viewed as a new beginning throughout Latin America. A genuine *revolution* that had taken power independently of the reformist Cuban Communist Party proclaimed a new moment.

The U.S. began its imperialist counterattack, organizing a mercenary force that, fortunately, was



Young Fidel Castro and other rebels released from prison in 1955. Their attack on the Moncada Barracks in 1953 began the revolution.

soundly defeated at the Bay of Pigs in 1961. However, despite the Cuban Revolution's full independence from orthodox Communism, that is, state-capitalism, and despite the revolution's efforts to ignite revolutionary movements in Latin America in the 1960s, Castro chose to align Cuba with Khrushchev's Russia. This was a strategic maneuver in a Cold War world of superpower rivalry. But was it done as well because Castro found a state-capitalist ideology that matched his own elitist attitude towards the Cuban masses?

The logic of accepting this state-capitalist world led to the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis. U.S. President John Kennedy and Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev, not Castro, let alone the Cuban masses, decided whether Cuba and perhaps the world would survive.

HUMAN POWER OR LABOR POWER?

"What happens after the revolution?" became the great test. The U.S. spent decades keeping Cuba in isolation, seeking to overthrow the government by every means possible. *Within* Cuba, Castro worked to confine the Revolution within his narrow maximum-leader, single-party (now united with the Communist Party) state. Any "deviation" from his line was characterized as aiding U.S. counter-revolution.

Brazilians resist return to neoliberalism

In the six months since a neoliberal legislative coup by the Brazilian Congress removed President Dilma Rousseff of the Workers' Party (PT) from office, there has been a campaign to reverse many of the social gains that had been implemented during the PT administrations of Luiz Inacio "Lula" da Silva and Rousseff.

Under coup-imposed President Michel Temer, the Senate passed an extreme austerity constitutional amendment. If it becomes law, it will limit federal spending for 20 years. Healthcare and education would be particularly affected. In response, protests took place in major cities. The headquarters of the Federation of Industries in Sao Paulo was attacked. Protesting students occupied hundreds of high schools. Mounted military police, tear gas, and billy clubs were the State's response.

STEALING LIFE FROM THE POOR

Temer proposed changing the pension system to require a minimum retirement age of 65, and 25 years of contributions to the social security system. This amounts to a neoliberal attack against workers, whose lifespan is considerably less than the well-off in a country with one of the world's highest rates of inequality.

A proposed anti-labor bill would allow "agreements" between employers and trade unions to override existing labor laws, permit a working day of 12 hours, and loosen rules on employing temporary workers. Added to this is an "outsourcing" bill awaiting action that would allow work to be sent to third party companies, where workers would not have the rights and benefits of "essential" workers in the principal enterprise.

Finally, members of Congress, involved in wide-scale corruption, bribery, kickbacks, etc., voted in

the middle of the night to gut an anti-corruption bill, thus seeking to protect themselves from the judiciary and prosecutors. Thousands of Brazilians took to the streets once again in protest.

The contradictory history of the PT in power (see "Polarization in Brazil," July-Aug. 2016 *N&L*) has opened the door for extreme right-wing and military "solutions," and not alone to demands for an authentic socialist alternative.

—E.W.

The past is prologue

The first mass Black protest meeting in the U.S. was held at Mother Bethel A.M.E. Church in Philadelphia, in January 1817—200 years ago. The meeting was called in support of a plan by the white-run American Colonization Society that would have shipped free Blacks to Africa, while leaving those enslaved in place. Headed by George Washington's nephew, and supported by ranking politicians and others who profited by slavery, it would have strengthened that evil institution.

While a number of prominent Black clergymen were taken in by the scheme, and so called the meeting, the 3,000 free Black Philadelphians who attended saw through it and denounced the plan so strongly that the clergymen were convinced to change their views as well.

Those Black Philadelphians don't have their faces on our money, like the slavemasters do. But their will to freedom *and truth* deserves special remembrance as a new generation of racists and con artists, nostalgic for those bad old days, move their dirty laundry into the highest offices.

—Gerry Emmett

The people's task was to defend the revolution, *as Castro and company defined it*, particularly by production and more production of sugar cane. At the same time there were advances in healthcare and education.

We cannot here follow all the subsequent developments: the debate on whether guerrilla *focoism* rather than mass social revolution was the pathway to social transformation; the tragedy of Che Guevara's adventure in Bolivia; or, most crucially, the failure to elicit the creative energies of the Cuban people in constructing an authentic socialist path as against laboring under a single-party state-capitalist one.

Over a half century after the Cuban Revolution's great divide, its original legacy still stands. But the grave contradictions in its aftermath leave a dual heritage that must be comprehended and overcome if we are to work out a truly emancipatory future for Latin America.

EDITORIAL On Syria

continued from p. 1



Radostaw Pilewski

the terrorist group ISIS, is untouched by either Russia or the Assad regime, and seizes land and weapons from them with impunity.

THE VOICES OF FREE SYRIA

The genius of Syrian revolutionaries foresaw this situation. As far back as April 2013, revolutionaries in Kafranbel wrote as their weekly message to the world: "Assad terrorism has turned the world values upside down; only people's interaction can turn the tables again." This remains true.

The effort to connect—human-to-human—could be heard in the voices of those who had been broadcasting on social media from Free Aleppo, in the last desperate days: "We were a free people. We didn't want anything else but freedom. You know, this world doesn't like freedom, it seems. Don't believe that you are free people in your countries anymore," said schoolteacher Abdulkafi al-Hamdo.

Human-to-human connection could be seen worldwide in the thousands of grassroots rallies organized to stand with the people of Free Aleppo, as well as those in towns and villages throughout Syria. The flag of the Syrian Revolution became a symbol of humanity.

Thousands of Syrians continue to reach out via social media. New organizations are forming reminding us that the Syrian Revolution began as a part of a worldwide movement that flowed from the Arab Spring. It lives as both reality and idea. Asked if the struggle could survive the fall of Aleppo, revolutionary journalist Hadi Abdullah said, "Of course. Because the revolution is first an idea and an idea can't be killed."

The life of that idea is always the responsibility of revolutionaries.

NEWS AND LETTERS COMMITTEES

Who We Are And What We Stand For

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We participate in all class and freedom struggles, nationally and internationally. As our Constitution states:

"It is our aim...to promote the firmest unity among workers, Blacks and other minorities, women, youth and those intellectuals who have broken with the ruling bureaucracy of both capital and labor." We do not separate mass activities from the activity of thinking.

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