

NEWS & LETTERS

THEORY / PRACTICE

“Human power is its own end”—Karl Marx

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Yemen: A voice that must be heard

The intense suffering of Yemen’s people continues. The country is torn by a regional imperialist war between the Saudi Arabia-sponsored government and the Iran-sponsored Houthi rebels, with both relying on various unprincipled alliances; militia allied with the United Arab Emirates; and ISIS and al-Qaeda factions. The result amounts to genocide.

EDITORIAL

This is a counter-revolution against the 2011 revolution—for the imperialist rulers, it was a conscious decision to choose a path of repression, however extreme, over human freedom.

More than 100,000 people, mostly civilians, have died as a direct result of the fighting. Over 85,000 children have died from war-caused famine. Two million children face acute malnutrition, and at times up to 80% of the population has stood in need of humanitarian assistance. The Saudi blockade and Houthi food confiscations have been brutal. Disease, including cholera, is rampant.

The U.S. is hardly innocent. U.S. arms sales to Saudi Arabia and the UAE have helped fuel the conflict, including \$8.1 million worth of weapons that Congress attempted to block, but which the Trump administration found loopholes to provide.

ONGOING BRUTALITY AND CYNICISM

Most recently, the UN Human Rights Office—a compromised institution—has documented severe crimes against journalists by all parties to the conflict. These include one assassination, one abduction, three cases of arbitrary arrest and detention, four journalists sentenced to death, six jailed, and three physical assaults. Doubtless the situation is even worse. In June, photojournalist Nabil Hasan al-Quaety was murdered at his home in Aden.

Now an environmental catastrophe threatens. A derelict oil tanker in the port of Hodeidah could

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VOICES FROM THE INSIDE OUT

Black prison lives matter

by Robert Taliaferro

The death of George Floyd in Minneapolis on May 25 sparked an overdue worldwide movement against racism and injustice. In sports, politics and television, the concept of Black lives actually mattering for something other than fodder for growing prison populations has become the predominant theme of American and international consciousness.

However, Black lives have always mattered. It is sad that only after tragedies do people in all walks of life express a realization of this fundamental concept. Equally sad is when a tragedy inspires others to compound it by turning a necessary movement into a forum to espouse their personal agendas geared towards furthering discord or hatred in the political sphere or within the movement itself.

APARTHEID USA STYLE

It is heartening to see the attacks on systemic racism and inequality sustained as we go into the long summer months since Floyd’s murder. Only the former system of apartheid in South Africa seemed to gain as much worldwide attention.

Yet concepts of apartheid were not limited to South Africa. They have existed in the U.S. since its founding, not only toward Black folks but Native

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ONLINE: www.newsandletters.org

Amid election battles, masses demand no return to normal

by Terry Moon

There is rage in America—rage at the choices the Trump administration has forced on people by his purposeful bungling of the coronavirus pandemic, rage at his racism, sexism, disdain for people with disabilities; and anger at his attempts to destroy



Women act as a human shield in Louisville, Ky. on May 28, 2020.

what little democracy people in the U.S. have, all to keep himself in office.

THE PANDEMIC DOES DISCRIMINATE

That rage showed itself when teachers across the country struck or staged sickouts rather than accept Donald Trump’s demand to open schools regardless of the consequences. A [school principal in small-town Arizona](#), whose students are 90% Hispanic and poor, spoke out when ordered by Gov. Doug Ducey to open or lose 5% of his school’s funding. He said: “I already lost one teacher to this virus. Do I risk opening back up even if it’s going to cost us more lives? Or do we run school remotely and end up depriving these kids?...There’s no way it can be safe.”

You see it in [obituaries in local papers like the one in Jefferson, Tex.](#), where David W. Nagy’s wife wrote: “Family members...blame his death and the deaths of all the other innocent people, on Trump, [Texas Gov. Greg] Abbott and all the politicians who did not take this pandemic seriously and were more concerned with their popularity and votes than lives.”

Over 200,000 have died because of incompetence, because of politics, because of this anti-human system. Those who died were mostly old, Black, Latinx, Native Americans, immigrants, disabled or poor and are viewed by those who run this country as an acceptable loss. As we go to press, more than 1,000 Americans are dying every day.

The rage was revealed when tens of thousands demonstrated in every U.S. state against police brutality and racism—a racism made “acceptable” by Trump and his cronies who praise white supremacists and demonize Black, Brown and white demonstrators as thugs, looters, mobs, Antifa and anarchists when what demonstrators want is justice,

Trump threatens DACA, ignores court

by Buddy Bell

When, in June, U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts authored a 5-4 ruling on the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) policy, and when last year he authored the 5-4 ruling that removed a new question asking about citizenship status from the census form, each time he was telling Trump to go back to the drawing board (next time be more thoughtful, deliberate, not so overtly racist). Roberts fears that a miserably failed Trump candidacy might doom Republican senators down the ballot. A Senate with a safe Democratic majority could pose a threat to his stranglehold on the Court.

SUPPORT FOR DACA GROWS

Perhaps Roberts noticed the tens of thousands of people outside the Court on a cold November day in 2019, as oral arguments in the DACA case began. The crowd included 800 high school students from the Washington area who walked out of classes, as

peace, an end to racism and police killings, and a refusal to return to the way things have always been.

Now there’s rage and fear about the coming election. Politicians talk about “the people,” as if they speak for them. But Donald Trump and his enablers dread “the people” as he orders the police and Federal thugs to beat, teargas, jail and lie about their victims.

This dread of “the people”—which is fear of revolt, of revolution—has never been more obvious than in the blatant and often frighteningly effective efforts to silence and disenfranchise voters and to wreck the approaching election that Trump may lose.

ELECTIONS/DEMOCRACY UNDER ATTACK

Ever since Blacks and women won the right to vote, taking the franchise beyond land-owning white men, that right has been under siege. The most vicious attack was during Reconstruction when Black voters’ lives were put in jeopardy when trying to vote. By gutting the 1965 Voting Rights Act, the U.S. Supreme Court majority let loose the Trump administration and state legislatures to stop not only Blacks from voting, but anyone who may vote Democratic.

Trump has tried to discredit voting by mail, lying that it was rife with fraud. Republican governors are working to make voting more difficult: cutting the number of voting stations—especially in Black, Latinx, poor and student neighborhoods; shortening times for voter registration and attacking early voting, making it more difficult for working-class people; using any excuse to reject mail-in ballots; tightening rules for who is allowed to vote by mail, for example not allowing a fear of catching COVID-19 as a valid reason. These new efforts are in addition to racist and partisan gerrymandering, mass incarceration and old-fashioned intimidation.

Now Trump has attacked the United States Postal Service (USPS) by installing his sycophant, the multi-billionaire Louis DeJoy, as Postmaster. (See “USPS crime scene,” p. 3.) [Trump refused the needed](#) funding increase, stating openly that without it the USPS is “not equipped” and “you can’t have universal mail-in voting.”

Sabotaging the USPS has drastically slowed down mail delivery, causing huge numbers of voters in primaries to be disenfranchised, as it did in Minneapolis. In one mostly Black public housing complex, it took nine days for mail delivery to resume after it was stopped before the election. People in Missouri told of 24-day delays for mail to “arrive back at the county election board.”

Postal workers in Detroit fought back. A mail carrier in Detroit reported: “The carriers were so outraged about the ballots and the

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well as university students from around the country. Some had been camped out on the steps since the day before. Others spent a week traveling on foot, all the way from New York City. Local radio station [WAMU](#) interviewed 23-year-old Brenda Perez, part of the DACA program: “This is really scary. This is really messed up. Everything that I’ve been working for, I could see it right in front of me just going to waste.” Actor and DACA recipient Bamba Bamba, who was quoted in the [American Prospect](#), told the crowd: “If we want any chance of moving this political needle, especially with this upcoming election where immigration will be a central issue, [we have to] start telling our stories, telling our truths.”

In April 2020, the Center for American Progress reported that there were about 142,000 DACA recipients working in food-related occupations, 43,000 in healthcare, and 15,000 teachers. Jessica Hernandez, a teacher

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WOMENWORLDWIDE

by Artemis

In July, Diana Russell, world-renowned Lesbian feminist activist, scholar of revolutionary studies, and author, died at age 81. Born in South Africa, she moved to the U.S. She authored, coauthored, or edited 17 groundbreaking books and numerous articles on forms of violence against women, apartheid, and nuclear weapons, linking all to patriarchy. In 1976, she organized the International Tribunal on Crimes Against Women, a speak-out by 2,000 women from 40 countries. In 1976, she redefined and politicized “femicide” as “the killing of females by males because they are female.” One book inspired an ongoing anti-femicide movement in Latin America. Another was among the first exposing rape as a widespread “act of conformity to the ideals of masculinity” rather than a rare, deviant act. Writing the first scientific study on incest, she helped survivors with legal assistance. A founding member of Women Against Violence in Pornography and the Media, her books linked porn to male acceptance of rape and violence. She was arrested, sued, and physically attacked for civil disobedience on many issues.

* * *

In April, the Hawai'i State Commission on the Status of Women of the Department of Human Services released “Building Bridges, Not Walking on Backs; a Feminist Economic Recovery Plan for COVID-19” in collaboration with the community and with national and international feminist and racial justice activist groups. The only feminist state recovery plan, it states, “it is clearer than ever that capitalism could not care for us during COVID-19,” which has disproportionately impacted women and other marginalized groups. It advises stimulus programs promoting gender and racial equity in “green jobs” and other higher wage jobs. The plan calls for an economy that “redresses inequalities and promotes values of social well-being”.

* * *

In August, thousands of women across Turkey demonstrated against right-wing attempts to get the government to withdraw from the Istanbul Convention, aka the Council of Europe Convention, signed in 2011 to promote the state's role in combating domestic violence. Wearing protective masks, they chanted, “the choice is ours, the decision is ours, the streets are ours.” Signs had names of murdered women, reading, “The Istanbul Convention is born of women's blood” and “We will not allow femicides.” Feride Eralp of Women are Stronger Together said, “Because they aren't able to openly say they want women as their domestic slaves and the freedom to beat women at will, they latch on to LGBTI+ rights as a more ‘socially acceptable’ pretext to attack the convention, hoping rampant homophobia will do the trick.”

* * *

In August, 600,000 of India's one-million, all-female profession of Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAs) went on strike for two days demanding better and timely pay and a legal status ensuring minimum wages. Providing healthcare to rural and lower-caste households, including immunization and maternal care, their duties now include tracking high-risk contacts of COVID-19 patients. They lack protective gear, including masks and hand sanitizer, have not been paid the promised virus-work bonus, and 20 have died.

* * *

In August, in Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko, authoritarian president of 26 years, had opposing candidates in an election arrested. One of their wives took her husband's place, with two female campaign managers of other candidates joining her. One stated, “The West won't help, Russia won't help, we can only help ourselves. Our female faces became a signal for all women—and for the men too—that every person should take responsibility.” After Lukashenko claimed victory amid accusations of voter fraud, tens of thousands of protesters demanding his resignation were met with police violence, random arrests and torture. Tens of thousands of white-clad women waving flowers protested the violence with signs reading “My Vote Was Stolen” and “We Have No Leader, Everything Depends on Each One of Us.”

* * *

In August, over 200 artists, writers, and actors and nearly two dozen human rights groups and film organizations signed a petition for the immediate release of activist and film editor Sanaa Seif. In Cairo last month, she and her family were attacked in front of guards at a prison while attempting to receive word from her brother, activist and blogger Aala Abd El Fattah. He has been held without trial since September 2019, having already completed an unjust five-year sentence. Upon reporting the attack to police, they arrested her for “terrorism,” “spreading false news,” “inciting terrorist crimes,” and “misuse of social media.” This public statement also demands the release of tens of thousands unjustly detained in Egypt.

Ecological tragedy in Mauritius

Port Louis, Mauritius—The Wakashio oil spill is an ecological tragedy in the pristine waters near Mahebourg. It will take years to heal and may be irreversible. To what extent was this event “inevitable”? What are the issues that lead to such an “accident”?

- How and why could such an immense tanker with all its sophisticated technology, including radar, steer straight at a reef and plough into it?

- Why were the Captain and crew unable to answer calls for so long?

- What is the responsibility of the Japanese Company and the State of Japan?

As for the Mauritian authorities, it is incredible that a country with such a big port that actually sells fuel to ships, and has ambitions to be a “petroleum hub,” does not have the know-how or equipment to deal with this kind of event.

- How could the Coast Guard let such a huge ship get so close without calling it out?

- Why has it taken 10 days without the Mauritian Government taking any initiative in the rescue? At least the Mauritian State needs to begin pumping out the oil and not leave it sitting on the reef.

International Maritime Organization



As LALIT member Lindsey Collen declared to Radio One: The ship just sat there like a sitting duck until the sea cracked open one of its tanks. In the face of this, LALIT is impressed with the mobilization of all those living around the spill, and of the groups of volunteers from all over the country doing their best to limit it. People are sewing long tarpaulin booms stuffed with cane-top straw and even human hair from hairdressers. They are showing how important the sea is, as nature, and as what sustains humanity.

THE REAL BLAME

This kind of tragic event is a result of some-

thing typical to the neoliberal capitalism that we are in today. A country like Mauritius has 35,000 huge vessels going past its waters every year, and people know only too well that such grave spills can happen. Yet Mauritius has none of the basic resources required to cope. There are not enough tug boats to handle a ship on the reef nor enough pumps to start the pumping operations at once.

This shows the criminal negligence towards nature and human society that is endemic to capitalism. It is systemic under capitalist rule.

This kind of “accident” will continue to happen as long as there is capitalism and the profits-first logic reigns. Precautionary principles, prevention of disasters, preparation to face accidents—all these things are often not “profitable” under the judgment of private enterprise.

Democratic control over the bosses and their state is a basic problem. Without it we are at the mercy of a huge tanker plowing into a reef. We need people's control over this complicated, highly developed technological society. Which is why it is on LALIT's agenda today.

—LALIT

DACA threatened

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and mother in Dallas, Tex., told the *Dallas Morning News*: “I've spent almost seven years working, thanks to this program. You would be stripping away a whole part of my personality if the government took this away. I wouldn't be able to help my community.”

Daniel [last name withheld] moved to New Jersey from South Korea when he was 11. Now 32, he has studied and worked as an ICU nurse since the creation of the DACA program in 2012. Speaking of the time before DACA, he told *Vox*: “I felt like I was in a prison without any bars.”

ADMINISTRATION IGNORES RULE OF LAW

The Trump administration is again showing its customary recalcitrance. In the wake of the June ruling on DACA, the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, an executive agency, posted an official [press release](#) to say that the ruling had “no basis in law.” In reality, the Court had found Trump's rescission of DACA in violation of a federal law called the Administrative Procedures Act.

Since the U.S. Constitution allows only the judicial branch to interpret laws, the press release would portend what on July 28 became a gross overreach of executive power, when DHS announced that while it took time to “thoughtfully consider” the future of DACA, it would reject all new applications and reduce all renewal periods from two years down to one. In other words, the renewal documents, interviews and a \$495 fee will need to be paid and collected every year.

As states and universities prepared to file suit against the new restrictions, Leidy Leon was moving to a new apartment in Merced, Calif., where she planned to attend college. “I got a text with the link to the [DHS] memo, and I forgot to breathe for a minute. It was disappointing, frustrating, a deep sorrow in a way. After I kind of composed myself a little bit, I checked in with a couple of friends who are in the same situation to show my support for them” (*EdSource*).

TRUMP SABOTAGING THE CENSUS

Meanwhile, Trump has already been busy making orders that defy more Supreme Court decisions; for example, the census case. On July 21 he ordered that the Constitutional phrase “all persons” for the purpose of Congressional reapportionment be defined to exclude undocumented people. However, the census has already begun and is on track to count the entire population present on midnight of April 1, not a subset, so the number Trump is demanding be used will not even be reported by the census, as required, but could only be ascertained through extensive cross-referencing and, sooner or later, subjective estimations.

As with so many other constitutional crises being breached for the first time with Trump, it is unclear how the courts assert their coequal function, their constitutional balance of power over the president. Whether that means monetary fines against executive agencies or even against individual employees of those agencies, the individual actions of judges cannot stand on their own. They must be “upheld” by ordinary people who recognize and reject the actions of a president who poses imminent danger to their freedom.



by Tim Finnegan

The staggering COVID-19 death toll among nursing home residents in New York State (officially around 6,600) looks to have been even higher than the Andrew Cuomo administration admitted. The official death count didn't include residents who were sent to hospitals before they died—by some estimates, this might have doubled the toll, or more.

Thomas Perls, a geriatrics expert, pointed out that nursing home deaths in nearby states are triple the percentage of those in New York. “[Whatever the cause, there is no way New York could truly be at 20%](#),” he told the Associated Press.

* * *

Beside nursing homes, institutions holding the disabled have been hit hard by COVID-19. Alison Berkoff, of the Center for Public Representation, said, “We do not know what outbreaks have looked like at facilities for individuals with intellectual disability, psychiatric facilities, or group homes. We hear reports, but there is no federal requirement that these be reported.” Currently, the only source for national data on this is provided by the Autistic Self Advocacy Network, collected from available state government and media reports. Disability rights activists are pressing for federal data collection to be included in COVID-19 relief legislation.

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The closure of schools due to COVID-19 has been especially difficult for special needs students. They are missing out on critical programs like speech, occupational and behavioral therapy. Online instruction is no substitute for personal attention, and while schools are still legally required to provide individualized special education programs, this is difficult. Without these programs many are missing out on developmental milestones and losing already-learned skills. As one Latina parent in the Los Angeles area said, “Our kids are the last to get checked on. Even before the pandemic they were struggling to get services, and now it's even harder.”

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In the world of United Kingdom auto racing, Team Brit was created in 2015 to allow people with disabilities to participate in motorsports. Driver Luke Pound, who only has the use of one arm and drives a specially designed car, said: “We want to be the first disabled team to take part in the Le Mans 24-hour race.” Driver Matty Street, who lives with autism, adds: “The more people we can inspire to get involved, the better.” These young drivers follow in the steps of disabled UK racing legend Archie Scott Brown. Born without a right hand and with impaired legs, he nevertheless won 71 races and competed in the Formula One World Championship in the 1950s.

Letter from Mexico

Ecological protest in Xochimilco

by Héctor

Mexico City—On July 31 I participated with a group of around 50 bikers in a protest against the construction of a bridge that would destroy the wetland of Xochimilco, one of the few natural zones remaining in the city. We joined locals in the protest, and for nearly two hours occupied the avenue where the bridge is being built. A few drivers yelled at us for stopping traffic, but several others honked their horns and made signs of support.

PROJECTS DOOM NATURE AND HUMANITY

The bridge was announced last year by Mexico City's mayor, along with many other "development" projects, and is supposed to help solve the enormous traffic problems in the city. The locals from Xochimilco, several of them small farmers and merchants, realized the negative consequences this would bring to their own activity and to the environment, and organized as Coordinación de Pueblos, Barrios Originarios y Colonias de Xochimilco (Coordination of Peoples, Native Barrios and Neighborhoods of Xochimilco). They began a legal action against the bridge.

Although a judge responded favorably, he then let the project continue because it supposedly met all the environmental, social and safety requirements. Since then, the protests have intensified, both online and in person. The biking action on July 31 was the second one in the last three weeks. A third one is expected soon.

By the end of our demonstration, a representative from the city government came to the site and offered a dialogue on Monday morning to "arrive at a solution." The locals from the Coordinación responded fiercely that there was nothing to negotiate, that their only demand was that the bridge construction be cancelled, and that they would talk to no one but the city mayor herself. She happily attends public ceremonies on weekends, but lets this situation wait until a "work day."



"See our good intention to negotiate," said the functionary, "We didn't send in the police." We immediately booed him. Around 7:00 PM, with the cool breeze and the soft light of the early evening refreshing our faces, we began our ride back home.

This was a most exciting and effective activity, as it really caught the attention of the government and a couple media corporations. It also might have raised some consciousness among drivers of the big pollution issues in the city and the use of bikes as an alternative means of transportation.

However, one can't help but ask: What comes next? Will the legal action against the bridge, together with mass protest, be enough to stop it? Will the government respect its own rules? How many more actions will be needed? What will happen with all the other projects that are being realized throughout the city, the whole country, as part of the "developmentalist" policy of Andrés Manuel López Obrador's federal administration?

CAPITALISM'S LAW OF MOTION

Developmentalism is the law of motion of capitalism. It is constantly looking for new areas of investment where, through the exploitation of labor, it can accumulate more and more profits. It doesn't matter whether these areas are natural reserves or belong to small farmers. Capitalism sees nothing but accumulation.

This is what is destroying the Earth and, consequently, our own physical and mental resistance to diseases. Only a theoretical/practical united view against capitalism can help us fight this problem at its roots. The question is how to build this with the broadest participation of all the subjects: Native peoples, workers, students, and those who don't want to keep on living in this rotten system and are aiming for a different kind of life. Maybe details of that life are still to be determined, but it will definitely be human, whole and free.

The USPS is a continuing crime scene

Chicago—Postal workers find themselves on the frontlines of three fronts: saving their jobs under attack from the United States Postal Service (USPS) under Trump's lackey, Postmaster Louis DeJoy; saving the USPS from the sabotage of DeJoy and Trump, and saving the integrity of U.S. elections.

Shortly after Trump appointed DeJoy, he decreed work rule changes designed to obstruct mail delivery, including a no-overtime policy that would impede deliveries under normal conditions but, when historic numbers of workers are sidelined with COVID-19 during a pandemic, are intentionally designed to disrupt operations.

DELIBERATE SABOTAGE OF THE MAIL

These changes were publicly aired as customer complaints of letters, checks and medical supplies delivered late or not at all escalated. But it was postal workers in the American Postal Workers Union in Iowa, Pennsylvania and elsewhere who raised the alarm about high-speed sorting machines being removed from Post Office work floors.

When exposed, the USPS claimed a lower volume of letters during the pandemic as the pretext for plans to remove 671 machines nationwide. Each sorting machine removal reduced mail-handling capacity by 36,000 letters per hour.

WORKERS PROTECTING THEIR JOBS

Workers battling the removal of machines, including with picket lines and sit-ins, is an old labor tradition. Workers at Republic Windows and Doors in 2008 sat in to block the company's attempt to clear the machines from its Chicago factory. Management tried to skip out on their legal obligations to give a 60-day notice of plant shutdown and pay workers what they were owed.

In recent years Chinese workers have fought management at hundreds of factories when machinery was being removed to be set up at lower-wage locations.

The difference at the USPS is that when the

Miners fight against strikebreakers

Mexico City—When miners at any of Grupo México's mines have attempted to organize independent unions to demand decent wages and safe working conditions, the company has responded with strike-breaking thugs. Often they are aided by state officials and the Federal Army.

Grupo México, the largest Mexican-owned mining company, has been operating a criminal enterprise for decades. It has exploited the sweated labor of mine workers to enrich its stockholders.

65 MINERS LEFT DEAD

Grupo México has disregarded health and safety, causing dozens of deaths and untold injuries from avoidable "accidents," including the 2006 killing of 65 miners at the Pasta de Conchos mine in Coahuila. It has contaminated water and soil, including a massive spill of sulfuric acid in the Rio Sonora.

Grupo México in numerous states has refused to clean up contaminated smelting sites. "A Monument to Dehumanization and Barbarism" is the term used to describe one such site in Ciudad Juárez.

Against the criminality that company owner Germán Larrea and his company have been engaged in, a growing resistance has arisen. The families of the miners killed at Pasta de Concho have been demanding the removal of their loved ones from the mine. Germán Larrea again and again refused to do so, claiming it is too dangerous, and only recently has supposedly agreed to it.

Wives and children of miners from Grupo México's Buenavista del Cobre copper mine, who have been on strike for 13 years, have been blocking a main highway and a railroad line in Sonora, demanding that President Lopez Obrador meet with them and force Germán Larrea, who they identified as "a murderous businessman," to negotiate with the miners' union to settle the strike.

HISTORIC DESPOILING OF RIVERS

The Rio Sonora Contamination was the greatest environmental disaster of the mining industry in Mexico, when the Buenavista del Cobre mine spilled 40 million liters of sulfuric acid and 700 tons of heavy metals into the Bacanuchi and Sonora rivers.

The consequences to these bodies of water, the ecosystem and the inhabitants continue to this day because the company failed to comply with commitments to care for those affected, especially in seven municipalities: Arizpe, Banámichi, Huepac, San Felipe de Jesús, Aconchi, Baviácora and Ures.

In response the communities have formed The River Sonora Watershed Committee. On the sixth anniversary of the ecological disaster, they have continued to confront Grupo México and issue statements of demands the communities insist be met.

—Eugene Walker

QUEERNOTES

By Elise

Photographer Camila Falquez's project "Being," begun as casual photos of her friends, is [online](#) and installed throughout New York City. Her photographs and the models' narratives comprise a manifesto of Trans and Queer Black and Brown people that challenges notions of classical beauty, and became an education in Queer studies for the photographer and her effort to reinstall Trans and Queer Black and Brown people into the classical art history canon, from which they have been erased. Falquez decided to self-publish as publication after publication rejected her project, proof to her of the continuing exclusion she battles.

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LGBTQ activists rallied in Warsaw on Aug. 8 to support Transgender rights activist Małgorzata Szutowicz, who was arrested the day before as she protested rising Queerphobia in Poland. Also known as "Margot," Szutowicz is a member of LGBTQ rights group Stop Bzduram, which means Stop the Nonsense. She committed civil disobedience to reverse the anti-LGBTQ tide that Pres. Andrzej Duda incited to win re-election, and she slashed the tires of a van that drives around falsely broadcasting that "homosexuals are preparing society to accept pedophilia." At the Friday protests police were standing on protesters after pushing them to the ground. Justice Minister Zbigniew Ziobro claimed the police were fighting crime, but Council of Europe's Dunja Mijatovic has demanded Szutowicz's immediate release from the male prison in which the Transgender woman has been ordered detained for two months.

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Mexico City, which in 2009 was the first state in Mexico to legalize same-sex marriage, has now outlawed conversion therapy. The penalty is more severe for those who carry out the therapy on minors. Israel's Knesset has moved two pieces of legislation to ban conversion therapy, also known as gay reparative therapy. Australia's opposition Labour Party is working on legislation to ban conversion therapy in South Australia. Those who carry out the therapy can face eight years imprisonment, longer sentences if carried out on minors. Victoria, Queensland, and the Australian Capital Authority have already banned this therapy.

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About 60 people attended a remembrance in Allentown, Pa., for 20 Black, Transgender and Indigenous people murdered for being who they were. The vigil was sponsored by the Eastern PA Trans Equity Project and Lehigh Valley Stands Up.

sorting machines were removed, they were scrapped. That will reduce the daily sorting capacity nationwide by three times the projected mail-in ballots due by Nov. 3, but most heavily from cities like New York and Los Angeles and cities in swing states like Houston, Philadelphia and even Pontiac, Mich.

LACKEY OF GRIFTER-IN-CHIEF

DeJoy's interference with the Nov. 3 election for Trump's benefit is only one of his motives. His Amazon stock options, which will be a bonanza if he drives down the USPS enough to sharply curtail Amazon's ability to deliver the goods it sells, identify DeJoy as one more grifter from Trump on down.

Whole sections of corporate America will be hovering like vultures over the bones of the USPS if DeJoy and Trump succeed. Postal workers, by fighting for their own jobs and their future, are leading resistance to dismantling what is left of democratic elections.

—Bob McGuire

Detroit eviction fight

Detroit—About 60 people demonstrated at Detroit's 36th District Court building to demand a continued moratorium on evictions. The court opened in mid-August for the first time since the COVID-19 shutdown in March. More than 3,000 Detroit families face the immediate resumption of eviction proceedings.

The court will now conduct "zoom evictions," in which the renter does not appear in court but must participate via Zoom or else receive a default judgment of eviction. Moratorium Now and Detroit Eviction Defense demand that all \$31 million of CARES Act housing funds be used to keep people in their homes.

There is no way to discuss eviction without including a racist housing system, with landlords supported by police brutality. The Black Lives Matter coalition challenges all of it.

—Detroit tenant activist

FROM THE WRITINGS OF RAYADUNAYEVSKAYA

*Editor's note: After the March 7, 1965, "Bloody Sunday" in Selma, Alabama, where John Lewis, who died July 17, was one of the freedom marchers clubbed and beaten, came the March 14 attempt to complete the march that had been broken up by police violence. News & Letters sent out this "Special Letter to Subscribers" titled, "Selma, Alabama—from Sunday, March 7 to Sunday, March 14, 1965—Where Now?" The principal author was Raya Dunayevskaya. It can be found in the *Raya Dunayevskaya Collection*, #6561, at #6746-48.*

Dear Readers:

The barbarism which passes for civilization in South USA reached such a stage of savagery on Sunday, March 7, with the gassing and clubbing of unarmed Negroes—men, women and children—that it set into motion thousands of new forces for the freedom movement. Many had never before been roused to action, even by the brutal murders of Schwerner, Chaney, and Goodman in Mississippi last summer.¹

But those who had kept their eyes closed to Magnolia Jungle justice by blaming it on "individuals" found they could no longer do so, when the storm troopers, under direct order of Alabama Governor George Wallace, displayed their bestiality as the arm of "the law." Coming directly after the death of Jimmy Lee Jackson, shot in the stomach by one of these storm troopers, the March 7 atrocity became the act that aroused the conscience of the nation.

The courage and determination of John Lewis, SNCC Chairman and leader of the march, who had been clubbed and beaten and yet rose to ask for another march, became a crucible out of which were forged new forces for the Freedom Movement Now.

At the same time counter forces were at work. We do not mean the openly counter-revolutionary actions of Gov. Wallace, who had planned the Selma outrage. We refer to the many ways in which the Washington administration began its attempts "to correct the American image" abroad by try "to stop bloodshed." This did not mean trying to stop the storm troopers who were shedding it, but the non-violent masses whose blood was being shed as they fought for their elemental rights.

Thus, first the administration advised against a new demonstration; then it inspired the federal court order to stop it; then there was an open appeal from President Lyndon Johnson; and when it became quite clear that nothing could stop the newly mobilized forces and that Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. would lead a new march of 2,500, the administration persuaded Rev. King to follow a federal plan—an agreement unknown to most of the demonstrators who had flocked to Selma to continue the struggle.²

NEW FORMS SPONTANEOUSLY EVOLVED

When Rev. James Reeb was clubbed to death, from behind, by white racists *after* the peaceful march, the great new demonstrations that followed across the land were in large measure unled.

New forms were spontaneously evolved—such as the sit-in at the White House, the lay-down on Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington, D.C., and the all-night vigils in such widely separated places as Selma, Alabama, in the streets in front of Brown's Chapel, which lasted for five long days and nights, and in Los Angeles before the Federal Building. These demonstrations also revealed that the violence of "law and order" is very little different North or South.

The yellow roses from the President, and the crocodile tears from Selma's City Council to the widow of the murdered Rev. James Reeb, cannot becloud the urgency for the civil rights movement to evaluate the new stage the freedom struggles have reached, and the ever-renewed pressure of the Administration to channelize them into legal traps.

1. James Chaney was a 21-year-old Black activist from Meridian, Miss. Michael Schwerner and Andrew Goodman were students from New York City who were helping to register Black voters in Neshoba County, Miss., during Freedom Summer 1964. They were murdered after being stopped for speeding; their bodies were found months later in an earthen dam. The perpetrators, associated with White Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, were tried years later and given light sentences. Only in 2005 was one person convicted of manslaughter.

2. Rev. King wrote in his autobiography: "Just as we started to march, Governor [LeRoy] Collins [from President Johnson's administration] rushed to me and said that he felt everything would be all right. He gave me a small piece of paper indicating a route that I assumed Mr. Baker, public safety director of Selma, wanted us to follow. It was the same route that had been taken the previous Sunday. The press, reporting the detail, gave the impression that Governor Collins and I had sat down and worked out some compromise. There were no talks or agreement between Governor Collins and me beyond the discussions I have just described....I felt that we had to march at least to the point where the troopers had brutalized the people, even if it meant a recurrence of violence, arrest, or even death. As a nonviolent leader, I could not advocate breaking through a human wall set up by the policemen."

Remembering John Lewis and Bloody Sunday

Racist barbarity spawned new forms of revolt

There have been too many martyrs, too many memorials, there has been too much achieved in daring, self-activity and momentum, for the movement to entangle itself once again in legalisms.

Rev. King is tied up in a court case at the very moment when, from below, there are both mass outpourings, and smaller vigils which demonstrate the unflagging determination of the ranks to continue. In Selma, freedom fighters have spent days and nights out in bitter rain on hard sidewalks, surrounded not only by armed police, but by what they immediately named "the Berlin rope,"³ strung up by Selma's "Public Safety Director" to keep them in one single place.

Throughout the country the ranks are devising new forms of revolt—while the administration keeps

WILL THE MOVEMENT BE DIVERTED?

But—now that the president has spoken out "strongly" and presented us with still one more bill on voting (nearly a century after the 14th and 15th amendments, *following a civil war*, had already established that elementary right)—the question is: will the movement which demands freedom *now* once again be diverted?

This is the turning point which must become a point of departure for weighing carefully and elaborating daringly, not ways to pause, but ways to unite thought with action, to work out a theory of liberation which will meet the challenge of the movement from below, from the actual struggles for freedom.

The proof that this is what the movement is searching for is that so many youth, South and

North, are not waiting for any leadership to call for some specific act before embarking on it themselves.

This weekend saw mass demonstrations which reached more and more thousands in more and more cities across the country: and alongside these mass outpourings have appeared smaller groups who have devised new ways of continuous challenge, not only to state but to federal authorities, acting on their own rather than under any established civil rights leadership.

From Selma to Los Angeles, from Washington, D.C., to Wisconsin, they are continuing the struggle with or without official sanction—and they are



Top left: Alabama police attack Selma to Montgomery marchers on Bloody Sunday, 1965. Photo by FBI. Top right: Solidarity march in Harlem. Photo by Stanley Wolfson, *New York World Telegram & Sun*. Bottom left: Part of Selma to Montgomery march. Photo by Peter Pettus. Bottom right: Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Dr. Ralph David Abernathy, their families, Rev. James Reeb and others in the Selma to Montgomery march. Photo by Abernathy Family.

trying to divert everything to the enactment of still one more bill.

The pattern is all too familiar now. After Bull Connor's display of brutality, use of fire-hoses, vicious police dogs and cattle prods against the mass demonstrators in Birmingham in 1963, we got the Civil Rights Bill passed in 1964.⁴ This was deemed sufficient for some civil rights leaders to call off mass demonstrations and to concentrate on "voting for Johnson."

COUNTER-REVOLUTION'S BLOODSHED

But the counter-revolution did not stop for a single instant in its concerted attempt to turn back the clock of history. Though the Mississippi murders might horrify others, they knew the killers would be acquitted by *federal* district judges on the fantastic ground that the heinous crimes were state, not federal, violations. Now the Alabama storm troopers and posemen, led by Al Lingo and Sheriff Clark,⁵ have unloosed, against unarmed Negro men, women and children, gas which has left serious chemical burns, bullwhips which beat them as they ran back, clubs which beat them as they fell, and horses which trampled them into the ground.

And the governor who created this new bloodshed, not only dared ask the president to stop the civil rights "agitators" from interfering with his "law and order," but after meeting with the president, dared continue with his ordered defiance—and called the shots against the very same type of police brutality in the North.

The revulsion against the latest outrages has forced even the moderate Roy Wilkins⁶ to state that there is a limit to patience and non-violence, that if the administration can't establish order, the Negro will have to, for it is "American to protect oneself when attacked."

3. A reference to the Berlin Wall, erected by Communist East Germany to separate the people of East and West Berlin from 1961-1989, when masses on both sides tore it down as the Russian empire crumbled.

4. Arch-segregationist Birmingham Public Safety Commissioner. More reports and discussion can be found in the May 1963 issue of News & Letters <https://newsandletters.org/PDF-ARCHIVE/1963/1963-05.pdf>.

5. Al Lingo, a Klan sympathizer and reportedly a member, was Director of the Alabama Department of Public Safety. James Gardner Clark Jr. was sheriff of Dallas County, Alabama, who had recruited a Klan posse in response to SNCC's voting drive in Dallas County.

6. Roy Wilkins was Executive Director of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

continuing discussion as well, not only in meeting halls, but in small huddles on all-night vigils.

PUBLIC IS BEYOND LEGALISMS

The fact that not only the civil rights movement, but the general public feels that legalisms are insufficient, is proved by their near-disregard of the Supreme Court decision which has just struck down Louisiana literacy laws as "a trap." A decade ago the Supreme Court decision on desegregation in the schools was hailed as a "milestone." Today, the new "historic" decision brought hardly a notice from anyone. The administration is well aware of the public feeling that one more law means only one more loophole for the Southern lawyers. That is why the administration is trying to present the new bill as something self-triggering—but it cannot trigger any new social order in South USA, since the South is, in fact, the material product of Northern capital.

The leadership of the civil rights movement may think that it is only by *not* facing that fact that they have attracted the new allies who have turned out by the thousands. In part this is true, but only in part.

The greater truth is that this numerically highest point is, at the same time, a turning point for the civil rights movement, which is now faced with possible isolation from its own militant ranks and those outside who are taking independent action, as well as carrying on discussion on various theories of liberation.

Unless the leadership listens to these new voices and recognizes that the momentum of the movement will not allow for any retreat to legalism; unless it becomes a participant in the elaboration of an underlying *philosophy* instead of merely using it as a slogan, the leadership itself will be left by the wayside. What is needed now is a unity of theory and practice in which the masses are not only participants in action, but in thought. Instead of a never-ending dialogue with the administration, it is time that the leadership of the civil rights movement started one with its own ranks.

The dialogue must no longer be put off on the grounds that "we are an activity organization." Thinking, too, is an activity. And awareness of the significance of an action is itself a step toward total freedom. It is imperative that what has been implicit in the freedom struggles all along, now become explicit. Dialogue with the ranks involved in direct actions can make it so. Nothing else will fully arm them in the struggle against the forces of reaction. Nothing else will transform the goal of freedom into a reality.

—The National Editorial Board

The Forum in Defense of Territory and Mother Earth

Unity of the struggles from a dialectical perspective, and what comes next?

by Héctor

The recent Forum in Defense of Territory and Mother Earth [Dec. 21-22, 2019, in San Cristóbal de las Casas, Chiapas, Mexico] was characterized by the diversity of movements that participated in it: from city dwellers displaced by real estate projects to

Indigenous peoples who resist mining, wind and thermoelectric invasion; from organizations with two decades and more experience

to newly formed groups.

The common denominator for all of them, sometimes only implicitly expressed, is the fight against current capitalist expansion; at the same time, there is an explicit desire (the forum itself is an example) to form a unity between movements to enable them definitively to stop dispossession and exploitation, *but this unity always appears as something elusive, as an unreachable beyond.*

Let's view this and other issues of the forum from the perspective of dialectical philosophy; not because of a theoretical eagerness, but because such a philosophy, recreated within the movements from below, is what can help us achieve this unity and respond theoretically and practically to the question "what's next?" in building a new world.

DIALECTIC OF THE WHOLE AND THE PARTS

One of the passages of most interest today is G.W.F. Hegel's discussion on "The Relation of Whole and Parts" in the second book—the Doctrine of the Essence—of his *Science of Logic*.¹ Hegel begins by establishing the indissoluble relationship between the whole and the parts: the whole is everything only because it contains parts, and these are parts only because they are integrated into a whole.

At the same time, despite this connection, the whole and the parts *are not identical*. Hegel states that the whole is "the self-subsistence which constituted the world in and for itself," while the parts are "the immediate Existence which was the world of Appearance" (514); that is to say, that the whole would be the abstract unity, still devoid of content, while the parts are precisely this diversity of content—for example, the multiplicity of movements participating in the Forum, each with its own particular history—but still devoid of real unity.

Since the whole and the parts are not the same, but nevertheless mutually need each other, the movement of their unification begins. This is precisely the dialectic, *the movement that leads to overcoming opposites through the formation of a new unity, a new starting point*. Hegel warns us that "The truth of the relation [between the whole and the parts] consists therefore in the mediation" (516), that is, precisely in its movement.

Without it, we would be trapped in the idea that the whole, although it *consists* of parts, is not equal to these, but to all of them, that is, that it is equal to itself, to its abstract identity; reciprocally, although the parts *make up* the whole, they do not equate to the whole, but to themselves, to the "unrelated manifold" (516). We would remain, then, at the same point where we started.

This happens, says Hegel, because of the "inability to bring together the two thoughts which the mediation contains" (518), which are identity and difference: the whole is identical to itself and, at the same time, different, since its existence presupposes its opposite, the parts; these are identical to each other and, nevertheless, different from each other, since to be parts they require the existence of a whole. Their truth is their movement.

Hegel then warns about the dangers of "infinite of the progress" (518), about the false idea that a *quantitative addition* will automatically lead us to a *qualitative change*. Expressed in terms of the social struggle, we could see this as the impossibility of achieving the desired unity from the incorporation of new individuals or groups into the movement.

The Forum has been one of the most important efforts to bring together the *greatest diversity of resistances at the national level*; many more could be invited, both from existing ones and those that are about to emerge. However, this "infinite progress" in the addition of struggles will not bring us one step closer, in itself, to the achievement of unity.

'ITS TRUTH IS ITS MOVEMENT'

In his speech to close the Zapatista participation in the Forum, Subcomandante Insurgente Moisés (*Sub Moi*) refers to the urgency of unity to take a step forward in the struggle to cope with the

resurgence of oppression:

From what we hear [here in the Forum], it seems that [we] are being asked to accelerate the organization. Okay, but there is a problem: we have not found which organization we are going to make. For our part, [as Zapatistas], we respect it. We are not going to say which is the one single form of struggle.

Sub Moi rightly states that the unity of the struggle is not in one of its particular forms, which could take on the appearance of a universal to be applied in all times and circumstances. However, *Sub Moi* does not go further in the search for unity, but remains in the idea of diversity of forms, which was already the starting point.

Can unity and diversity be brought together in some way that escapes falling into the extreme, on the one hand, of tyrannical unity—a particular form that wants to be applied at all times and places—or, on the other hand, of the swamp of diversity without a perspective? The truth of this unification is not in one of its specific forms, not even in a "combination" of them, but in its movement.

Raya Dunayevskaya, commenting on Hegel's passage about the whole and the parts, explains:

[This is key] to the entire philosophy of both Hegel and Marx. Thus, when I say that the whole is not only the sum total of the parts, but has a pull on the parts that are not yet there, even as the future has a pull on the present, it is obvious that we have moved from abstract philosophic conceptions to the actual world, and from the actual world back again to philosophy, but this time as enriched by the actual.²

"The whole is not only the total sum of the parts," but something else: the *totality of the movement that includes both the existing parts and those that "are not yet there," that is, which point towards the future, which build it.*

Dunayevskaya then equates the whole with the "abstract philosophic conceptions," and the parts with "the real world," but immediately speaks of a return "to philosophy, but this time as enriched by the actual," that is, a double movement which makes the abstract unity of philosophy walk hand in hand with the richness of the real world.

In terms of the social struggle, we would be talking about consciousness and explicitly taking on dialectical philosophy as the driving force of the resistances, which, once enriched by their diversity, would return to themselves in the form of a new beginning or new concrete step in the construction of a world beyond capital: it would be the full fusion, always in motion, between thought and action, philosophy and reality.

DOES THE DIALECTIC 'APPLY' TO INDIGENOUS PEOPLES?

A question that may arise here is whether the dialectic, as a philosophy formulated by a European thinker (Hegel), can "apply" to the original peoples of Mexico. In the Forum, the struggles expressed desires to end the current conditions of dispossession and oppression, that is, they have a *desire for self-movement, for overcoming the contradictions that block the path to freedom*. The dialectic is precisely the science of movement; moreover, it is the science of the self-movement towards freedom.

Even Hegel, despite his "genius," would have been unable to "invent" the dialectic alone; who "invented" it was the French masses in their quest to end the monarchy and give rise to a new way of life in the late 18th century. Hegel only gave philosophi-

2. *The Power of Negativity: Selected Writings on the Dialectic in Hegel and Marx* (Lexington Books, 2002), p. 64.

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cal expression to the *methodology of their movement*.

Something similar, although on a much more concrete level, occurred with Marx and the workers' revolts in the mid-19th century.

What makes the dialectic universal is not one or the other of its concrete manifestations, but the form of its movement, which has mediation as its point of departure, and as its point



At the Forum in Defense of Territory and Mother Earth. Photo by Radio Zapatista.

of arrival the search for freedom, and this is the essence of humanity in its entirety!

Proposing the dialectic as a unity of struggles would therefore not eliminate their diversity, but would enhance it. Each movement, according to its times and circumstances, could decide in what form to recreate the dialectic; at the same time, in the proposition of this as a unity of the struggle, it would have a perspective with which to orient itself beyond the abstraction of "to each its own form."

Is the discussion of the dialectic a subject that we can begin to include in our movements, as well as in the attempts to unify them, as a guide to be able to answer concretely what comes next in the construction of a new world?

TWO ADDITIONAL OBSERVATIONS

1. Another idea present at the Forum was to "inform people" as a fundamental strategy of struggle. Undoubtedly, the sharing of knowledge, data, etc., about capitalist projects that are trying to be imposed in a given territory is important; however, this strategy has as a limit the idea already questioned that the mere sum of particular elements—new people who join the struggle—is enough in itself to achieve a qualitative change. Once they join, what to do? The question is always postponed for an indefinite time or reduced to practical issues.

On the other hand, this strategy assumes consciousness as something determined only by individual will, which can be "won" through "convincing," instead of understanding consciousness as a unity between the will and the social conditions of existence.

The fact that a sector of the oppressed is not rebelling at this precise moment is not synonymous with their "ignorance" or "conformity," but that their total conditions of life—subjective and objective at the same time—have not yet led them to that point of explosion. When they do—and this always happens, sooner or later—will we be ready to help them strengthen their rebellion with a philosophy of liberation that they can recreate according to their own forms, or will we simply limit ourselves to expressing our solidarity with their movement?

2. The *horizontal form of decision-making* is often presented as the ultimate answer for the whole question of the organization. Without a doubt, a struggle can only move forward, as we have seen, with the richness of its diversity, *which exists only if its decision-making is horizontal*. However, the other moment is missing here, that of *philosophical unity*, the full meaning of the struggle.

The movement of an organization does not arise only from the collective reflection on the errors and successes of the actions undertaken, but, above all, from the presence of dialectical philosophy within it, which can be recreated for each concrete struggle, and by all in their entirety, on the path of always seeking to respond, practically and theoretically, to the question about what comes next in the construction of a new world, beyond capital.

(translated from *Praxis en América Latina*, February-March 2020, by Franklin Dmitryev)

1. Hegel's *Science of Logic*, translated by A.V. Miller (Humanities Press, 1976), pp. 513-18. All references to the *Science of Logic* will be to this edition. In the text, we only indicate in brackets the page numbers.

BLACK REVOLT AND RACISM

The “Wall of Moms” idea is great. But I think a lot of people are missing the point. Trump’s thugs say they are coming to Chicago to police Black people in Black neighborhoods who they deem criminals at a moment when an entire movement arose to say no to police violence, and is calling for aboli-



tion or defunding of the police. Sending in troops is the state’s answer to the movement—to come in and police Black people in Black neighborhoods in the name of fighting crime. To make it look legit, the white supremacist Chicago Police Department union president even requested Trump send his goons.

**Mad as hell
Chicago**

It is a relief to see the image of the Confederate battle flag removed from the state flag of Mississippi. Yet the the state of Georgia flag is far worse: a full-blown “Star and Bars”—the actual “national” flag of the Confederacy—is hiding in plain sight. Governor Sonny Perdue made it the official flag in 2003 and he knew exactly what he was doing. Georgia is carrying the worst baggage from Civil War days: the lowest minimum wage in the nation, \$5.15; a Workers Compensation system stripped so bare that it has created life-threatening situations for thousands of injured workers; one of the worst instances of voter suppression in over 50 years was instituted; and several recent racist police killings. The Stone Mountain monument stands as a nuisance that attracts die-hard segregationists. Georgia is one of the worst states for taking protective measures against COVID-19.

**Malcolm
San Francisco Bay Area**

John Lewis, the young advocate of direct action to achieve social gains, had little in common with the Congressman Lewis became. (See “[Remembering John Lewis and Bloody Sunday: Racist barbarity spawned new forms of revolt](#),” p. 4.) His 1963 speech at the March on Washington was harsh in its criticism of the Kennedy administration, and march leaders forced Lewis to tone it down. Once part of the Beltway establishment, Lewis was often on the wrong side of issues central to Black liberation.

**Bob Schwartz
Chicago**

How do we best honor such a human being, such a moral force as John Lewis? We continue to resist injustice. We continue to insist on the beloved community. And we continue to challenge ourselves—how in these times can we best use our voices, our energies, our resources and our lives toward these ends?

**Audrey May
Memphis**

You are in this struggle not only for the liberation of others, but for yourself as part of humanity. Beginning there is the way through which all struggles can unite in solidarity under a banner of a multifaceted human liberation. No one needs you to free them. We free ourselves, with each other, through struggle. The notions of being an ally and privilege can limit your idea of freedom. The privilege to walk down the street while white without being killed is not freedom. It’s the bare minimum expected just to live! It doesn’t mean white or male or heterosexual privilege doesn’t exist. It does! And the lack of it among op-

READERS' VIEWS

pressed groups is deadly. Equality is important and worth struggling. But equality in a messed up, hierarchical, class-based world isn’t freedom and is never possible for all. If you are radical, your hunger won’t be quenched by getting a piece of the pie, though you need to eat in order to live. But you want to make a new pie, or new world for all, including yourself, no matter your privilege in the current one.

**Revolutionary feminist
Chicago**

DIALECTICS OF LIBERATION

In the Writings of Raya Dunayevskaya column “[From Black mass revolt to Freedom](#)” (July-August, 2020) written in response to the revolts of 1967, she wrote: “Now that a new page in the dialectics of liberation—its thought as well as its struggles—has been opened, the question is: where to now?” This summer we witnessed the largest protest movement ever in response to police killings of Black people. Led by young Black women and men activists, it is a new page in the dialectics of liberation. Yet, it is in danger of being swallowed up by Democratic Party politics or even by corporate America suddenly “discovering” that Black Lives Matter. By submerging the magnificent protests into old categories of thought and action, rather than reaching for the fullness of a philosophy of liberation that calls for the total uprooting of racism, classism, sexism, homophobia and transphobia of capitalism and reconstruction on new, human beginnings, aren’t we in danger of stopping halfway? Of course, we need to get rid of Trump. But the only way to do that is via concretizing in real life Marx’s “revolution in permanence” that ends humanity’s prehistory and begins our liberatory future.

**Eugene Walker
Mexico City**

SCHOOL BATTLES

Our school district is sending teachers and students back to summer school—it seems like an experiment to see if teachers will go back, or will be forced back, and if parents will send students. I will not be sending my daughter right away. I don’t feel it is safe for everyone. Our present school board rarely communicates with parents: despite social media, ro-bocalls, and parents being more available



now, we get no texts, and at meetings you have to fight for three minutes of public comment. The district wants to partner with the community. But the community wanted to open Paul Robeson Malcolm X Academy as a COVID-19 test site. The district refused the community request.

**Parent and public school graduate
Detroit**

ELECTION VICTORIES

Electoral politics will not bring a new society, but it tells us important things about where we are. The growing social movements and discontent are having an impact even on the undemocratic U.S. political system. Recently, Cori Bush, a Black woman who was active in the Ferguson protests after Michael Brown was murdered by the police, defeated 20-year incumbent Lacy Clay in a primary election

in Missouri for the U.S. House; and Marquita Bradshaw, who started as an environmental justice fighter against the Memphis Defense Depot in her teens, stunned the Tennessee Democratic Party establishment by defeating their anointed candidate in a statewide primary for the U.S. Senate. A new generation is moving in new directions, and elections are one part of it.

**Former Memphian
Midwest USA**

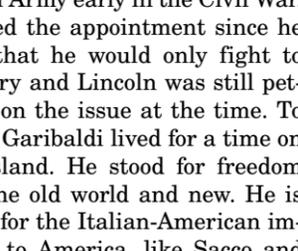
HISTORY AND FREEDOM

Many people think that removing statues of those who engaged in crimes against humanity—such as Christopher Columbus or leaders of the Confederacy—is a waste of time or that they are just part of our history. I believe keeping their statues in public spaces honors them and perverts history. Hitler was an important part of German history but the German government does not allow his statue in public spaces. Even the Spanish government stripped Columbus of his titles and jailed him temporarily for his enslavement of the Caribbean Indigenous and for brutally murdering those who resisted. Those Italian Americans who use Columbus as a figure to represent their contribution to U.S. society would recoil in shock if they knew what crimes he and his brother Bartolomeo committed in the “New World.” There are other Italians that Italian Americans can honor in place of Columbus, such as Giuseppe Garibaldi or Giuseppe Mazzini, who were instrumental in the unification of Italy in 1870. Not learning from our history will prevent us from solving the racism, prejudice and xenophobia that afflict this country.

**Thomas Siracuse (Siragusa)
New York**

Garibaldi would be a particularly apt choice to replace statues of Columbus since he fought to liberate Uruguay and Brazil and was offered command of the Union Army early in the Civil War. He refused the appointment since he insisted that he would only fight to end slavery and Lincoln was still pettifogging on the issue at the time. To top it off, Garibaldi lived for a time on Staten Island. He stood for freedom both in the old world and new. He is a symbol for the Italian-American immigrants to America, like Sacco and Vanzetti, Carlo Tresca and Vincenzo Vacirca.

Garibaldi statue, Rosario, Argentina



**Dylan, an Italian American
Virginia**

CLASS STRUGGLES

Thanks for writing “[The Gig Economy’s Highway toward Increasing Surplus Labor](#),” posted July 14. I’m an Uber driver

in a medium-sized city and, wow, these past few months have been tough. Unemployment wasn’t worth it for me because I would only qualify for the \$600 per week which is now over. It’s been tough just keeping everything safe/clean in my car, let alone the notion that I may not be able to pay my bills. I

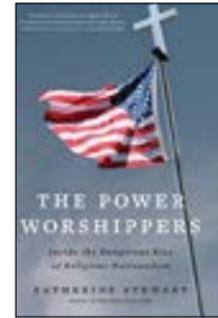
can’t imagine what it will be like when Ubers drive themselves...
**Jeff S.
Cyberspace**

Class society is based on the few exploiting the millions. The hope is that workers will rise to the occasion. There have been 500 strikes in the U.S. just in July. The system wants to crush them. This uprising is not alone Black Lives Matter. It’s all people who are fed up with this system. They know the system has no answer for them.

**Mannel
Los Angeles**

FIGHTING THE RIGHT WING

Thanks to Adele for her review of the *The Power Worshipers* by Katherine Stewart (see “[Power Worshipers](#),” July-Aug. 2020, *N&L*). I have family members who have fallen for this movement, I’m sorry to say. Some are part of the movement with eyes wide open, believing



that is how this world should be. There is no reasoning with them. Others are ignorantly part of the movement and I think would be horrified, to one extent or another, if they knew the real intentions. Christian nationalism must be revealed for what it is and be fought. We who want a truly human world must show what it is we are for in contrast to Christian nationalism. Eyes may be opened, minds might be changed.

**Elise
Chicago**

I’ve been a white far-right-wing person all my life. I don’t remember making that choice. It’s, I guess, bred into us Southern whites. But since I’ve been reading *N&L* and other papers, I’m growing away from racism and far-right thinking. I feel so sad for the way non-whites, Gays, etc., are being treated all over the world. I feel sad the way we are treating animals and planet Earth, our home. I need to help others come to this Marxist-Humanist way of thinking, which is hard due to being in an American white prison gang, “Aryan Nation.” If I can change from white racist to a more Marxist way of thinking, then anyone can. We must stand up and fight for equal rights for all humankind and planet Earth. We are shattered by hate and fear, divided by religion created by far-right people to control everyone. The time for revolution is now in this moment. Never has the setting been more open for a revolution to work. Your paper and *Earth First* have helped me liberate myself. I hope I can help other people in here come to this way of thinking with the help of great papers like *N&L*.

**Prisoner
Manchester, Ky.**

Have you noticed how each “liberal” decision Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts handed down was timed to saturate media coverage before he went on to issue horrendous blows to democracy—like the case on partisan gerrymandering in 2019 or the final two decisions in summer 2020 that prevent any hope of voters being able to review Trump’s suspicious tax returns before the election. Roberts has stepped into a kind of fixer role as the de-facto “median” judge. Also, as a member of the conservative Federalist Society, Roberts’ decisions are consistent with someone who is working out a long-term strategy for continuing corporate and religious dominance over U.S. law and society.

**Suspicious
Indiana**

Editor’s note: Due to pandemic restrictions, for the time being N&L will unfortunately be online only.

QUEER SAFETY IS A HUMAN RIGHT

I was happy to hear that the UN Human Rights Council had a comprehensive discussion of why “conversion therapy” should be banned worldwide. They are correct



that it causes harm, especially to youth, and that it is a violation of human rights. It is also important that different tactics employed in therapy were revealed. I was surprised that Germany outlawed the therapy as late as this past May and that it is banned in Brazil. I’m dreading the day that anti-Queer brutal Brazilian President Bolsonaro reverses that ban. I am dismayed that the therapy is not illegal across the US. Let’s encourage the UNHRC to endorse an international ban on conversion therapy. You can reach them at: <https://unfoundation.org/contact-us/>.

**Queer Person
Rogers Park, Chicago**

FAKE GREEN POLITICS

The fact that “Green Recovery” from the COVID-19 recession and things like the Green New Deal are being seriously talked about by politicians shows that they have been put on the agenda by the pressure of social movements and of the noticeable, sometimes disastrous, impacts of climate change. Politicians are busy trying to co-opt and water down what the movements thought these things were supposed to mean. Now Joe Biden has his climate plan and the Democratic Party is revising its platform along these lines—although at the last minute they threw out the plank calling for an end to subsidies for fossil fuels. Many important Biden advisers on environment have ties to the natural gas industry and he refuses to endorse a ban on fracking, let alone quickly winding down fossil fuels.

**Environmentalist
Southern California**

WOMEN IN INDIA

If India’s leader, Narendra Modi, was trying really hard to think of what he could pretend to do for women without actually doing anything, he couldn’t have come up with anything better than replacing 240 traffic light pedestrian signals in Mumbai with stick figures in skirts rather than pants. Well, that will certainly stop rape and abuse of women. Why didn’t anyone think of it sooner? Hey, Modi, if you really want to help women—which is doubtful—how about getting rid of your heinous Citizenship (Amendment) Act, effectively excluding Muslims from citizenship. Half of those Muslims are women. So go stuff your stick figures and your racism.

**Not a stick figure
Chicago**

WOMEN IN THE U.S.

I’m 83 years old. I was in the women’s liberation wave that obtained Roe v. Wade. Planned Parenthood (PP) and NARAL behaved badly. We told them then that they settled too quickly and too easily. They didn’t hold out for abortion to be a right and for women’s reproductive care to be paid for by the government for those who could not afford it. Now PP and NARAL are singing the blues because that law didn’t hold and abortion is not a right. It’s a service you can get if you can afford it.

I am sick of the half measures that were settled for back then. Women are a class in the U.S. and many of us have been class traitors; and that goes for the women who settled for a crummy law that only protected the middle and upper class of women. Now there are much fewer middle incomes in the class named “women”; and the former members of the middle-income group are singing the blues.

**January
Chicago**

SHAMELESS EVICTIONS

Why is there no will among U.S. leaders to stop the shattering of people’s lives from the coming tsunami of evictions? *The Wall Street Journal* shamelessly gives us the answer: “A

growing number of property investors are preparing for what they believe could be a once-in-a-generation opportunity to buy distressed real-estate assets at bargain prices.” Senator [Elizabeth Warren and Carroll Fife](#) tell us what happens then: “Following the 2008 crash, corporations that grabbed up properties on the cheap converted those homes into rentals, and turned into the worst kind of slumlords—jacking up rents, neglecting maintenance requests and health and safety concerns, and eagerly assessing fines, fees and eviction notices. Other corporate-owned homes were left vacant in a hoarding of housing stock.” We live in a society that rewards those who prey on the poor. That’s got to STOP!

**Angry feminist
Chicago**

VOICES FROM BEHIND BARS

I’m really missing your newsletter(s) in print big time! Will you guys ever go back to printing *N&L*? Please do as soon as possible. Some states are closing again because the COVID-19 positive numbers are spiking due to premature reopening of the states. So, I do understand, mostly, always have. I don’t have a television or radio. I’m indigent, so *N&L* is a blessing. Take care of yourselves, be safe, and please, as soon as you’re able, please send me your next available print *N&L*—including previous issues. Thank you.



**Prisoner
Ionia, Mich.**

Editor’s note: Yes, we will resume printing and mailing News & Letters as soon as possible.

Prisoners don’t have cell phones, we can’t facetime or chat on computers because we have no access to the internet. In North Carolina, the prison system has been on lockdown and we can’t even visit with our loved ones during this quarantine. All this is exacerbated by the harsh censorship pol-

icies that permit officials to intercept prisoners’ incoming mail, to use the mail as tools of torture. It’s sad that America doesn’t feel the need to see its shame and misery manifesting in its prisons. Bill Clinton’s 1994 crime bill, supported by Democrats like Joe Biden, only benefits the rich and corporations. Where’s the rehabilitation? Where’s America’s integrity? When America learns empathy and compassion for the poor, the working class, people of color, the homeless and the imprisoned, then maybe we can return to apple pie, baseball and good old-fashioned honesty.

**Randy Watterson
Elizabeth City, N.C.**

Warden J. Fikes recently gave rejection slips to senior prisoners who filed for compassionate release and are terrified of dying from the coronavirus. The overcrowded prison of FCI Sandstone is considered a “low” and costs taxpayers \$3 million a month to house mostly middle-aged and senior prisoners classified “unlikely to re-offend.” Each unit houses 162 inmates in a single 30 by 90 foot space, sharing open bathrooms and forced to double bunk in cubes just six by nine feet. According to *USA Today*, former Assistant Attorney General Laurie Robinson had stated, “There is no way to set up an effective quarantine because prisoners are confined to a small cell.” Inmates cannot purchase hand sanitizer bottles and extra masks. Mysterious sickness is rampant in the units. Nurses tell inmates to just “sleep it off” and are hush-hush about what the sickness is. Sandstone refuses to test for COVID-19 and has no adequate plan for confronting it. Prisoner advocates worry that the decision not to send prisoners home is based on a “human dollar sign” and not safety. A coalition of civil rights groups called governments to “apply compassionate release” for the elderly or chronically ill inmates. The evidence overwhelmingly leads to the conclusion that prison profiteering is the driving force behind excessive incarceration and federal prison overcrowding. Inmates are not a “human dollar sign,” and a bed-filling quota is not more important than human safety and fair sentencing.

**David Azreal
Sandstone, Minn.**

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by Raya Dunayevskaya

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COVID at San Quentin



Photo: News & Letters

San Quentin, Calif.—On Aug. 2, several hundred people, including many family members of prisoners at San Quentin, demonstrated for the fifth time in the last three months to protest the state's murder of prisoners by COVID-19. Our cry was, "No state executions by COVID-19!" At the time of the first demonstration in May, there were no COVID-19 cases at San Quentin. We demanded that the California Department of Corrections (and rehabilitation, CDCr) take preventive measures by releasing at-risk prisoners to enable the most minimal social distancing, and by providing masks, cleaning supplies, etc.

Instead, in late May, CDCr brought several dozen prisoners from California Institution for Men—the site of the deadliest outbreak of COVID-19 in California's prison system at the time—to San Quentin without testing them. San Quentin was warned by Marin County's top public health officer that, unless these transferred prisoners were "radically sequestered," a major outbreak would ensue. And so it did.

By Aug. 2 over one half of San Quentin's population tested positive and 19 died there. On Aug. 17, the First District Court in San Francisco found that prison officials had shown "deliberate indifference" to the health of those in custody. One judge was stunned that neither Gov. Newsom nor CDCr's director Ralph Diaz were willing to even discuss a possible release of vulnerable prisoners, even though "the pandemic within San Quentin is probably more severe than in any jail or prison facility in the U.S."

Fifty-five prisoners have died in CDCr's custody thus far, with numbers increasing daily. CDCr's total impunity and inhumanity with respect to prisoners' lives is a part of the insanity of this moment of the dehumanization of many, especially "minorities."

—Ursula Wislanka

Soledad families say: "We Are Their Voice!"



Photo: News & Letters

Soledad, Calif.—On Aug. 6, dozens of mostly family members demonstrated in front of Soledad prison. Below are a few statements made at the rally.

An organizer with We Are Their Voice addressed not just the crowd but the guards looking at us: "We are here for our loved ones, but not only them." Turning to the guards she continued, "I want to ask you, do you think Ralph Diaz [head of California Department of Corrections and rehabilitation (CDCr)] cares about you? He doesn't. This prison was doing fine, no instances of the virus. How did it get in there? [It was brought in by staff, most likely during a raid a couple weeks ago.] Now our loved ones are sitting in there, at risk of dying, just like so many already have.

"The prisoners were sentenced by the court. They were not sentenced to die by the virus. We are here to stand for our loved ones, to end mass incarceration, regardless if they are classified as 'violent offender' or not.

"We have to stand up for all our loved ones: we want to drop enhancements, drop LWOP [life without a possibility of parole], stand up for youth offenders, close these damn prisons already. Just like our lives matter out here, so do theirs. Just because they are incarcerated, they are still human beings."

Another family member said, "My husband is not even at this prison. I keep fighting for my husband, for your husband. What's happening right now is completely wrong. I see women come out here holding all those beautiful signs. I want them to understand that when they are hurting, we are too. I love my husband. I want him home. It was an accident when he was 19 years old and they gave him life.

"We will show up at every prison: Solano, Chino, Monterey County Jail, Calipatria... I want to be a part of this movement. There will be adversaries

Black August, an evolving Idea

THOUGHTS FROM THE OUTSIDE

by Faruq

For many New Afrikan Revolutionaries August has a profound significance. Those of us who were there from the beginning of Black August have witnessed the development of that singular concept over 41 years. In 1978 a small collective of New Afrikan prisoners took inspiration from what we knew about Black history—the Civil Rights Movement and the many struggles for freedom worldwide. (See my essay "Black August, from 1971 to 2011-13," Nov.-Dec. 2019 *N&L*.) We saw the prison struggle as a particular aspect of that general and ongoing upheaval.

George Jackson provided the opening for a new realization of the Idea of freedom when he said, "Settle your quarrels, come together... discover your humanity and your love in revolution." What is the universality—the total nature, breadth and depth of the idea of freedom as our essential humanity? The spirit of it is cooperation, the place and time of human development which is each one's voyage of discovery.

For example, the 2011 Pelican Bay hunger strike's overall demand was to be validated as human and not as gang members to be locked away in perpetual solitary confinement. This was expressed in many forms. One of our demands was to get colored pencils while in solitary. Prisoners work to make themselves better people, always difficult when armed forces of the state use their power to run the brothers away from the idea of freedom. Many expressed their humanity through drawing, letting their spirit/imagination roam free beyond the walls.

I needed to understand what freedom is, what it looks like. When I was 15 or 16 I heard a song by The Last Poets about freedom. Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr. talked about freedom. I was asking, why is it so unattainable? What is it we need to do? Black August was to liberate people from the racial oppression of capitalism.

For me Black August attempts to set forth a new humanism. It is about all forms of human relations. It is a platform to relate our own struggles to others' struggles to be whole. Now my work takes me to the streets of San Francisco, where I see the multiple effects of capitalism's anti-humanism. Everyone on my

crew has at least two jobs primarily to make money. The cost of living in San Francisco is unbelievable. A small one-bedroom apartment is \$2,500 per month. A room the size of two individual cells in prison is \$1,000 per month.

I see many young people selling drugs all day and night to make a living. This is what capitalism reduces life to. When you can't make a living from the land, in this country or in others, people are forced to migrate to cities or across borders. Without a job, they are forced to scratch out some level of existence.

Capitalism by its very nature denies many even the right to live. Capital's enforcers murder people by the thousands every day. We see daily reports of migrants drowning in the Caribbean or the Mediterranean. We see them die in the desert. Guards shoot people trying to cross the border into Hungary.

Anti-life is capital's normal. There is no "return to normal" when human activity under capitalism's commodity production is causing destruction of life on the planet in myriad ways. Deaths due to COVID-19 are announced every day. Capital restructuring has stripped the health system of much of its ability to deal with the crisis. The "essential" workers, in hospitals, in meat processing plants or in the fields, are dying from COVID-19 in huge numbers.

Yet we see health professionals, postal carriers, all sorts of delivery people and food preparation people fight to save the lives of others, even if it means putting their own lives and the lives of their loved ones at risk. Many of the brave nurses or cooks are women. Black women initiated the Black Lives Matter movement, which became a global movement even under these conditions.

Karl Marx talks about the man/woman relation as the most fundamental. As opposed to Stokely Carmichael's statement that the position of women in the Black Liberation Movement is prone, Black freedom and women's freedom are both aspects of the idea of freedom as well as the drive to make our life activity a creative expression of our humanity.

Detroit police brutality and restraint

Detroit—On July 13 a young man was killed in a west side Detroit neighborhood in an incident believed to be a police shooting of an unarmed Black man. A crowd of angry neighbors confronted police in riot gear and riot mentality; some threw rocks and bottles at them; at least one was injured. Police threw tear gas canisters just as a local news crew began filming, but the protesters had large fans and blew and threw the gas back at the police. The crowd was swelling with young people, the white participants were easily identified as being from outside the neighborhood.

Then a line of police marched slowly down the street to 6 Mile Rd., a major thoroughfare. The crowd were backed onto 6 Mile Rd., and then the police simply stood. Next the crowd headed for the 12th precinct, with the police nowhere in sight. Traffic and passers-by honked and waved in support. At the precinct, police prevented entry but were otherwise quiet. Some protest leaders seemed to be encouraging the crowd to back off.

Later that evening Chief Craig went on TV to play body-cam and dash-cam videos of the shooting. Most viewers clearly saw the young man pull his gun and fire on police officers arresting another man, thus quelling the rumor of unjustified police violence—this time.

BRUTALITY AND RESTRAINT ARE REAL

Police brutality and police restraint in the same incident. Both are real. Here is how my friend T. reflected on it, giving meaning to "Defund the Police":

"The hood needs conflict resolution and mediators. Eight folks shot on San Juan. Three dead on the 4th of July. Then what? No healers, no mediators, no support, just a hot-ass block. So two babies walking down the same street that two dudes was just sprawled out on...of course they packing. Then in his 18-year-old mind, cops pull him over, he know his boy hot, he decide to go out in a blaze like the rappers and the movies do. Cause he got to be hard. But there was a point in all this where conflict resolution was needed. By some OGs [Original Gangstas]. Eighteen and dumb and in a f—ked-up situation that too many of our babies be in too much. This the type of healing the hood need. Now his little brother watch this, anger boiling, who is there to help him deal with this trauma. It's too much. But he will probably just go to school next year like ain't shit happen and blow up one day and not know why. How do we get out these cycles? Internalized oppression and trauma is just as fucking serious as white supremacy and police brutality. But when do it stop?"

Lessons reinforced: Detroit, don't let your guard down, on COVID-19 or police accountability. Black Lives Matter/Power to the People!

—Susan Van Gelder

Fracking cannibalizes our future

The unmitigated disaster of fracking (hydraulic fracturing of rock to extract oil and/or natural gas) reflects the current condition of capitalism. The Barack Obama administration presided over a boom in fracking that turned the U.S. into the world's biggest producer of both oil and natural gas—such a great achievement that Obama and Donald Trump both want to take credit for it. But it came at great human and environmental cost, including doubling down on fossil fuel production when it needed to be winding down to prevent climate catastrophe. And the lush profits turned out to be a mirage—stolen from the future economically as well as ecologically.

PEOPLE OF COLOR MOST AFFECTED

As with all pollution, the toxic effects of fracking hurt Black, Latinx, Native American and poor communities the most, and generated resistance in place after place. In Pennsylvania, [fracking wells are disproportionately sited in poor rural communities](#). Those wells pollute the air and water, making people sick and likely more vulnerable to COVID-19.

Where the polluted wastewater is disposed of is also skewed. In South Texas, these [wastewater sites tend to be placed near minority communities](#). Downstream industries processing the fracked gas and oil—refineries, plastics, petrochemicals and power plants—also disproportionately poison Black, Indigenous and People of Color communities. Those are where some of the most ferocious environmental justice battles are being fought. Facing a glut of natural gas, companies are ramping up plastic production,

knowing that they are increasing that poisoning and worsening the climate and pollution crisis.

As with all fossil fuel extraction projects, the wells sooner or later run out of materials that can be extracted economically, leaving abandoned toxic waste sites, which often spew methane into the air, adding to the climate crisis. As bankruptcies decimate fracking companies, those toxic sites will mushroom.

By law, companies have to post bonds for cleanup, but [the amounts are only a fraction of what is needed, and even that often disappears, particularly when companies declare bankruptcy](#). Take Spyglass Cedar Creek, which abandoned 40 wells in South Dakota, with an estimated cleanup cost of \$1.2 million. The company spent their \$30,000 bond five years ago, leaving the state to pay the rest.

Canada has the same problem. The [province of Alberta](#) alone faces [hundreds of billions of dollars](#) in cleanup costs of oil and gas wells, with company funding so far a tiny fraction of that.

Coal companies operate in the same way. Companies that have [recently declared bankruptcy are producing half](#) of U.S. coal. Coal executives use bankruptcy to escape pension and environmental responsibilities, while awarding themselves huge bonuses and shafting workers.

Just as importantly, the intended products of fracking, oil and natural gas, are climate-busters. Recent studies have shown that both companies and regulators have underestimated, probably vastly, the amount of methane leaked into the atmosphere during normal fracking operations. Since Trump administration standard operating procedure is to hide information and spew lies instead, they have tried to prevent production or dissemination of data about the leaks.

STATE-CAPITALISM PROPS UP BIG OIL

With all these terrible consequences, why was fracking allowed to boom? Was it favored over renewable energy because its profits were recognized by the “free market”? No! The fracked oil industry has been a [financial failure for more than the past decade](#). For five years, the industry has been losing money, even before the COVID-19 crash in demand that caused the brief spectacle of a negative oil price. But the pandemic gave them an excuse to demand bailouts, when all countries should be winding down fossil fuel production and use.

For instance, fracking powerhouse [Chesapeake Energy filed for bankruptcy](#) on June 28—joining 227 North American oil and gas producers that declared bankruptcy in the five years that ended May 31, involving more than \$134 billion in aggregate debt. And in 2020-21, [almost 250 oil and gas companies](#) could file for bankruptcy.

Shale fracking was never profitable, but it kept going by the power of state-capitalism—subsidizing fossil industries and keeping interest rates low to prop up the failing post-2008-crash economy—combined with a con game, in keeping with the times. Company executives and private equity firms siphoned off revenue for themselves, leaving investors in the lurch, and propping up operations by piling up cheap debt. Usually the bosses give themselves a big bonus right before they go bankrupt and kick their employees to the curb.

This is the current operation of decaying capitalism in miniature: cannibalizing the economy, people and the planet, destroying our future, in order to funnel wealth to the favored few.

—Franklin Dmitryev



Nov., 12, 2016, demonstration in Chicago against Dakota Access Pipeline, built to carry fracked oil from the Bakken shale formation.

VOICES FROM THE INSIDE OUT

continued from p. 1

Americans as well. Upon the release of Nelson Mandela from his incarceration in South Africa, one of the older lifers in a Wisconsin prison shook his head in disgust as he watched all the celebrations, noting, “Hell, we have apartheid right here in this country and no one says a damn thing.”

Concepts of apartheid are manifested in a variety of ways in the U.S. The most obvious is in the disproportionate treatment that people of color, particularly Blacks, receive in the criminal justice system. It starts with the initial police contact currently under scrutiny due to the deaths of Floyd and others, and continues through every phase of the criminal justice process. This led to the U.S. being the leader in the mass incarceration of its citizens, especially if they are people of color.

In Wisconsin, for instance, 31 of the state's 56 Black neighborhoods are prisons or jails, mostly located in rural areas, creating a form of prison population gerrymander, especially as those numbers reflect on representative populations regarding people of color. Not surprisingly, for decades Wisconsin has been number one in the nation in the per capita incarceration of Blacks and Native Americans.

PRISON TERMS ARE DISCRIMINATORY

Additionally, though Blacks make up a very small minority (9-12%) of the state's population, according to recent statistics by the Wisconsin Department of Corrections, 42% of its prison population is Black with a disproportionate number housed in its secure maximum facilities. Blacks make up an average of 52.8% of max prisons in the state with the majority of Black prisoners incarcerated in the most secure facilities—61% and 59% respectively in the State's two walled facilities at Green Bay and Waupun, and 55% in its former Supermax facility in Boscobel, as opposed to medium facilities (only 39.1% are occupied by Black prisoners) or minimums and work centers (37.5% are Black prisoners).

Traditionally, people of color in Wisconsin, and around the country, also get disproportionately longer prison terms, spending much more time in prison than White prisoners who commit the same crimes. This is another attribute of America's form of apartheid.

Prisons, along with disproportionate incarceration, are forms of social, economic and cultural death for Black communities, especially when the majority of those prisoners are either nonviolent offenders, or prisoners who have been incarcerated disproportionately longer than many of their White counterparts.

Mass incarceration, and disproportionate treatment by all aspects of the Prison Industrial Complex, is a cultural knee on the neck of the Black community as a whole.

If Black lives are going to continue to matter in the U.S., then change must happen at every level of a racial discussion, not only within Black communities back in the world, but within the more numerous Black communities that are confined.

EDITORIAL

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dump 1.14 million barrels of oil into the Red Sea. The tanker, captured by the Houthis in 2015, has had no maintenance. A serious oil spill could increase the suffering in Yemen by poisoning the environment (and destroying biodiversity), releasing toxic fumes, and potentially raising the price of food by 90%. It is being held as an apocalyptic bargaining chip.

The genocidal inhumanity of the regional imperialist war was seen in April when the Houthis expelled thousands of Ethiopian immigrants. Claiming that they would spread COVID-19, Houthi militia rounded up the immigrants, shooting at those who tried to escape. One woman said, “I ran with a group of 45 people, and 40 people were killed in my group. Only five of us escaped.”

When the immigrants were forced to the border, Saudi border guards also began firing on them. The Ethiopians were caught in a crossfire between Saudis and Houthis. Shooting is said to have lasted for two days. Survivors were stripped of their belongings and taken to miserable detention camps in Saudi Arabia to be sent back to Ethiopia.

HUMANISM AND DIALOGUE

The humanism and recognition of the Other that pervaded the Arab Spring—like the demonstrations in Kafranbel, Syria, with their slogans addressed from the revolutionary grassroots to humanity at large—exists in Yemen, and formed part of the background to the revolution of dignity and the occupation of Change Square.

It is expressed in contemporary novels by Wajdi al-Ahdal, Ali al-Muqri, Yasser Abdulbaqi, Nadia al-Kawkabani, Nabila al-Zubair, and more, whose works explore relationships between people of different religions, regions, classes, races or tribes, as well as the oppression and empowerment of Yemeni women. In the revolution these dialogues moved from the page to the public squares.

The “small” nation of Yemen speaks to humanity. Humanity, for our own sake, has the responsibility to hear and respond. The Other is us. Who now lives in fear of disease? Who suffers the unprincipled maneuvers of power-hungry, sociopathic “leaders”? Who watches their children die and their cities burn?

N & L office damaged

In the recent uprisings against racist police murders and brutality against Black people, the store on the first floor of the building where the N&L office is located was burned. A result of putting out the fire was flooding in our storeroom and smoke damage to our office. We lost many books, pamphlets, newspapers, and more. We need your help to recover.

The attitude of News and Letters Committees to finances stems from a philosophy of organization which recognizes that we

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U.S. masses demand no return to normal

continued from p. 1

political mail [not being mailed], we said we were still going to take the ballots out.”

In the time of COVID-19, people are depending on the USPS for everything from medication to government checks. But the attack on the election is not confined to destroying the USPS.

Trump is also ruining the 2020 Census. His administration shortened the time the Census Bureau has to complete the job by 30 days when the Bureau had asked for an extension. Their aim is to undercount Blacks, Latinx people, and the poor, and cut their political representation. It will devastate their federal funding, which includes money for school lunches and healthcare. Lizette Escobedo, a Latina activist leading a census program for a Latinx rights group, *said*: “We’re in the middle of a global pandemic, and they might be shortchanging every Latino community for 10 years to come. This is cruel.”

FEDS IN PORTLAND, A DRESS REHEARSAL FOR THE ELECTION?

The country was also outraged when Border Patrol agents, Homeland Security personnel and who knows who else invaded Portland, Oregon, at Trump’s bidding and began brutalizing demonstrators. Trump’s move was reminiscent of every tin-pot dictator and warlord who amasses their own private army of thugs and mercenaries.

Wearing no identifiable uniforms, name tags or badges, they often attacked peaceful demonstrators. People were kidnapped, dragged off the streets and literally thrown into unmarked vans. Trump’s minions didn’t take their victims to police stations but to holding cells at the Federal Courthouse. They effectively “disappeared” them, as they didn’t let anyone know who had been taken or where, stripping protesters of their civil rights.

These actions, which continued for days—and weeks if you count how long this makeshift collection of thugs remained in Portland—effectively destroyed democracy, free speech, the right to assemble, the right to protest. Methods honed in repressing immigrants, African Americans, Iraqis and Afghans are being turned against ever greater swathes of the population.

That there were no real consequences to an outrageous violation of people’s freedom stokes not only outrage but fear—fear that such forces could be used again. If Trump loses the election, the fear is that he will summon his paramilitary raiding party again to crush any movements in the streets to stop his illegal coup. What makes this fear realistic is that Trump has already done the unbelievable with no serious repercussions.

This danger is palpable because Trump [also sent his “forces” to Kansas City](#) and Seattle, and threatened to send them to Albuquerque, Baltimore, Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, Milwaukee, Philadelphia and St. Louis. Not coincidentally, the majority of voters in these cities are projected to vote for Democrats.

THE LEAP TO FREEDOM IS FROM NECESSITY

People are fighting back out of necessity. If things don’t change, 67 million households, including millions of children, [may soon have their water turned off](#), because the moratoriums stopping water shutoffs will have expired. At [least 51 million Americans have filed for unemployment](#) since the pandemic started and that doesn’t include all those who didn’t file but are unemployed.

Experts in the housing field are predicting an “eviction apocalypse” where up to 23 million families are forced out of their homes. This will be a catastrophe. Trump’s hollow executive order on unemployment and evictions did nothing to change this. It merely mandates that “agency leaders” study if a rent moratorium is necessary and, if so, are there funds to pay for it.

Trump has hollowed out, dumbed down or politicized every U.S. agency involved in health and safety, pollution control, immigration, labor, education, housing—everything. Every system has failed humanity in this time of crisis.

MOVEMENT FROM PRACTICE FIGHTS EMERGING FASCISM

Like the postal workers in Detroit who, after being [told to leave the political mail behind](#), delivered it themselves on their own time, people have been fighting back. On Aug. 15, 100 people showed up at DeJoy’s home, banging on pots and blowing horns, protesting his attempts to wreck the USPS. As activist [Martha Leslie Allen](#) said, “Today we

joined [#ShutDownDC](#), and others in delivering democracy—and a lot of noise—right to the door of DeJoy’s swanky condo in Kalorama.” Signs read “Postmaster saboteur,” “Stop voter suppression,” “U.S. Mail=our property,” “Defend democracy,” and the ever present “Black Lives Matter.” They plan to demonstrate there again.

Photo: [Martha Leslie Allen](#)



#ShutDownDC organized a march and demonstration to Postmaster Louis DeJoy’s condo in Kalorama, Washington, D.C., to protest his sabotaging of the Post Office on Aug. 15, 2020.

Even before this latest housing crisis, Black women had taken matters into their own hands. Following in the footsteps of welfare rights organizations, women in Oakland, Calif., formed Moms 4 Housing. They inspired Reclaiming Our Homes in Los Angeles and Occupy PHA (Philadelphia Housing Authority). The women and children take over vacant homes and apartments, help families move in, and fight to keep them there. [Dominique Walker of Moms 4 Housing](#) pointed out what should be obvious: “The true crime lies in this society we live in that can normalize people living in the street. Shelter is a human right.”

As we go to press, Moms 4 Housing reports on an upcoming demonstration to protest an eviction: “On Jan. 14 in a pre-dawn raid of a residential home in Oakland, Calif., the Alameda County Sheriff’s spent tens of thousands of taxpayer dollars to evict women and children from a vacant, speculator-acquired property.

“Tanks, military-styled officers, drones, robots, a battering ram and assault rifles were used to execute an eviction order on Black women and their children. There has not been a more stark example in recent history of militarized racism in housing than in the saga of Moms.

“...Now more than ever, we must divest from policing to end terror and invest in the essentials that our communities need to thrive and survive COVID.”

Not only have Black women been leaders in the fight against evictions and homelessness, they, including their Transgender sisters, were founders of the Black Lives Matter coalition and called for and led many of the demonstrations that blanketed the country and are ongoing as we go to press. (See [“Black youth lead revolt challenging deadly racism, aiming to dismantle system”](#) and [“Black women speak a new humanism”](#) in the July-Aug. 2020 issue of N&L.)

Those demonstrations, like the decades-long struggle to end slavery, like the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s and ’70s, have inspired new strata to join them in the fight for freedom and for an end to racist police violence and the whole racist society.

In unprecedented numbers white, Latinx and others joined in the demonstrations. First a Wall of Moms, then of dads, then of veterans, and always of youth. Not only to be allies, but because the humanism of the Black struggle for freedom is in such vivid contrast to the anti-humanism of the police, the state, the federal government that it was clear to all and especially the youth that it was their freedom too that is at stake.

NOT BACK TO NORMAL BUT TO A NEW HUMAN SOCIETY

The upcoming presidential election is eliciting a great deal of hope and energy because so many are frantic to get the great destroyer out of the White House. No one who cares about humanity would argue against that effort. Destruction of the Republican hold on the executive and legislative branches of the U.S. government would immediately make a difference in people’s lives, including saving lives of those who might die if Trump remains in office.

And yet what Black Lives Matter is shouting loud enough for anyone who cares to hear—and they’ve been saying it years before the COVID-19 pandemic—is that our “normal” U.S. society is racist to the core and must be transformed.

When the #MeToo movement took hold, women made clear that the whole rape culture must change. The Women’s Marches were demanding not only issues like equal pay, but a comprehension that women are whole human beings.

When youth by the hundreds of thousands “Marched for our Lives,” they weren’t only saying they wanted gun control, but that a society that values guns over human lives must be completely transformed. Youth climate strikes called for deep systemic change.

The movement to support immigrants and refugees, to honor DACA dreamers, and those who are our most essential workers and yet are treated like dirt, was not only to stop Trump’s violence against children, but to erase borders so that all could travel freely as a human right.

What Joseph Biden and Kamala Harris represent is *not* these voices, these ideas. What they pledge is a return to “normal.” But it is the “normal” that got us here in the first place. It is the “normal” that “elected” Trump, that discriminates, that has led to the rich getting obscenely richer and the poor losing everything, that put humanity in the middle of an out-of-control pandemic that has killed millions and a planet that is in danger of becoming uninhabitable.

As we wrote in the last issue of N&L: “There is no sense in waiting for a return to normal, because there is no return to normal...What shines through the revolt is the underlying philosophy of humanism, and the political maturity of our age...”

“The negative in that self-activity is easy to see: efforts to tear down the systems of racism and other oppressions. The positive in that negation is not as easy to hear, but it is crucial to listen—and not only to support the revolt, letting it speak and highlighting the reason in what the rulers and media portray as unreason, but to let the Idea of Freedom hear itself speak.

“The negation embodied in spontaneous revolt is a needed first step. To proceed to the reconstruction of society on truly human foundations requires unification of theory and practice, including a clarification not only of what masses in motion are against, but what they are for.”

Black masses have taken the lead and this past decade has seen every force for freedom taking to the streets demanding a new and different world, certainly not a return to normal. The revolt has been continuous. Can it develop to a revolution in permanence?

The Marxist-Humanist Theory of State-Capitalism: selected writings by Raya Dunayevskaya



This collection of 17 writings by Raya Dunayevskaya, founder of Marxist-Humanism in the U.S., contains a selection of her writings on the theory of state-capitalism, ranging from her original analysis of Russia as a state-capitalist society in the early 1940s to writings on the global phenomenon of state-capitalism from the 1940s to our era.

“Raya Dunayevskaya’s essays on the nature of capitalist and Soviet societies are full of the kind of scholarly insights and political wisdom that no one interested in these topics can afford to ignore. A mind-stretching exercise for those willing to risk it!”

—Bertell Ollman

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Detroit teachers vote safety strike

Detroit—Ninety percent of the members of the Detroit Federation of Teachers (DFT) voted to authorize a safety strike, which means they will not



'Liberate Hong Kong'

by Bob McGuire

The same day that Beijing imposed a National Security Law on Hong Kong, July 1, police blocked a pro-democracy march of thousands of youth and arrested 370 students, many for actions that were legal the day before. The 66 articles of the new law criminalize acts of opposition beyond what had gotten protesters arrested and brutalized in marches as large as two million over the past year, when they successfully blocked a proposed law permitting extradition to Chinese courts.

But the law's wording is so ambiguous that none could be sure what act, slogan, tweet, or connection abroad would be treated as an act of secession, subversion, terrorism or collusion with foreign powers deserving a life sentence. Those still daring to take to the streets, instead of carrying signs with the now-forbidden phrase "Liberate Hong Kong—Revolution of Our Times," have displayed blank pieces of paper to make their point.

ELECTIONS DELAYED A YEAR

China has effectively dismantled the self-governing that the people of Hong Kong had been guaranteed under the "One Country, Two Systems" agreement supposedly in force until 2047. Hong Kong authorities had feared elections scheduled for September after last year's unexpectedly overwhelming success by the opposition in district elections. Even though voters choose only half the Legislative Council, which would have no authority over Beijing security forces in any case under the national security law, those elections have now been postponed for a year.

In recent weeks the arrests of Agnes Chow, representing the history of the 2014 Umbrella Movement, and Jimmy Lai, publisher of Apple Daily, have illustrated how security forces concoct charges of financial corruption and subversion to threaten life sentences on opposition figures and anonymous protesters.

Some activists have publicly looked to the U.S. government for backing, cheering gestures like Secretary of State Pompeo criticizing Xi Jinping or Trump imposing tariffs on selected exports from China. The people of Hong Kong can hope for solidarity from freedom movements in the U.S., but Donald Trump begged Chairman Xi to give him illegal aid in his re-election campaign this year. That is the real Trump; the one calling COVID-19 the "China virus" or canceling joint training with Hong Kong police forces is the façade.

TOOTHLESS U.S. SANCTIONS

Similar desperation has led some defenders of Uyghurs—who have received scant support from governments of Muslim countries despite suffering suppression of their language and religious rights in Xinjiang even when not confined to work camps—to hail sanctions Trump imposed on exporting cotton and other goods in Xinjiang. That, again, is likely mostly symbolic, since goods for exports made in camps under company control, even MAGA hats, can be labeled with an origin elsewhere in China.

The end to Hong Kong's autonomy poses a looming threat to Taiwan. For decades threats against Taiwan from Beijing were bluster, as Taiwan and Hong Kong were prime conduits for the capital that permitted exploitation of Chinese labor power under conditions of what Karl Marx referred to as "the so-called primitive accumulation of capital." But now, willingness to risk scuttling the cash cow that is Hong Kong likely would apply to Taiwan as well.

Taiwan activists have supported the Hong Kong opposition the way that Hong Kong activists had commemorated the June 4, 1989 military massacre of students and workers in Beijing's Tiananmen Square. Yet under this renewed threat the first election in Taiwan was an act of defiance: replacing by an overwhelming vote the pro-unification Kuomintang mayor of Kaohsiung with a mayor from President Tsai Ing-wen's ruling party.

teach face-to-face but are willing to work remotely. The DFT president maintains that the union was not adequately included in the re-opening planning. Several teachers doubt that 20% of parents will actually send their children to school on Sept. 8. Most parents, students, and educators want to return to classroom learning, but COVID-19 forces everyone into choices unthinkable six months ago, choices that could mean life or death. People have to make these choices when school funding is challenged, when many doubt schools can be safe for students, teachers, staff and their families, and when it's too early to know the ramifications of remote education.

Trump's politicized defiance of public health guidelines has helped the coronavirus to become so widespread that return to in-person learning, the best educational setting, is grinding to a halt. One high school in Georgia suspended a student who photographed crowded hallways. It closed a few days later for disinfection and now has 1,600 students and staff quarantined.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS DENIED AID

Trump, cheered on by Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos, is forcing school re-opening with nary a dollar to pay for the increased costs. The Michigan Superintendent of Schools reported that, although the state received \$175 per student for COVID-19 costs in the CARES Act Funds, the actual cost was around \$400. School closures in March left Michigan school districts with a budget shortfall averaging \$700 per student.

In Michigan, the legislature finally agreed to let state schools open fully virtually. Teachers have given their all to do their best teaching amid chaos, and want to return to their classrooms. In Arizona, one district in Phoenix could not re-open because of a teacher and staff sick-out.

NO SCHOOL, NO CHILDCARE

The class and racial divides in U.S. education are deepened by this pandemic. Essential workers, majority Black, Brown and lower-wage, need their children in school so they can go to work. Special needs children (including English language learners) can't receive support services unless they are in school. Black people are four times more likely to die of COVID-19 and Latinx seven times more likely.

Parents, students and teachers rightly fear the loss of quality education. Remember when you were in school and had a substitute teacher, what did you learn? How did you behave that day? (Don't answer.) Today, the substitute teacher is a device, a computer! In isolation, children see, hear and talk to the teacher, but everyone knows there is no real control of student work, or a setting for them to learn appropriate group behavior, without adult physical presence.

Even the youngest child quickly learns how to mute the microphone not just for co-operation with the class but for their own distractions. As a Detroit high school senior said, "I don't want to do online. There are too many distractions at home. The phone is addicting; when I get a notification, I open it and I don't get out of it."

One promising development is parents and teachers cooperating to self-organize small learning "pods." Neighbors and extended families with similar standards of hygiene and social distancing pool resources, share adult support and enable expanded social experiences in relatively safe settings. Even a pair of "study buddies" could help offset the negative developmental impacts of prolonged isolation.

LEARNING THAT TRUMP HATES LEARNING

We will not know for years what children have learned while out of school: about public health, the economy, politics and media manipulation and their own schooling. A 16-year-old explained that he was laid off from his job at a bicycle shop because manufacturers and distributors were not sending them enough bikes, an unexpected global economic analysis not generally taught in high schools. Worse, we don't know all the mental effects: fear of the virus, disrupted lives and loss of friends and family.

Now, the whole country can see deep flaws in American education. How can we go forward, centered on the needs of the children to realize their true humanity?

—Susan Van Gelder

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



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Cops protect fascists

Kalamazoo, Mich.—At Arcadia Park about 12:15 on Aug. 15, 45 minutes before the Proud Boys rally was supposed to begin, I noticed a decent amount of police officers around the area. Everybody there, I'll refer to us as counter-protesters, was being 100% peaceful. We had a few guys at entrances with rifles, and everybody else was waiting to see what these Proud Boys were going to do. Absolutely zero issues.

When we had gotten word that the Proud Boys were getting geared up to march, I noticed all the police officers in the area had left. Every single one. The police left at the exact time that the Proud Boys were getting ready to move in.

POLICE DISAPPEAR

About 1:30, we saw them marching towards us. No exaggeration, this was a uniformed militia marching through the streets of Kalamazoo, chanting "Whose streets? Our streets!"

No police to be found anywhere.

As they walked by the park, tensions rose. There was screaming and aggression from both sides. People were breaking street signs and hitting people with them, and from what I've seen that was mainly coming from the Proud Boys.

This brawl lasted on and off for about 20 minutes until the Proud Boys started macing us, so we backed off. Mind you, there was zero police presence for the entirety of this brawl.

After getting their asses kicked, the Proud Boys left, and we began marching through the city. Now the police come back. We were met with riot lines at almost every corner, while the Proud Boys were able to walk back to their meeting spot and vehicles with absolutely zero consequences.

ONLY PROTESTERS TARGETED

People were maced by police, people were arrested, and for what? Protecting our city from a group of racists and white supremacists because the police are on their side?

Everywhere we went, we were followed by a riot line of police, telling us to cease and desist or face arrest. But the uniformed militia walking through downtown Kalamazoo gets to go home with no consequences.

We were peaceful. We were gathered at a park to stop a group of white supremacists from holding a rally there. We defended our city when the police failed to do so, and we were punished for it, while the instigators walked away with no problems.

—Participant, Metro-Detroit Political Action Network

YOUTH IN ACTION

by Buddy Bell

Former Starbucks barista Andre Shirley confronted his manager over the policy of letting police officers inside his Los Angeles store, while regular customers were expected to observe social distancing and order/pick up drinks at the front door. Days later, he was fired for being late, though he would usually arrive early for his shifts. He told *KQED*: "It infuriated me, but I understood being a Black man in America I can't show that anger or that frustration... That is a fear I wake up to every day that I do not have secure employment. It's hard being in that place again after you've worked so hard to not be there."

* * *

Students at California State University in Los Angeles rallied on July 13, to urge the university president to appoint a prominent professor and local organizer, Melina Abdullah, as Dean of the College of Ethnic Studies. An online [statement](#) by student organizers said that Abdullah's appointment was forestalled by her "unapologetic opposition to all expressions of anti-Blackness on campus and in the community." California Faculty Association members have urged supporters to call or email President Bill Covino at 323-343-3030 and bill.covino@calstatela.edu to politely ask him to name Melina Abdullah to this position.

* * *

School boards in conservative states and counties have been eager to follow the Trump Administration's urge to reopen schools on regular schedules despite the continued risk of Covid-19's spread. In Dallas, Ga., high school sophomore Hannah Waters was suspended and received threats from classmates after she took a picture of a crowded school hallway and uploaded it on social media. Although all the students pictured are facing away from the camera, it is apparent that numerous students were not wearing a mask. "I was nervous for everyone in that building because precautions and guidelines that the CDC was telling us for months now weren't being followed," she said in a [CNN](#) interview. "I don't learn well online, and I want to be able to go to in-person school... but we can't if we're not safe." Waters' suspension was reversed without comment and her school [shut down](#) in the following week, after nine students tested positive for coronavirus.

WORLD IN VIEW

by Gerry Emmett

President Alexander Lukashenko, “Europe’s last dictator,” has ruled Belarus for 26 years. His time now may be up, as hundreds of thousands of protesters have filled the streets of the capital, Minsk, in the weeks following the disputed election of August 4 to 8.

Opposition coalition candidate Svetlana Tikhonovskaya has formed a transitional council to manage the transfer of power. Tikhonovskaya became a candidate following the arrest of her husband.

Lukashenko has responded to this challenge to his rule with mass arrests, police beatings, and torture, which has only caused the peaceful protests to increase. This state violence has repulsed most of the population.

Each of Lukashenko’s last five “elections” have drawn increasing protests, but now he may have lost



March for freedom, Bobruisk, Aug. 16, 2020.

Belarus thaws in a world in flames

the working class and entered his endgame.

A LONG FROZEN MOMENT

As one worker from the MTZ Minsk Tractor Works, whose son was tortured, said: “I have had enough. They think I am livestock just because I work on an assembly line. But I am a man.”

Lukashenko is a product of the old USSR state-capitalist regime. His one positive gesture was to spare Belarus’ workers the drastic “shock doctrine” that devastated Russian workers in the 1990s. It left him with the base of support he depended upon, at the price of continuing the old repression.

Yet Lukashenko was roundly booed when he appeared before the workers of the Minsk Wheeled Tractor Plant. While the opposition has yet to form a solid alliance with the workers, the workers are not defending the regime.

HUMANISM IN THE BALANCE

Lukashenko’s gesture toward the working class didn’t amount to any positive vision for humanity.

He was a supporter of Serb President Slobodan Milosevic’s 1990s genocide in Bosnia. He has been an ally of the genocidal Bashar al-Assad regime in Syria. His throwback Stalinism has helped disorient a generation of “Leftists” who have become apologists for mass murder.

He has also attempted, recently, to play off the U.S. and Russian governments against each other as energy providers. This has weakened his position with the Putin regime.

As Lukashenko’s frozen moment thaws, it is important to remember that history held out other possibilities. As the humanist Belarusian author Ales Adamovich wrote near the end of the Cold War, “New thinking requires a radical change. It does not refer to cosmetic changes...It means basic alterations in everything we think and do. It involves assuming a feeling of personal and historical responsibility for everything on the planet...”

“We must now reject those ideas and creations that are not for continuing the life process before they lead us to the verge of disaster...What is needed is the intuition generated by a great love of man for others. This is more essential today than anything else.”

As Belarus seeks its future, this remains true.

Remembering ruth weiss (1928-2020)

Poet ruth weiss (she preferred lower case as a protest against authority) passed on July 31 in Alhambra, Calif. One of the great originals, she continued public readings and environmental activism into her 90s. She published many books of poetry in English and German, including her 1977 masterpiece, *Desert Journal*.

Born in Germany, weiss’ family fled the Holocaust and moved first to New York, where she was for a time the only white child in her Harlem school. They then moved to Chicago. In Chicago she met a community of artists including Gwendolyn Brooks, who became a friend and mentor, and began experimenting with reading poetry accompanied by jazz—an idea she developed further in San Francisco, where she became close to Jack Kerouac.

In cropping her hair and dyeing it green, after the anti-prejudice film *The Boy with Green Hair* (1948), weiss even anticipated the look of 1970s punk rock by decades. That her life touched all these bases should make it easier to see her as the representative figure she was.

ART AS AN OBJECT OF FREEDOM

The creative work of her generation of artists can be viewed through the lens of Richard Wright’s 1940 essay on the writing of his classic novel *Native Son*, “How Bigger Was Born.” There he described wrestling with the questions of dehumanization, nihilism, and state power (Hitler and Stalin as well as Jim Crow) as objects of imaginative creation—of mental freedom. In writing of the creation of his central character, Wright said: “I made the discovery that Bigger Thomas was not Black all the time; he was white, too, and there were literally millions of him, everywhere.”

This was the impulse behind the innovation of jazz-poetry, as well as of Black and working-class artists’ appropriation of aspects of European modernism, from Charlie Parker, Ralph Ellison and Romare Bearden to the Association for the Advancement of Creative Music in the 1960s.

A trivializing academic world may have reduced

the artistic history of that era to the empty category of “Postmodernism,” but as a new generation confronts a similar nexus of state power, dehumanization, and nihilism, the underlying humanism of these great artists will be reinterpreted and built upon. As ruth weiss promised in her poem “San Francisco, silly city:” “The Tower of Babel will not be built again.”

World economy falls

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, for the first time on record *all* sections of the world economy are expected to contract in 2020. In June, the World Bank forecast declines of 8% or more in the U.S. and Canada; 9% or more in Latin America; and double digit declines (10.2% to 12.8%) in the UK, France, Italy, Spain, and Europe as a whole.

The only comparable crises, historically, have been the Great Depression of the 1930s and the crisis following World War I and the Spanish Flu epidemic.

This will fall most brutally on the poor, and in particular those in Third World countries where food and other necessities become less available.

THE STATE-CAPITALIST DISEASE

Even as millions of jobs and small businesses have disappeared, there has also been an immense transfer of wealth upward. Billionaires like Jeff Bezos (Amazon), the world’s richest man, and Bill Gates (Microsoft) increased their personal wealth by \$565 billion between March and June.

State intervention has also kept stock markets artificially (and unsustainably) high.

This pandemic is uniquely a product of state-capitalism. Most of the 803,000 deaths must be attributed to state actions—like the cover-up by authorities in Wuhan, China, that unleashed it, or the malfeasance of state officials in the U.S. who sent those infected into nursing homes.

Militaries will also be studying all this closely as a dress rehearsal for future biowarfare.

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.

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