

# NEWS & LETTERS

THEORY / PRACTICE

“Human power is its own end”—Karl Marx

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## Green recovery needs a radical struggle

The disruption caused by the pandemic and lockdown have been so severe that governments around the world scrambled to bolster economies. That immediately became a battle over who would benefit most and who would be left behind—corporations or workers? Oil companies or their “clean” rivals?

### EDITORIAL

“Green recovery” and “green stimulus” became the watchwords of many environmentalists, renewable energy companies, and their political supporters. All this money supposed to jumpstart the economy should be used to move toward climate restoration and away from climate chaos. Calls for a green recovery came from world leaders like the heads of Germany, France and the UN and from development banks, economists, environmentalists and doctors. The International Energy Agency held a “Clean Energy Transitions Summit” in July, which to them means funding renewable energy, in which they include nuclear, which is hardly clean.

**MOVEMENTS PUT CLIMATE ON AGENDA**

The green recovery and the Green New Deal have been put on the political agenda by pressure from social movements, together with the increasingly disastrous impacts of climate change. COVID-19 and pandemics to come are among those disastrous impacts; 2020 was the worst weather disaster year in history.

At the same time, governments and politicians are busy trying to co-opt and water down what the movements thought these things were supposed to mean. They exploit the limitations of the Keynesian green stimulus/recovery concept itself: it is based on the state’s power restoring economic growth, meaning capitalist

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## THOUGHTS FROM THE OUTSIDE

### Epidemic #2: fentanyl

by Faruq

COVID-19 is a disaster. The numbers of cases and deaths are mounting. The vaccine is not getting to enough people to stem the outbreak.

Another scourge stalks the streets of San Francisco.

**SCOURGES: COVID-19 AS WELL AS FENTANYL**

Every day I see the effects of fentanyl. Fentanyl is an opioid 50-100 times more powerful than morphine. It is the favored drug to ease the pain of life on the street among those discarded by society. In the richest part of the country this epidemic is greater than COVID. In San Francisco COVID-19 killed 191 people in 2020, while well over 600 died of drug overdoses (see “Fentanyl Seized, but Fatal ODs Soar on Streets,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, Jan. 3, 2021).

Throughout every day and night, you hear ambulance sirens rushing to victims. But many times they are stuck in traffic, not able to get there in time. At my job, a lot of the people carry and are trained to use Narcan. It was used over 3,000 times<sup>1</sup> in 2020 to bring someone back from the brink of death.

When I approach someone passed out on the street, I feel I should warn them the city will charge them \$3,700 for an ambulance ride. They are more scared of that charge than of whatever is wrong with them. If they can, they get up and run.

**No epidemic has killed more people than capitalism. The people on the street are denied any inkling of freedom, their minimal allocation of food is taken away to pay for those ambulance rides, for example. When you are no longer needed by**

1. This data was collected by San Francisco’s Drug Overdose Prevention and Education Project, which estimates that this is a vast undercount.

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## Double scourge of fascism and COVID-19 shakes the world

### Vaccine rollout inflames global inequalities

by Buddy Bell

In the U.S., the first publicly broadcast injections of Pfizer and Moderna vaccines brought a needed feeling of hope. [Dr. Richard Bates of Alpena, Mich.](#), drove three hours to personally pick up the vaccine allotted to the medical building where he works. “Seeing our staff with tears receive the vaccine was an unbelievable experience, much like delivering a new baby and handing that baby off to parents, who have just spent months...thinking and dreaming and placing their hopes in that baby.”

#### TRUMP’S INDIFFERENT VACCINE ROLLOUT

Sadly, the pace of the rollout has been slow and mired by a volatile mix of poor planning, profit-centered thinking and discrimination, added in with President Donald Trump’s indifference. Three weeks after the first vaccines were approved, only [2.6 million doses](#) had actually been



Illinois Nurses Association members strike the University of Illinois, Chicago, in Sept. 2020 over the COVID-19 deaths of two nurses and a clerk after the hospital refused to provide staff with masks and sufficient staffing to deal with increased patients.

used. At that rate, it would have taken years to vaccinate even half of U.S. residents.

**Worldwide, a rat race ensued. High-income countries cynically cut deals to gobble up the expected vaccines well into the future. An unwillingness to pause drug patents will inhibit the development and manufacture of more drugs, more quickly. Low-income countries will be delayed from starting vaccinations, or will be thrust into the arms of despots, now that Russia, China and India have all begun to roll out their home-team vaccine with [no third-phase trial](#) to test effectiveness. These vaccines have met widespread distrust, cloaked as they are with each national leader’s never-ending effort to shore up his own domestic legitimacy.**

Likewise, President Trump’s moldering necrosis after the election signals that Operation Warp Speed was for him only a strategy for holding onto power. Just as there was very little federal effort exerted to prevent the virus from spreading through the population, not a lot of direction or help has come from the federal government regarding the logistics of getting first and second vaccine doses into the arms of actual people, and especially the people most at risk. This daunting task was dumped on the states with no direction and miserly financial aid.

**Before Trump belatedly signed a Dec. 2020 stimulus bill which provided \$8 billion for pandemic response, the states could only count on getting a combined \$350 million in federal help, meaning that they had to start small. “This is not how you handle the biggest health, economic, political and social crisis the country has faced in decades,” said [Ashish Jha](#), dean of Brown University’s School of Public Health. “The notion that states can efficiently stand up new infrastructure is a fantasy.”**

The holidays saw a sluggish start. Although pharmaceutical companies, regulators, and medical administrators knew for a long time that the vaccines would likely be approved and distributed around the end of 2020, there were [no plans made by government or by private industry to give medical staff more overtime pay](#)

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### Trump’s coup threatens U.S. democracy

by Franklin Dmitryev

The violent far-right coup that failed on Wednesday, Jan. 6, was the predictable—and pre-announced—outcome of a campaign of lies, propaganda, and incitement by Donald Trump, most of the Republican Party, media such as One America News Network, and innumerable far-right groups and individuals. Trump’s double-tongued leadership did not hide its deadly intent, where Nazi swastikas, T-shirts proclaiming a new Civil War and “Camp Auschwitz,” and Confederate and Trump flags mixed with zip ties, a gallows, pepper spray, guns, tactical gear, pipe bombs, and Molotov cocktails. Among them were extremist militia members, current and former police, military and prison guards. The incompetence of thousands of rioters gave cover to the deadly serious, coordinated, military-style plots by a smaller number. They intended “to capture and assassinate elected officials,” according to a court filing by Trump’s Justice Department.

#### POLICE’S BLATANT DOUBLE STANDARD

It is hardly necessary to point out the flagrant, racist double standard in police treatment of this violent assault vs. mostly peaceful demonstrations for Black Lives Matter, universal healthcare, climate justice, human rights for immigrants and so forth. Everyone from President-elect Joe Biden to conservative pundit David Brooks had to admit that Black people would have been met with lethal force, as opposed to the kid gloves that coddled this almost all-white mob that resulted in five deaths.

Some of the Capitol Police acted as accomplices or participants in the assault and occupation of what they are charged with defending. The complicity goes to the top: the Pentagon (which after the event labeled the coup “First Amendment Protests”) beforehand limited deployment of the D.C. National Guard. The Capitol Police assigned inadequate staff and barricades to defend the Capitol. This despite well-known violent plans shouted by the far right on social media for weeks, warnings from the FBI and other agencies, and an hour-long call Rep. Maxine Waters made to the now-resigned head of the Capitol Police the previous week, stressing the threat from these violent groups. Right-wing violence has always enjoyed relative impunity in this country, and even under President Barack Obama’s administration the investigations of right-wing terrorism were sidelined due to pressure from Congressional Republicans.

**Just the day before the assault, a funeral was held in Columbus, Ohio, for Andre Hill, a 47-year-old Black man gunned down by a cop; and marchers in Kenosha, Wisc., protested the prosecutor’s refusal to charge the police officer who shot Jacob Blake, a 29-year-old Black man, in the back seven times in front of his young children on Aug. 23, paralyzing him. It was in the Aug. 25 protests against Blake’s shooting that the local police embraced white supremacist terrorists, one of whom shot and killed two protesters. He was allowed by the cops to walk away, despite people yelling that he had just murdered people.**

Throughout U.S. history the police have largely seen themselves and right-wing terrorists as being on the same side, and “the Other” as the enemy, even if they are peacefully protesting or just walking or driving.

#### THE BIG LIE: A ‘STOLEN’ ELECTION

The fascist worldview, which permeates the Tea Party/Trump-era Republican Party as well as a great deal of the armed enforcers of the state, sees itself as part of the true nation besieged by the Other: Blacks, Native Americans, Latinxs, nonwhite immigrants, women’s liberationists, Queers, climate scientists, striking teachers, labor unions, environmentalists, left-wingers, anyone demanding recognition of their humanity or equality. The big lie that the real threat is Black protesters rather than the Capitol mob<sup>1</sup> goes hand in hand with the big lie that the election was stolen from Trump when the reality is that all the suppression of votes is aimed at people of color and

1. After the mob was ousted, a participant cried, “This is not America. They’re shooting at us. They’re supposed to shoot BLM, but they’re shooting the patriots.” Quoted in “Madness on Capitol Hill,” by Andrew McCormick, *The Nation*, Jan. 7, 2021.

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# Sarah White (Sarah Hamer) 1958-2020

The movement lost a powerful voice for workers' liberty, self-development and freedom when Sarah White died of a heart attack on Oct. 5, 2020. While educated to be a teacher, her whole life changed—as did the lives of workers in South USA—when she took a job at ConAgra catfish processing plant in the early 1980s and a few years later began working at Delta Pride catfish plant in Indianola, Miss. There, Black women, many of them single mothers, made \$240 for a 40-hour week—\$6/hr—where they killed, gutted, filleted, or [skinned 50 to 60 thousand catfish](#)—12 to 25 a minute.

## SARAH LED HISTORIC STRIKE FOR DIGNITY

Sarah, who worked on the “kill line,” helped organize a strike that changed the relationship between catfish workers and owners. She saw helping other workers as her life's work. She made the point many times to us that workers striking wasn't all about the money, “It's about dignity, about being treated with respect.” When talking of the strike at Delta Pride, she said: “It came down to restroom breaks. We got another five or six cents an hour, but the strike centered on bathroom rights. Management told us they gave us six breaks [a week], but since we said no, [they said] we were going to have to go once a day—at lunch-time. They added five minutes to our lunch break and said we would have to go then. We couldn't abide it. We tired of it. The workers couldn't abide it anymore. I've had a [male] supervisor walk into the restroom and tell me, ‘Get up, Sarah. You've been sitting there too long.’ That don't happen no more. The civil rights movement changed a lot of things.”<sup>1</sup>

**In 1990 the workers struck. A thousand and more walked out in a strike that lasted four months. It was the biggest labor action up to that time in Mississippi, and Sarah, as one of its leaders, took on responsibilities for traveling widely and speaking in public to get the issues known. According to the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* (Oct. 8, 1990), she was cheered by a huge crowd when she said that the “plantation mentality, it still exists. We're going down in history as Black women in Mississippi who tried to do something.”**

But that life's work was not confined to unions, of which Sarah had a deep critique. When asked how she felt about being a union organizer, she responded: “It will give me a chance to do what's in my heart. I believe I can make a difference in the state of Mississippi, or wherever they send me, but especially here because this is my home. I know people have been struggling for years and

1. “The Blues in Belzoni,” by Molly Ivins and Lou Dubose, *The Texas Observer*, Oct. 10, 2003.

## ‘The Dangerous Legacy of White Male America’

by Adele

Predictably, some reviewers of *Mediocre: The Dangerous Legacy of White Male America*, a timely book by Ijeoma Oluo, have accused her of saying all white males are mediocre. In reality, she discusses the serious damage caused when we expect white men to have all the leadership roles in a society. The damage is not only to women and people of color whose voices are not heard, and to society, which loses their input, but to white men themselves.

### STEREOTYPES MISLEAD

The stereotypes of whiteness and maleness are associated with positive traits like rationality, competence and success. But to exist, these need opposite stereotypes for blackness and femaleness. Since white males are often given jobs and leadership roles because people believe in these stereotypes, it is not necessary for them to strive for success, develop their talents, or even be competent. Some of these stereotypical traits, such as aggressiveness, are actually counterproductive for leadership roles.

**This has damaged governments and workplaces, which benefit from teamwork and diversity. The notion that strength means always being right and never showing supposed weakness leads to an inability to learn from mistakes or from other people. It also leads to the contradictory but commonly held notion that white males are too “fragile” to handle rapid social progress so Leftist activists should make slower changes.**

Oluo delves into the historical roots of the American white male archetype of dominance and violence. In the 1800s, capitalists accumulated wealth using the forced labor of women and people of color and violently stealing land from Indigenous peoples. They deliberately promoted the myth of the violent hero so their sons would continue using force to maintain and grow the wealth and political power of their families and the U.S. empire. There was a dread the young men would become “soft,” which included having empathy and viewing others as equals. William F. “Buffalo Bill” Cody participated in the genocide of Native Americans, then dramatized it as en-

years to make this an equal, just place for people to grow and not live in the poverty they are living in.

“If I could change Delta Pride—and that's one of the toughest struggles I've been through—there's other plants here I can change. Just think if people in Mississippi had those good benefits and the medical insurance for their kids. Do you see how good it would be? A lot of people took this union job because they could advance materially up the ladder. But if most of those people who took that job took it to change people's whole minds and attitude, then Mississippi wouldn't be so bad like it is.”

### THE IMPORTANCE OF SELF-DEVELOPMENT

The union couldn't satisfy Sarah because she recognized that what was important to her was the concept of self-development—her own as well as the workers she worked and lived with. That is what she wanted for them. When she gave the Welcome to the 1997 Plenum of News and Letters Committees, she put it this way: “I'm still going to work there [at Delta Pride], I'm the same. But it don't make me happy because there's no learning experience there. There's nothing to do, there's no taking on a task and fulfilling it and accomplishing it and putting it on the shelf and saying I'm going on. That's the way I am.

**“I think this is what Raya was talking about when she talked about the ‘quest for universality.’ I just want to see Delta Pride here and one day, News and**

**Letters Committees will be sitting over here as far as in my head, and I will have accomplished learning what I need to learn and know the whole history. So if me and Franklin get to arguing I can shoot back what Raya [Dunayevskaya] said, just as well as he can. That's an accomplishment and I'm the type of person who likes to achieve and it ain't at Delta Pride no more. Marx talked about ‘the absolute movement of becoming.’ That's what I mean when I talk about being self-developing.”**

Sarah White, who wrote for *News & Letters* for many years under the name of Sarah Hamer to honor the Civil Rights giant Fannie Lou Hamer, wanted that self-development not only for herself but for every worker in the Delta and beyond. That's what she devoted her life to as a worker, a union organizer for the United Food and Commercial Workers International Union, an organizer for the Mississippi Workers Center for Human Rights, or as a member of News and Letters Committees.

That Sarah White died so young is a tragedy, not only for those she left behind, but for the future of the freedom movement that had so much to learn and gain from her actions and ideas. She changed the world and made it better and we can honor her by continuing that work.

—Terry Moon

tainment. Numerous adventure fiction writers and the concept of “muscular Christianity” promoted this masculine ideal. President Theodore Roosevelt exploited football for this purpose. Every year, several young wealthy white men died playing it at colleges created to educate them for leadership roles.

### WHERE WHITE SUPREMACY COMES FROM

Oluo describes today's legacies of these histories. The white supremacist movement and paranoia toward immigrants and people of color evolved from colonialism and capitalism. It is inseparable from the dominant, aggressive white male ideal and anti-feminism. Oluo describes working-class white men learning to resent Black laborers when capitalism's need for cheap labor brought them close to the same level. Politicians still exploit their anger at being oppressed alongside people they were told they were supposed to dominate.

Oluo explores politicians' propaganda against women in the workforce although their labor is needed and women need income. Women and people of color are hired to leadership positions and their ideas used only when a business is facing failure, then blamed on its new leaders.

**Oluo explains why right-wingers attack higher education when they would not reject this benefit for their families. This former institution of grooming white men for power is now a place to meet diverse people and learn how governmental and economic systems actually function. She describes the similar white male rage towards Black football players advocating for rights as laborers and against racist police violence. The same rage is expressed by white male liberals who don't seek to understand but to dominate movements of women and people of color.**

Oluo describes how dire the situation is for society. She describes harrowing attacks and harassment of herself and female politicians of color. Her positive message that human beings have created this situation and human beings can change it for the good of all is vital in these increasingly desperate times.

## WOMENWORLDWIDE

by Artemis



Lenn Keller taking photos.

In December, Lenn Keller, a Black lesbian feminist activist, historian, and documentary photographer, died of cancer at age 69. Arriving in San Francisco in 1975, she collected pamphlets, flyers, posters and other memorabilia of the thriving political and social lesbian community, creating the Bay Area Lesbian Archives in 2014. Especially documenting the lives of Black lesbians and other women of color, she was always taking photos, five of which featured in the 2019 group show “Queer California: Untold Stories” at the Oakland Museum of California. She interviewed 80 lesbians for her unfinished documentary “Persistent Desire.” She stated: “Marginalized histories are not often documented. This means that all of us have a distorted sense of who we are... This history... helps us understand how we got to where we are and helps us understand how to deal with the challenges.”

\* \* \*

In December, a group of women brought a \$600 million child pornography lawsuit against MindGeek, the company that owns Pornhub, the internet's largest porn website. The representative of the group, The Children of Pornhub, states a video of her rape at age 12 was posted to the site, which ignored her pleas to remove it. In December, 40 women sued MindGeek for \$80 million for making millions from a sex-trafficking scheme using Pornhub. The site purged over 10 million videos, claiming to crack down on illegal content, although activists found violent videos still on the site. Some credit card companies finally ended or limited services for the site due to pressure from activists.

\* \* \*

In October in Chile, a year of mass protests for wide-ranging reforms resulted in a popular referendum. Citizens voted to replace their dictatorship-era constitution, and in an even more unusual victory, the new one will be written by an assembly of citizens with no politicians. Thanks to the tireless demand of feminist activists, “Never Again Without Women,” half this assembly will be composed of women, setting a groundbreaking global standard for women's inclusion in government. In December, when men in Congress balked, women protested outside the chamber, chanting “We Want Half!” The constitutional convention will also reserve seats for Indigenous peoples, whose lands had been stolen by the government. Activists projected the word “Rebirth” onto the walls of buildings in celebration.

\* \* \*

In November, over 400 Canadian women were notified that they are part of a class action lawsuit to restore their membership and that of their children in First Nations bands. The Indian Act of 1876, with the genocidal intention of assimilating Indigenous women into white culture, gutted their Indian status and membership in First Nations bands upon marriage to a non-status man. In 1985, Canada's federal government found it discriminatory since the same rules did not apply to men. It amended the Act, retroactively restoring status to Indigenous women and their children, but many bands refused to honor it, claiming it interfered with their self-government. Plaintiff Bonnie Bruno brought the suit 14 years ago because her mother had lost status and membership in the Samson Cree Band, causing loss of federal benefits and rights to profit from oil and gas revenues. Other women describe devastation to generations from loss of the right to live on the reserve, causing loss of culture, poverty, homelessness, addiction, and alienation due to racism and loss of family.

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# Pandemic prompts rethinking education

**Detroit**—As schools and colleges resume after the holiday break, both students and teachers are rebelling against the mis-education the mis-handled pandemic has wrought. The majority of the 24 children in a fourth-grade class in Detroit—Black, Latinx and white students—have not tuned in to their virtual class. They’ve dropped out. Their young teacher, in a desperate effort to engage them, tells the two or three who are doing their work, “You can’t talk now”—which discourages them further.

**In Chicago, Mayor Lori Lightfoot ordered teachers and students back to classrooms on the grounds that remote learning was leaving disproportionate numbers of Black and Latinx students behind. But Brentano Elementary School teachers worked outdoors in sub-freezing temperatures**

## Argentine women win abortion rights



The power and scope of Ni Una Menos is seen in this demonstration against violence against women called by the organization in Lima, Peru, on Aug. 13, 2016.

At 4:00 a.m. on Dec. 30, the Argentine Senate finally passed an abortion rights bill, making it legal to terminate a pregnancy in the first 14 weeks. Abortion will be free in government hospitals, crucially important for poor women. The law would halt criminal actions against many hundreds of women who resorted to back-alley, clandestine abortions. This victory was won, not in the Senate that two years earlier had defeated a similar bill, but in the streets, in the organizing, in over ten years of *Encuentros* [mass meetings], and the continual demonstrations of a powerful feminist movement in Argentina.

While the Senate debated and voted, thousands of women of all ages, wearing green clothes, scarves, and paint (the Green Wave), filled the Plaza with drumming, dancing, speeches, discussions and sloganeering: “Legal abortion is social justice!”

### THOUSANDS OF WOMEN IN THE STREETS

We witnessed not only the tension and joy of a single night that became victorious in the early morning, but a social revolution which had brought thousands of women and girls into the streets with their own voices.

Adriana: “I have participated in all the *Encuentros* and among them many young women did not have the vocabulary. But suddenly they seized the concept with impressive force. Before we had hardly had the demand in our language, but today there is not only awareness regarding the right to abortion but also awareness regarding patriarchy. The debate translated into consciousness. There is no turning back.”

**Hopefully, this legalization victory in Argentina will have an impact on movements in other Latin American countries such as El Salvador, which has imposed horrendous criminal penalties on women for having abortions.**

Abortion rights is only one flashpoint in this growing social movement of feminism that is demanding that women have the right to control their own bodies in every realm. The movement is not only in Argentina, but in Latin America as a whole.

In 2015 the call for Ni Una Menos (Not One Less) erupted against femicides—the murders of women for being women. In Mexico, hundreds of thousands of women are involved in Ni Una Menos demonstrations throughout the entire country. March 8, 2020, International Women’s Day, was extended with a nationwide strike on March 9 for women’s rights.

### DEMANDS BEYOND ENDING FEMICIDE

The demands of feminism in Latin America do not stop with abortion rights and the ending of femicide. They extend to all areas of society, particularly labor rights. In the San Quintín Valley of Baja California, supplying fruits and vegetables to the U.S., *la organización de Mujeres Unidas en Defensa de Jornaleras e Indígenas* (Women United in the Defense of Agricultural Day Laborers and Indigenous Women) are working on challenges to working women whose pay is often less than men’s, and who face a double and triple work day in the fields, in the home, and in raising their children.

In Argentina what remains, beyond the positive vote on abortion rights, is a future of rights, conquests and more demonstrations in the streets. “Patriarchy will fall! Feminism will rise!” is the slogan of the Argentine feminist movement.

—Eugene Walker

**because they did not think their building had adequate COVID-19 safety practices.**

Mayor Lightfoot is not wrong to state that remote learning is alienating increasingly large numbers of students. But Chicago teachers feel that the decision to reopen at this time—as COVID-19 cases are rising nationwide after the holiday travels—is not supported by data and is disrespectful to staff and students. “I also want them to stop using equity as an excuse to open buildings when it’s really not safe. That’s not what equity is,” said one teacher.

### POLICY OVER SAFETY

Teachers, parents and students all across the country report similar concerns about student engagement and motivation, beyond the frustrations of technology failures. But some are generating better ideas. One Michigan school superintendent advocates individualized learning for all students, which would require everything from legislation to more funds, to a changed mindset. Another former teacher’s philosophical approach, shared on Facebook, is even more deeply grounded in the students’ needs:

“In our determination to ‘catch them up,’ I fear that we will lose who they are and what they have learned during this unprecedented era. What on earth are we trying to catch them up on?...When the children return to school, they will have returned with a new history that we will need to help them identify and make sense of. When the children return to school, we will need to listen to them. Let their stories be told. They have endured a year that has no parallel in modern times. There is no assessment that applies to who they are or what they have learned. Remember, their brains did not go into hibernation during this year...”

### LEARNING, NOT TESTING

“They need be given as many tools as we can provide to nurture resilience and help them adjust to a post pandemic world.... Our children have so much to share... This will help them—and us—achieve a lot more than can be measured by any assessment tool ever devised.”

**The pandemic and the massive switch to virtual education upended the social and political foundation of education, placing question marks over curriculum, teaching and evaluation methods. Moreover, the deep divides in student achievement are much greater than technological inequities affecting poorer, Black and Brown children. Fundamental assumptions underlying society’s financial support for education and the very purpose of schooling in the U.S. are up for debate.**

Out of this mess comes an opportunity to address basic issues. Most immediately, educators can be thinking about ways to help students reflect and build on what they have learned, in school or out, and to figure out how to allow those experiences to “count.”

—Susan Van Gelder

## Rohingya burned out

Rohingya Muslims have faced extreme hardship at the hands of Burma’s military with the cooperation of the civilian government under once opposition leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, spurred on by Buddhist religious leaders encouraging violence, rape, and genocide against them. The Rohingya Muslims who survived have since 2017 fled Rakhine State in Burma to refugee camps primarily in Bangladesh. They face poverty and restricted movement, and their children have little access to education and face abuse including child marriage.

**Earlier this month, a fire almost completely destroyed over 550 shelters and 150 shops in Nayapara Camp. An investigation is ongoing, and it is uncertain whether shelters will be rebuilt or if the refugees will be relocated. The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) is providing medical care, winter clothing, hot meals and shelter.**

Before that fire some Rohingya were forcibly moved to the remote Bhasan Char Island refugee camp, which Bangladesh leaders deny, and about 99 Rohingya trying to travel to Malaysia were arrested.

**After years of being ignored, including when the persecutions began and other nations and the UN Security Council could have acted to help them, the UN Security Council did issue a statement condemning the attacks by the Burmese government and military.**

Finally, Gambia filed a case in November 2019 with the International Court of Justice, which ruled unanimously in late January 2020 that Burma must prevent all genocidal acts against the Rohingya Muslims and must preserve evidence of genocidal acts. Burma’s military and Aung San Suu Kyi’s government rejected the ruling and still deny that the Rohingya are being persecuted.

To help, you can donate to these organizations specifying your donation is for the Rohingya Muslims: UNHCR at [give.unrefugees.org](http://give.unrefugees.org); Doctors Without Borders at [doctorswithoutborders.org](http://doctorswithoutborders.org).

—Elise

Do you have something to say about labor? In *News & Letters* people in struggle speak for themselves. We want to hear from you. Contact information is on page 9.

## Governor charged in Flint water poisoning

**Flint, Mich.**—Rick Snyder, the former Governor of Michigan, has been charged with two misdemeanor counts of willful neglect of duty. An internal e-mail by Governor Snyder’s former chief of staff, Dennis Muchmore, suggested that the governor was aware of the serious lead problem in Flint’s tap water while the state Department of Environmental Quality was telling Flint residents that the water was safe.

### SNYDER GETS SLAP ON THE WRIST

On Jan. 14 Snyder entered the Genesee County jail through a back entrance for his booking and arraignment. Humiliating as this was, Mr. Snyder escaped the more serious charges facing other defendants. Two are charged with involuntary manslaughter.

The manslaughter counts arise from the death of two men in their eighties from Legionnaires’ Disease, which is a severe form of pneumonia. Prompt treatment with antibiotics usually cures it, although some people experience problems after treatment.

**These charges all stem from the decision by Flint’s former emergency manager, appointed by Snyder, to save money in 2014 by taking water from the Flint River rather than buying water from Detroit. Detroit gets its water from Lake Huron, and a pipeline was installed many years ago by the Detroit system so that Flint would get water from Lake Huron. Flint, like many cities, had lead pipe service lines to residences.**

The water from Lake Huron did not corrode the lead pipes. However, water from the Flint River was polluted with corrosive elements that caused the lead in the pipes to enter the water and exposed the people of Flint to elevated levels of lead, which especially harmed children.

—Dan B.

## Wave of arrests indicts justice in China

Zhang Zhan is an independent journalist who traveled from Shanghai to Wuhan in early February 2020 and, until her arrest in May, documented, through videos shared to YouTube and Twitter, hospital corridors of patients on oxygen and other realities of COVID-19 in China. That exposed as a lie the official line that, under the strong, wise leadership of Xi Jinping, China had stopped the pandemic cold. She was sentenced on Dec. 28 to four years in prison on the regime’s one-size-fits-all charge against dissidents of “picking fights and provoking trouble.”

**Zhang was one of several journalists detained for exposing the life-and-death reality for patients while the official line remained that the Party and government had protected the population.**

She had refused cooperation with arresting authorities, and began a hunger strike shortly after arrest. She endured a forced feeding tube while she was restrained, and refused to appeal her sentence in January. That system of injustice is what impelled millions of marchers in Hong Kong to oppose extradition to China even before it imposed its National Security Law last July 1.

### RUNNING FOR OFFICE NOW SEDITION

Once that law was imposed, arrests of demonstrators have muted the massive street protests of the last two years. The law has ensnared 53 members of the opposition charged with plotting to overthrow the government of Hong Kong for planning a “35+” campaign to try to win a majority on the Legislative Council.

**That would have been an elusive goal when many legislative seats are reserved for corporate supporters of China, under the nominal autonomy that was supposed to last until 2047. But now part of the law decrees that publicly running against a government supporter is an act of sedition.**

Chinese authorities have also arrested 12 people for aiding the escape attempt of prominent dissidents. Sixty years ago, Mao Zedong’s regime criminalized thousands of youth who fled famine by swimming from the mainland to Hong Kong, where they joined the working class building the wealth there.

### UYGHUR SLAVE LABOR

The lame duck meddling of Secretary of State Mike Pompeo is only reinforcing China’s claims of total control over territories—from Taiwan to Xinjiang and Tibet—ever influenced by the Chinese Empire that ended in 1911 or occupied by the People’s Liberation Army. The taint of Trump attaches to Pompeo’s efforts to hamstring the incoming Biden Administration. Pompeo “threw out the rule book” regulating high level meetings with Taiwan, and still could not get a meeting.

More serious, the U.S. unilateral ban on import of cotton and tomatoes from Xinjiang one week before Trump is evicted from the White House could have been imposed one week after Trump took power, or any time that Trump was making a show of waging a tariff war with China. The evidence of China forcing Uyghurs in Xinjiang into labor camps or into mines and fields has long been overwhelming. Choosing to delay sanctions until now only adds to the catalog of petulant actions by which Trump is trying to narrow Biden’s foreign policy options.

—Bob McGuire

## FROM THE WRITINGS OF RAYADUNAYEVSKAYA

*Editor's note: Originally titled "These Uncivilized United States: Murder of Rev. King, Vietnam War," the editorial excerpted here was published in the May 1968 News & Letters. It speaks to King's actual, non-sanitized life and legacy, as well as to the ingrained violence of U.S. racism, including what was seen on Jan. 6 at the U.S. Capitol. Footnotes were added by the editor.*

by Raya Dunayevskaya

The long hot summer began in spring this year with so fast-moving a scenario that neither the startling abdication of LBJ nor his loaded "peace feelers" had time to sink in before the shot that killed Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. reverberated around the world. LBJ's popularity, which had risen late Sunday night with his announcement of de-escalation of the Vietnam War, plummeted down with the news of King's assassination on Thursday, April 4.

No serious commentator abroad thought this was an act of a single individual, insane or just filled with hatred. Everyone took a second look at this racist land where acts of conspiracy to commit murder "and get away with it" are spawned out of an atmosphere emanating from a White House conducting a barbaric war abroad, and a Congress which allows its "illustrious members" to sound like red-necks bent on murder when the "Negro Question" is the issue. Just the week before the assassination, those legislative halls were resounding to demands "to stop King" from leading a Poor People's March into Washington. . . .

Though President Lyndon Johnson ordered the flag flown at half-mast and shed many a crocodile tear, one thing was clear: no overflow of staged tears by the administration could possibly whitewash the Presidency and these uncivilized United States of America. The murder of Rev. King pushed even the Vietnam War off the front pages of the papers as Black revolts struck out in no less than 125 cities. . . .

**The very fabric of American civilization was unravelling so that its racism stood stark naked for all the world to see. When "law and order" was restored, nothing was in the same place, nor will it ever be. . . .**

### POVERTY VS. AFFLUENCE

Though all the "dignitaries" were duly represented at King's funeral, the difference between the pomp and pageantry of the funeral of the assassinated president five years ago and the present mule-drawn carriage bearing the body of Dr. King was stark.

This was due not only to the difference between a president and a "civilian." Nor was it just the difference between a rich man and a poor one; Rev. King wasn't all that poor. He had chosen the mule-drawn carriage as symbol for his Poor People's March on Washington not only to underline the difference between affluence and poverty in this richest of all lands, but mainly to stress the backwardness of the conditions of the Black farmer in this most technologically advanced land.

**The Negro has always been the touchstone of American civilization, exposing the hollowness of its democracy, the racism not only at home but also in its imperialist adventures. And the latest of a long list of martyrs in the battle for freedom was too much flesh of the flesh of the whole of American "civilization" to be capable of cover-up by all the flags flown at half-mast. After the Black man had had his funeral, what then?**

The true measure of both the grief and determination to go on with the civil war for freedom was seen, in one form, in the mass outpouring of 150,000 who were in Atlanta, and, in another form, in the Black revolts in the cities.

### SELF-STYLED 'REVOLUTIONARIES'

Enter the self-styled "revolutionaries" with their depreciation of the role of Dr. King in the Movement. It is the obverse side of the hypocritical mourning by the administration. Parroting the talk of the white power structure, they equate King's life with his stand on non-violence. That isn't why Rev. King was subjected to 30 jailings. It isn't why he earned the most unbridled attack from Congress. And it isn't why he was marked for assassination.

On April 8, when Rev. King's body was still lying in state, one such self-styled "revolutionary"—William Epton—rose to speak to a campus meeting of some 200, mostly white CCNY students. Just because he was a Black man, he had the gall to speak as if he represented the Black community as he yelled "We don't mourn King. . . . We saw King as an obstacle to the Black liberation movement."

**Outside of the inhumanity of such a statement about one man who was struck down at the age of 39, having given his whole adult life to the Movement, the misreading of the history of the Black liberation struggle is self-evident when one considers that Rev. King was murdered because he came down to Memphis to assist Black workers locked in class struggle with the white power structure.**

But this isn't a question only of the past, either that of one man or of the Movement. Rather, it is a question of perspective, of future development, and is not unrepresentative of some Black nationalists and their white

# Uncivilized U.S.: Murder of Rev. King

followers in the so-called New Left. It becomes necessary therefore not only to set the record straight, but what is even more important, to see that the objective movement of history isn't replaced by petty-bourgeois subjectivism—be it expressed in the open air crudely by a William Epton, or more subtly in a vanguardist church by Rev. Albert Cleage.<sup>1</sup> Any voluntarist approach cannot but have tragic consequences for the American revolution that is yet to develop.

### VOICES FROM BELOW: 1956-66

In retrospect, the coincidence of Rev. King's beginnings as a leader of the Montgomery Bus Boycott with the totally new stage of Negro revolt appears, not as accidental, but the right person at the right place at the right time. That is to say, it bespeaks the objective significance of Rev. King's role in that struggle, sparked by the refusal of a Negro seamstress, Rosa Parks, to give up her seat in the bus to a white male.<sup>2</sup>

We didn't need the lapse of a decade before we sensed the historic significance of "the forceful voice of the Alabama Negroes who have taken matters of freedom into their own hands." At the very moment of its happening, we compared the significance of these actions against the white power structure in Alabama to the Hungarian Revolution against Russian Communism, stressing that "the greatest thing of all in this Montgomery, Alabama, spontaneous organization was its own working existence."<sup>3</sup>

**But let us add here that it wasn't only that Rev. King was there. It is that he knew how to listen to the voices from below and, therefore, to represent them in a boycott that lasted 382 long days during which it was in mass assembly some three times a week, daily organized its own transport, moving from a struggle against segregated buses to a demand for hiring Negro bus drivers—and won on both counts.**

If there were those who hadn't recognized this totally new stage of Negro Revolt in 1956, none failed to see, on the one hand, the barbarism of Bull Connor's police dogs, water hoses, electric cattle prods, and, on the other hand, the bravery, daring, and massive persistence of the Negroes in Birmingham in 1963.

Again King was there. This time he tried also to give philosophic expression to the struggle against segregation. In his famous letter from a Birmingham jail to the white clergymen who objected to "illegal acts," Rev. King wrote: "We can never forget that everything that Hitler did in Germany was 'legal' and everything the Hungarian Freedom Fighters did in Hungary was 'illegal' . . . To use the words of Martin Buber, the great Jewish philosopher, segregation substitutes an 'I-it' relationship for the 'I-thou' relationship and ends up relegating persons to the status of things."<sup>4</sup>

Both nationally and internationally, both in relationship to the non-violent tactics here and the more violent phases of the African revolutions, Dr. King had developed to the point where he let nothing stand in the way of the struggle for freedom.

Though the humanist philosophy he then unfolded was quoted from Martin Buber, and not Karl Marx, he was not unaware that the African Revolutions based themselves on the Humanism of Marx.

### ISOLATION

It is true that, by 1965, Rev. King faltered seriously as he was completely baffled by the newer stage of Negro revolt in Harlem and Watts and all the other long, hot summers, marked by the shouts of "Burn, baby, burn!"<sup>5</sup> But the isolation from the Negro masses at that moment was not due solely to his belief in nonviolence.

**Those leaders who made a principle of the need for violence for self-protection were just as far removed from the actual Black revolt in the Northern cities as were those like King who persisted in preaching nonviolence.**

For something a great deal more significant than violence vs. non-violence was involved in the new Black mass revolt. New perspectives were needed. A new comprehensive view; new allies among rank-and-file labor and other white militants to help in the arduous task of tearing the

1. Albert B. Cleage Jr. was a Black nationalist minister active in civil rights in Detroit.

2. The Montgomery, Alabama, Bus Boycott lasted a year, beginning December 1955 after Rosa Parks, an activist and organizer since the 1940s, was arrested for refusing to give up her seat on the bus for a white man. Dr. King rose to prominence after being recruited to lead the boycott.

3. *Marxism and Freedom, from 1776 until Today*, by Raya Dunayevskaya (Humanity Books, 2000), p. 281.

4. "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," April 16, 1963, by Martin Luther King Jr.

5. See analysis in "New Passions and New Forces," chapter 9 of *Philosophy and Revolution*, by Raya Dunayevskaya (Lexington Books, 2003).

whole exploitative society up by its roots.

New leaders did arise, but they travelled everywhere from Cuba to Algiers. They were not where mass power lay—on the streets. They were not working out a new relationship of theory to practice on the basis of it and hence could not give expression to the new **in the masses.**

### 1967-68: THE VIETNAM WAR & DEATH AT HOME

The sickness unto death with the Vietnam War on the part of the youth, both white and Black, at first got but little response from Rev. King. However, there was no doubt that the dream he had of achieving equality for Negroes had turned into a nightmare as he moved North and came up against the mightier white power structure there in the person of Chicago city boss, Mayor Daley.

At the same time, the white youth that had gone South to help in the civil rights struggles had clearly, since 1965, shifted to creating an anti-war movement to oppose the barbaric imperialist war.

**Many a tactic of the earlier fight—sit-ins as well as teach-ins, marches as well as days of protest on an international scale—had been applied by them to the present struggle, which they saw as critical**

**both to their lives and to any movement "to end poverty." With \$20 billion being poured annually into the Vietnam War, the administration's "Great Society" was the forgotten Black waif left both homeless and starving in the backwaters of the South as well as the ghettos of the North.**

Clearly, without a new unifying philosophy of liberation that would relate itself to the new reality, it was impossible to move forward. The new voices of revolt in the

North as well as Virginia and Mississippi that had not been heard in 1965 were finally heard to say "Hell no, we won't go!" in 1967.

### UNITING MOVEMENTS

Dr. King came out against the war and tried uniting the two movements fighting the administration. At once, he became the target of the most slanderous campaign which showed also its arrogance in telling him to keep hands off other than "Negro problems." In this, the administration was joined by the leaders of the NAACP and Urban League. Gone was any pretense to Black unity. Gone was "approval" of King as a man of nonviolence. The deep-freeze against "the war on poverty" was no longer restricted to Southern bourgeois but was the dominating line of the Presidency.

**It is this atmosphere of capitalistic monolithism that Rev. King confronted as he planned what became his last and greatest battle: to combine the poor—Black and white, Indian and Mexican American—in a massive march on Washington that would not only coincide with the days of protest against the Vietnam War, but also promised to continue till the whole white power structure was disrupted; civil disobedience that would peacefully revolutionize society by masses in motion. Thereby Dr. King courted death.**

It was not King who was the "obstacle" to Black liberation. It was the capitalistic system. The "guerrillas" had far less a revolutionary perspective with their smaller goals and elitist concepts. Whether the march would have developed to keep things moving, to bring "orderly" government to a halt, it is impossible now to say. What is clear is that the threat of the march kept the administration on tenterhooks. All sorts of "new politics," too, was brought in to bring pressure upon King to direct the movement into electoral channels—and he seemed to begin to think in these terms himself.

### BLACK AND WHITE

But all was still in flux, masses were in motion if not in the Movement; white labor was forced to help Black labor at least on specific issues, and not only with finances but a promise to bring "thousands" to Memphis! The atmosphere was charged further as it became clear that President Johnson, while declaring for de-escalation [in the Vietnam War], had in fact embarked on the greatest escalation, although within a more "restricted" area.

**The civilians who died were not all in Vietnam. One was gunned down in Memphis and 46 more were killed, 2,600 injured and 21,270 arrested in the week of Black revolt that followed King's assassination.**

It is true that all that Dr. King had achieved through the years was but prologue. But it is prologue to a drama of liberation that is unfolding daily. His greatness lay in recognizing the objective movement of history and aligning himself with it. Precisely because it was both objective and had masses in motion, it is sure to continue on a high historic level till society is reconstructed from the bottom up.

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Martin\_Luther\_King\_Jr.\_St\_Paul\_Campus\_U\_MN.jpg



Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. speaks against the Vietnam War at University of Minnesota in St. Paul, April 27, 1967.

# Trump's coup threatens U.S. democracy

continued from p. 1

young people. The big lie of a stolen election is instantly credible to anyone with a core belief that only white voters have a right to participate in democracy. The fact that the White Christian Nation/Other split overrides class struggles makes it useful to the ruling class at times of potential working-class unrest. For decades plutocrats have funded the Christian Right and other racist, homophobic, anti-immigrant and misogynist groups in exchange for lower taxes, deregulation and union-busting.

**White supremacy's reaction to Black revolt is at the heart of the fascist urge to civil war expressed on Jan. 6. Fascist currents were inflamed by the election of the first Black U.S. president; by the boldness of the revolts announcing that Black Lives Matter, from Ferguson, 2014, to Minneapolis, 2020, as well as the fact that so many white youth joined the 2020 revolt; and by the resulting outpouring of Black organizing and votes that played a key part in ousting Trump in the November election and two pro-Trump senators in the Jan. 5 Georgia runoffs. What they disregard is the skyrocketing toll of the pandemic, which killed almost 4,000 on the day of the maskless insurrection.**

Even after the police escorted Trump's cannon fodder out of the Capitol and Congress resumed the certification of the presidential election, eight senators and almost two-thirds of Republican House members voted to reject Trump's electoral loss. Even those Republicans who spoke out against that rejection, as well as many of the Democrats, obscured the nature of the fascist assault behind rhetoric about states' rights and the republic's hallowed institutions, none less sacred than the anti-democratic electoral college that delivered vote losers Trump and George W. Bush to the White House—an institution designed to prevent direct democracy and to defend slavery.

## MASS BASE FOR FASCISM THEN AND NOW

Senators Josh Hawley and Ted Cruz, Ivy League-educated lawyers with supreme ambitions who are con artists as fake as Donald Trump, spearheaded the effort to block Biden's ascent by proposing a commission on the model of the one that settled the 1876 Hayes-Tilden election. They failed to mention its role in setting the stage for Jim Crow. However, the many commentaries pointing that out portrayed it as a trade of the end of Reconstruction for a Republican presidency. The real arrangement was described in *American Civilization on Trial*: "1877, the year the Federal troops were removed from the South, was the year they were used to crush the railroad strikes stretching from Pennsylvania to Texas."<sup>2</sup>

No longer the party of emancipation, the Republicans were already the party of Northern capital, which faced labor so revolutionary that 1877 became the year of the first general strike in the U.S.<sup>3</sup> Removing the troops from the South opened the floodgates for the racist violence there that had already been rife in the 1876 election and was used to put a bloody end to Reconstruction and institute a new era of near-slavery. That is the model for Cruz, Hawley and their allies.

**The confluence of events from outside and inside the Capitol dome shows that there is a mass base for fascism, together with a highly organized base not only in the openly fascist groups present in the mob but also in the Republican Party, in government, in mass media such as Fox News and the even-more-pro-Trump media like NewsMax and OANN, and in social media—despite the bans on Trump and on Parler, the social network favored by the far right. It would be foolish to assume that the coup's defeat means that this base will go away.**

Ruth Ben-Ghiat, a historian of fascism, warned: "If there are not severe consequences for every lawmaker and Trump government official who backed this, every member of the Capitol Police who collaborated with them, this 'strategy of disruption' will escalate in 2021."<sup>4</sup> And yet, such severe consequences hardly seem likely. Internationally, the trend of rising fascism parallels that in the U.S.

Why now? Extreme reactionary elements dreaming of violent "revolution" have long subsisted in U.S. and European society, but mainly at the fringes. Recall what Raya Dunayevskaya wrote in 1980 about the religious Right's rush to power:

"The real point is this: the totality of the crises, es-

2. *American Civilization on Trial: Black Masses as Vanguard*, by Raya Dunayevskaya (News and Letters, 2003), p. 43.

3. See our Marxist-Humanist pamphlet *Then and Now: On the 100th Anniversary of the First General Strike in the U.S.*, by Terry Moon and Ron Brokmeyer (News and Letters, 1977).

4. Quoted in "From Charlottesville to the Capitol: How Right-wing Impunity Fueled the Pro-Trump Mob," by Lois Beckett, *The Guardian*, Jan. 8, 2021.

pecially since 1973-74—and by no means only the Arab-Israeli war, but the economic crisis that resulted from the oil embargo—has shown that the undercurrent of revolt may, and in some cases did, lead to revolution. It is this, especially as it is evolving in the last year, which has led the capitalist rulers to flirt with Nazism and occultism all over again.

"Occultism has ever been the escape from reality, and since it doesn't have quite as obnoxious an odor as Nazism, non-taxable dollars are spent on that electronic miracle [televangelism] to bring the message to the public."<sup>5</sup>

In the past decade, occultism and Nazism have spewed their noxiousness side by side, sometimes together. In this they have been empowered by money from billionaires and millionaires and the think tanks and fake grassroots organizations funded by that

money; right-wing media, politicians and pundits; social media amplifying their propaganda, not out of sympathy so much as compatibility with their basic business model of hijacking people's attention and behavior through a scientifically honed apparatus of manipulation.

## CAPITALISM BREEDS REACTIONARY IDEOLOGY

This vast network of support for far-right ideology and organizing occurs in the context of capitalism in chronic crisis and stagnating or declining wages for the majority of the working class. Beyond wages and benefits, living conditions have been decaying, including increasing isolation and fraying of community. That is partly caused by the deliberate destruction of working-class organizations as a central aspect of the ruling-class offensive to shore up the rate of profit by undermining working-class power and increasing what Marx called the rate of exploitation, that is, taking more for profit and allowing less in wages and benefits. All of this has been exacerbated by the pandemic. A key part of the capitalist offensive is *ideological*, and inseparable from it is the cancerous growth of mass incarceration since the 1970s.

**But why should decaying conditions of life and labor, and massive discontent among the working class and the middle class, be harnessed by racism and fascism rather than lead to revolution, as has happened in some earlier periods? Why should some class discontent be diverted into delusional scapegoating of the Other, rather than class struggle joining with all freedom struggles to tear down and remake this rotten society?**

Many commentators have pointed to the promotion of the far right, as just detailed. Some have noted also the capitulation of the center, both Democratic and Republican parties as well as "non-partisan" news media, social media, and so forth.

## THE LEFT'S PHILOSOPHIC VOID

But there is a third crucial element: the ideological weakness of the Left, what Dunayevskaya identified as its philosophic void. It is this void on the Left that ceded the field for the Democratic Party and liberal democracy to pose as the alternative to fascism, even though they may all think they understand Marx's point from his March 1850 Address to the Communist League on revolution in permanence:

"The relationship of the revolutionary workers' party to the petty-bourgeois democrats is this: it cooperates with them against the party which they aim to overthrow; it opposes them wherever they wish to secure their own position....But they themselves must contribute most to their final victory, by informing themselves of their own class interests, by taking up their independent political position as soon as possible, by not allowing themselves to be misled by the hypocritical phrases of the democratic petty bourgeoisie into doubting for one minute the necessity of an independently organized party of the proletariat. Their battle-cry must be: *The Permanent Revolution*."<sup>6</sup>

What sort of banner has been raised by the Left that would show the masses a true alternative to both fascism and the crumbling capitalist society that fascism pretends to be an answer to? In truth the Left has mostly failed to raise a clear banner at all; a vocal segment is more interested in supporting "anti-imperialist" monsters like Syria's Bashar al-Assad than addressing or listening to the U.S. working class, and a great deal of the Left is more interested in unity of the Left as the supposed answer to

5. *Crossroads of History: Marxist-Humanist Writings on the Middle East*, by Raya Dunayevskaya (News and Letters, 2013), pp. 86-87.

6. "Address of the Central Committee to the Communist League," by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, March 1850, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1847/communist-league/1850-ad1.htm>. See analysis of this in *Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution*, by Raya Dunayevskaya (University of Illinois Press, 1991), pp. 158-62, where a slightly different translation is used.

the Right than in unity of the movement from theory with the movement from practice, and thus accept the progencide Left as a legitimate part of their "unity"—just as they often end up capitulating to the Democratic Party in practice, even moments after intoning that there is no difference between the two big capitalist parties.

**The fact is that the Left in general has no confidence in the self-activity of the masses reorganizing society, which is unseparated from their lack of confidence in the power of the Idea, that is, of philosophy of revolution.**

The fundamental problem is that "the third force... truly independent, truly original in the sense in which Marx made it the original world outlook of the class that would put an end to all classes, has not put its stamp on world development."<sup>7</sup> What it shows is "the need to unfurl our own banner of Marxist Humanism, and stand only under that without deviation of 'meanwhile' doing 'something' for the general movement, [otherwise] we will... have no solid theoretical foundation which *others* will be compelled to come to if they wish this truly new society.... We must concretize the theory where it is the life and activity of the masses aspiring to freedom."

Concrete projection of that kind of liberatory banner—centered on both the necessity and the potentiality of a new society on truly human foundations, in which all people could flourish as human beings in the movement of self-development—is what is needed if we are not to be thrown right back into more oscillations between fascist horrors and the crumbling "normal" of capitalist liberal democracy.

7. This and the following passage are quoted from Raya Dunayevskaya's May 5, 1961, Weekly Political Letter, "The Recent Growth of the CP's in Western Europe and Especially So in Great Britain," #2913-2915 in the Raya Dunayevskaya Collection (in <http://rayadunayevskaya.org/ArchivePDFs/2906.pdf>).

## Race & the Capitol mob

**Los Angeles**—On Jan. 6, armed Trump supporters invaded the Capitol building in Washington, D.C., to stop the U.S. Congress counting of state electoral college votes.

Some police were part of the problem. One Los Angeles police officer stated that he attended the rally at the national mall but did not go to the Capitol building. A town in West Virginia put two officers on leave. Police from Seattle and New York took part in the mob. Some Capitol Police opened gates for the invaders while some wore MAGA hats.

## RACISM: 'THE STORY OF OUR LIVES'

Long-time progressive Congresswoman Maxine Waters, representing South Los Angeles, stated on Pacifica radio on Jan. 13: "This is the story of our lives: systemic racism against Black people." Congresswoman Karen Bass lambasted the president for "inciting a coup," stating: "The people breaking into the Capitol are the same people screaming about law and order when there are Black Lives Matter protests."

**LZ Granderson, a Black writer for the Los Angeles Times, quoted Golden State Warriors forward Draymond Green on the night of Jan. 6: "It just goes to show, the policing system was built against Black and Brown people."**

One of the first functions of the police, which was formed in the U.S. during the abolition movement prior to the Civil War, was to retrieve runaway slaves in the North and return them to Southern plantation slave masters.

The *Los Angeles Times* reported that, on the same day as the Capitol was mobbed, Berlinda Nibo, a Black woman, and her friends stumbled upon a pro-Trump rally in downtown Los Angeles. After expressing her anti-Trump views, they left. When she realized her cell phone was missing, she returned alone to look for it and was surrounded, called the N and B words, was pepper-sprayed in her eyes while her arms were held immobile at her sides from behind. A group of Los Angeles police nearby did nothing. Only when her friend returned to look for her were they able to walk away. A Black man was also severely beaten at the Capitol.

**LZ Granderson stated: "Yes—they are actually blaming Black People" for the Jan. 6 invasion of the Capitol. Republican Congressman Tom McClintock stated: "If we prosecuted Black Lives Matter and Antifa rioters across the country...this incident may not have happened at all."**

The extremist white supremacist followers of Trump are against the Black and Brown working class.

—Basho

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## TRUMPIST COUP AND FASCIST THREAT

Many who participated in mobbing the Capitol don't believe the election was stolen. How many of the 130+ House Republicans who voted against Biden's certification actually believe that? How many Republican senators, including McConnell and Graham, who for weeks refused to recognize Biden as president-elect, actually believed there was any fraud? I think few to none. They, like the mob that took over the Capitol, were simply using the lie as a justification to make sure white supremacy continues to dominate. They are enraged that they lost, that seven million more Americans rejected their overt message of white supremacy and authoritarianism. That told the white males, "You're not special."

**Anti-racist  
Chicago**

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Every day as more of the invaders of the Capitol who on Jan. 6 attempted a coup to install Trump get publicly identified, the arrestees turn out to be overwhelmingly prosperous and politically well-connected, not the forgotten white workers that so many news outlets have told us form the MAGA base. A tech company CEO, a real estate agent flying to D.C. by private jet, lawyers, bankers, cops and QAnon legislators vastly outnumbered the scattered skilled tradesman and sanitation worker arrested. This just confirms the numbers from the 2016 election, when analysts determined that higher education and higher income both correlated with higher rates of voting for Trump.

**Retired Teamster  
Chicago**

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The Republicans have won only one popular vote for president in over 30 years. That has caused them to believe that their only way forward is through fraud and overthrow of the existing system. Thus the attack on the Capitol. This was a partial failure of the Citizens United court decision because no amount of misinformation is convincing the populace that Republicans represent them. While the party may fail, the lobbyists just switch their money from bribing Republicans to bribing Democrats. We are seeing this already. At some point, a strong emphasis on the problem of Citizens United's connection to the Capitol attack needs to be drawn—that it was the massive amount of money in politics that drove elected officials to seek the money rather than follow the Constitution or work for the common good.

**David  
Marin County, Calif.**

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All this mention of "banana republics" in regard to the mobbing of the U.S. Capitol is just one more racist slur against Latin Americans. It was after all the U.S.'s imperialist adventures which forced countries to grow bananas, sugar cane, and other mono-agricultural crops to serve the U.S.'s own interests.

**Anti-imperialist  
Mexico City**

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In an age where citizens have unfettered access to information, it's astounding how anyone can find their own "truths" about the world. The politicians should be ashamed of themselves for stoking the flames of ignorance for their own gain. Trump is the worst of them. All this unsubstantiated foolishness about voting fraud only serves to strengthen his image with his constituents. Worse, it becomes even more fodder for conspiracy theories.

**Musician  
Chicago**

\*\*\*

What happened at the Capitol was a fascist, white supremacist movement which Trump and the Republicans incited and helped build for years. They tried to strip voters of their will to make the U.S. less fascist, racist, sexist, homophobic and xenophobic. Our flawed democracy matters and must be preserved while we fight to make it real. But this attempted coup is going to harm the Left and prop up undeserved and abstract reverence to "our institutions" and "democracy." Our institutions and sham of a democracy must be transformed for the better, not blindly worshipped. Civil disobedience is not the same as terrorism and it is sometimes

# READERS' VIEWS

right to stop the government from functioning and even to overthrow it.

**Feminist  
Chicago**

## BLACK REVOLT AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS



Both the presidential and the Senate Democratic victories in Georgia were driven by hard Black grassroots work organizing hundreds of thousands of Black and Latinx voters, who resisted the big lies of election fraud and the myth of their own apathy. The massive numbers participating in Black Lives Matter protests of both Black and white supporters—mostly young—surprised the organizers and the whole world. They successfully resisted right-wing attempts to demonize them to the mainstream media. And after exclaiming of what happened to white rioters at the Capitol: "If that was me, I'd be dead!" they are determined to keep up the pressure not to let the establishment once more sweep them under the rug (or the bus).

**Community activist  
Detroit**

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Stacey Abrams's fair elections group is the face of a social movement that has kept U.S. democracy from dying, giving the new administration a chance to not be totally stonewalled by flipping the Senate, even as the Black movement continues to put that democracy on trial. Fascists like Josh "Howly," who gave the thugs a raised fist and tried to achieve trashing the election from pure legal casuistry from the inside, are learning from these rehearsals for the future.

**Observer  
Oakland, Calif.**

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"On Jan. 14, Detroit's 36th District Court Judge Larry Williams, Jr., dismissed without prejudice all criminal cases on his docket against all Black Lives Matter protesters arrested during this past summer: a total of over 40 cases involving 30 protester defendants. Most of these cases involved protesters arrested during the initial weekend of protests following the police murder of George Floyd...and also some protesters arrested for blocking Detroit school buses, to prevent them from picking up school children for dangerous in-person school sessions during the pandemic."

This is from a press release from the Detroit and Michigan National Lawyers Guild. This victory was made possible by the work of the Detroit Coordinated Defense Coalition, which includes National Lawyers Guild Detroit and Michigan Chapter, Detroit Justice Center, National Conference of Black Lawyers, Neighborhood Defender Service of Detroit, the Wayne County Criminal Defense Bar Association and Michigan Liberation.

**D. Miller  
Detroit**

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It is long overdue that, just before the new year, Major League Baseball included in its statistical record the accomplishments from players in the Negro Leagues who were barred from the "white" teams for over half a century. The cutoff of 1948 means games in 1952 won't change the stats of Henry Aaron, whose death we just learned of, but his 23 years were evidence that racism did not end when Black players finally got jobs in MLB, especially when Aaron was about to catch Babe Ruth's home run total in 1974. Aaron's whole family endured constant racist taunts and death threats. But then renowned Detroit Tigers broad-



caster Ernie Harwell, who was raised in the segregationist South, wrote a song, "Move Over Babe, Here Comes Henry," to tell the racists and traditionalists to shut up.

**Baseball fan  
Detroit**

## RIGHT'S WAR ON THE MIND

The far right's totalitarian assault on our minds is just as important as their physical violence. Trump's "1776 Commission" is a direct retaliation against Black Lives Matter and the 1619 report it inspired in *The New York Times*. The absurdity of its historical claims—justifying slavery and at the same time exonerating the Founders for condoning and practicing it, while attacking all anti-racist, anti-sexist, LGBTQ and pro-labor movements—is a demand to surrender rational thinking in obedience to the dictates of authority. Meanwhile, even after Trump left office, Florida arrested Rebekah Jones on trumped-up charges. She is the dissident scientist fired by the state for telling the truth about the pandemic.

**Environmentalist  
Southern California**

## LOVE IS LOVE

I hate that it has to be such an ordeal for someone to love who they love. It's really unfortunate. I am grateful that our country doesn't have the hateful leadership we were under. Hopefully, we'll find peace amongst one another as a country.

**LGBTQ+ Advocate  
Elgin, Ill.**

## THE UNFINISHED BATTLE

With Biden's election the battle is only half-done. We know that he will not advance a working-class agenda. We know that, despite their protestations, the Democrats and Republicans are merely different sides of the same corrupt capitalist coin. Together, they constitute a U.S. empire that must be toppled if humankind is to survive. While the odds may seem against us now, remember Tom Paine's words: "Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph."

**Retired postal worker  
Kalamazoo, Mich.**

## WOMEN'S LIBERATION

In the USA the right to abortion and birth control needs to be explicitly legally based on women's right to control our own lives and therefore bodies.

**Elise  
Chicago**

## WHAT IS CAPITALISM? WHAT IS SOCIALISM?

Adam Smith had a theory that constant capital eventually dissolves into consumption by labor. This obscures class differences. Racism has been inherent throughout U.S. history. The have-nots are much more Black and Brown people of color. Hard-working people, but poor, and Marx's theories show why. Blacks are more outside the system than any other group of people. COVID-19 hits Black and Brown people at higher percentages.

**Activist  
Los Angeles**

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When the rate of profit declines, that doesn't mean capitalism stops. Capitalism keeps going. It controls the means of production. Capitalists cannot escape from the hope of revolution. They cannot escape environmental limits. There's been the highest number of hurricanes this year,

the highest intensity of fires.

Production is a human relation. It becomes a social relation between capitalist and worker. Our vision of the new society should be a way to paint the society so people can work together (freely associated labor) for the benefit of society, which is at the same time the benefit of the individual. It doesn't mean a few people decide, but requires cooperation among people to bring a non-capitalist society. What ambience do we have to create for people to come up with these human ways of relating?

**Mannel  
Los Angeles**

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I heard a woman on the radio talking about a more collaborative society based on Indigenous traditions: allowing for people not to have to work more than four hours a day, to develop their creativity, family/friend relationships. She was talking like all this was a new idea. Actually, it's even older than Marx. He looked historically at different societies like the Iroquois. He saw something important about their social relations. Early socialists thought monopoly capitalism would let factory workers be more highly organized, becoming so well-structured as to bring about a strong movement. Pro-labor and anti-war organization would then automatically destroy capitalism. Raya Dunayevskaya knew that was not enough. The events of the day are teaching and learning opportunities for what type of freedom people are asking for.

**Anna Maillon  
Los Angeles**

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In Marx's time socialism was anti-capitalist, but when Bernie Sanders talks about democratic socialism, it's about getting socialism within capitalism. He never spelled out what that means. The 1905 Russian Revolution gave birth to a new form of workers' organization, the soviet or workers' council. Well, the Soviet Union became a totalitarian society. The



soviet was supposed to give the working class power to make decisions, and they had no power under the USSR or Chinese systems. The actions of the workers created the conditions for Marx to work out theory during the time he lived, but the intellectual movement in 1905 or the counterpart for Communist China failed that test.

**Basho  
Los Angeles**

## RAY BAZMORE

I extend to News and Letters Committees comrades my deep condolences on the passing of Ray Bazmore. I knew him only briefly, having visited with him during the U.S. Social Forum, the Centenary for Raya Dunayevskaya, and the services for his wife Grace, all held in Michigan. He was very kind to me and, as was Grace, a true worker for a human society. They're both missed.

**Activist  
Chicago**

## To our incarcerated readers

Prisonrats sometimes choose to return an issue to us undelivered, but if you have been moved—to another prison, or within the same prison—the USPS will *not* forward newspapers. Help us keep *N&L* in your hands by letting us know your change of address, including when you are released. When you leave prison your donor subscription can continue to your new address for one additional year.

We welcome your contributions to *N&L* and for our website. There are some things we cannot provide. We do not match up pen pals. *N&L* cannot help prisoners with individual legal cases, and we cannot offer legal advice or access to attorneys. This paper is a place where the voices of people engaged in struggles inside and outside prison walls can be heard speaking for themselves.

**WHAT IS PHILOSOPHY?  
WHAT IS REVOLUTION?**

This excellent piece of writing by Dunayevskaya, "What Is Philosophy? What Is Revolution?" (Nov.-Dec. 2020 *N&L*) comes to a point near the end where she is dissecting Hegel's philosophy. In the process she compares Hegel's Divine (maybe: religious force) to human thought. Then she says that human reason is superior as the motive force in history. I don't understand why she finds the distinction necessary. Is Divine so limited as not to embody Reason?

**Buddy Bell  
Indiana**

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"What Is Philosophy? What Is Revolution?" is a sober reminder of the organic link between the dialectic (emancipatory philosophy) and the actuality of revolution. It was not alone an excursion into the relation of philosophy and revolution at the time of the French Revolution, the 1848 Revolutions and the Russian Revolutions of 1905 and 1917. Nor alone a look at the greatness and limitations of Lenin, Trotsky and Luxemburg in relation to Marx as philosopher of permanent revolution. Rather, What Is Philosophy? What Is Revolution? were questions of Dunayevskaya's day when a narrow anti-imperialism was being substituted for the possibility of uniting philosophy and revolution.

What of our day and the near-fascism of Trumpism and, at the same time, the rise of new passions and forces for the reconstruction of society on human foundations, as with Black Lives Matter and its allies? But have we begun the needed full discussion of emancipatory philosophy that, in fusion with such passions and forces, can lead to the fullness of revolution? It is here where Dunayevskaya's provocative discussion can be of great service.

**Eugene Walker  
Mexico City**

**PRISONERS' QUEST FOR  
SELF-DEVELOPMENT**

We are all part of society, whether living in the free world or behind the walls. As part of society, our voices and votes deserve to be heard. The time has come for disenfranchisement of the incarcerated masses to end!

**Prisoner  
Newport, Ark.**

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I am an avid student of history, social sciences, economics and metaphysical thought and practice. I read excerpts from the writings of Marx, Hegel and Raya Dunayevskaya, but often feel I have gained an incomplete review. My desire to gain an understanding which will influence my life is genuine. To do this I need more access to credible, logical and detailed thinkers and writers who engage in subjects unpopular to the masses.

**Prisoner  
Columbia, S.C.**

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*N&L* has helped me mature in a broken system that sends juveniles to die in prison. I, too, was a part of the majority of prisoners that get lost in the hate and violence of this place and take it out on fellow prisoners. Now I understand that this system was built just for that, to keep us apart. It is when we unite that they get scared. And thanks to y'all, I now see the real Amerika. Thank you for opening my eyes to the truth of the world. ¡Que viva la revolución!

**Prisoner  
Kenedy, Texas**



**VOICES FROM BEHIND BARS**

At Crowley County Correctional Facility, run by CoreCivic, a private for-profit company, the kitchen is run by Trinity Services. Other than Trinity employees, all the workers are prison slave laborers, forced to work in the kitchen. If a prisoner refuses a kitchen "job" when ordered to work there, he is written up, put in orange pants, and has privileges restricted as punishment. Trinity Services is owned by the Compass Group in the UK. On their website is a statement that the company is opposed to slavery. Can you say hypocrisy?

**Prisoner  
Olney Springs, Colo.**

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What about letting more lifers out without being so restrictive? There are a lot of us who have changed but are continually denied parole. They keep using

the insight to our behavior as a reason. I have shown them in my board hearing but I am being denied because I haven't voiced it the way they want to hear it. It's called articulate?

**Latino prisoner  
Coalinga, Calif.**

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It is funny how one prison in California allows property but at the next prison you're forced to take what you just bought or received and give it away because the prison does not allow it. However, we are all subject to the state corrections department rules in every prison. This only screws the inmates and their families for money and hardship.

**Prisoner  
Corcoran, Calif.**

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The fiscal misery of prisoners' families has become a cottage industry. California prisonrats created a program with JPay, which is owned by Securus (see "ACCESS/KEEFE robs prisoners' families," May-June 2018 *N&L*), which is owned by Abry Partners. CalPERS, the pension fund for California public employees including prisonrats, has over \$40 million invested in Abry. Prisonrats set up a very lucrative scheme in which JPay extends its carceral conglomerate tentacles even further into the pockets of prisoners' families and friends. Securus is already the leading telecommunications company to prisons and jails in the U.S. Now prisoners for a fee can receive or send email to "approved" family and friends. JPay provides the primary screening of all such communications and "intelligence gathering"! Prisoners will be allowed to purchase what media prisonrats decide to allow. Sadly, the profitability of managing to maintain large prisoner populations draws substantial investment that has made many very wealthy, adding to the continual promotion of mass incarceration.

**Brian Keith Barnett  
Wasco, Calif.**

**WHY READ N&L?**

Your paper is a deep educational paper. I have been locked in a cell and even though I am aware of what's up in the world I still would like to know more especially how this new administration is treating my Latina Sisters and Latino Brothers as well as my African Brothers

and Sisters. I like to be ahead of the oppressor mentally and physically.

**Prisoner  
Shirley, Mass.**

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For a long time I have viewed the capitalistic nature of this country and the consumeristic nature of many of its citizens. As a Buddhist, I denounce both but have learned that I stand for a new Humanism. As such, I was hoping you could send me a copy of the Constitution of News and Letters Committees. Under its barbaric rule, the Dept. of Corrections has taken new steps intended to make getting mail harder.

**Prisoner  
Collegeville, Penn.**

\*\*\*

I'd like you to keep me on your mailing list, because it's an enlightening and knowledgeable paper to keep me up on issues, as well as give me positive motivation to self-advocate. Thank you for the support, love and concern.

**Prisoner  
Sacramento, Calif.**

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Thank you, *N&L*, also all the donors who make this paper happen. We look forward to every issue. I'm not going anywhere for the next few years and would like to keep growing with you.

**Prisoner  
Beaumont, Texas**

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Thank you for your continuing coverage of world events from the Marxist-Humanist perspective, which is invaluable and refreshing. Please divide the enclosed money order for a subscription renewal for me plus a subscription for a prisoner who cannot pay. The insightfully multi-dimensional, multi-perspective, oft thought-provoking publication is invariably a pleasure.

**Subscriber  
West Virginia**

*TO OUR READERS: Can you donate \$5 for a prisoner who cannot pay for a subscription to N&L? It will be shared with many others. A donation of \$8 pays for a subscription plus the Pelican Bay Hunger Strikers pamphlet to be sent to a prisoner. Prisoners are eligible to continue their free subscriptions when they first get released, a time when the system tries to make them forget the struggle.*

**SELECTED PUBLICATIONS FROM NEWS & LETTERS**

**by Raya Dunayevskaya**

- Marxism and Freedom: from 1776 until Today**  
*Foreword by Joel Kovel* \$24.95
- Philosophy and Revolution: From Hegel to Sartre and from Marx to Mao** \$24.95
- Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution** 1991 edition.  
*Foreword by Adrienne Rich* \$24.95
- Russia: From Proletarian Revolution to State-Capitalist Counter-Revolution** \$24.95
- Marx's Philosophy of Revolution in Permanence for Our Day** \$24.95
- Women's Liberation and the Dialectics of Revolution: Reaching for the Future** \$24.95
- The Power of Negativity: Selected Writings on the Dialectic in Hegel and Marx** \$24.95
- Crossroads of History: Marxist-Humanist Writings on the Middle East** \$10.00
- The Marxist-Humanist Theory of State-Capitalism** \$10.00
- The Philosophic Moment of Marxist-Humanism: Two Historic-Philosophic Writings** \$3.00  
paperback, \$10.00 hardcover
- American Civilization on Trial: Black Masses as Vanguard** 40th anniversary edition \$10.00
- Marx's Capital and Today's Global Crisis**  
Includes critiques of Ernest Mandel and Tony Cliff \$8.00
- Nationalism, Communism, Marxist-Humanism and the Afro-Asian Revolutions** \$5.00
- Guides to Collection and Supplement to Raya Dunayevskaya Collection: Marxist-Humanism: A Half Century of Its World Development**  
Full description of 17,000-page collection \$5.00

*Dunayevskaya en Español*

- Marxismo y libertad** \$10.00
- Filosofía y revolución** \$10.00
- Rosa Luxemburgo, la liberación femenina, y la filosofía marxista de revolución** \$10.00
- Una trilogía de revolución todo en un solo libro: Marxismo y libertad; Filosofía y revolución; y Rosa Luxemburgo la liberación femenina y la filosofía marxista de la revolución** \$25.00
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- El poder de la negatividad: Escritos sobre la dialéctica en Hegel y Marx** \$10.00
- Contradicciones históricas en la civilización de Estados Unidos: Las masas afroamericanas como vanguardia** \$8.00

**by Charles Denby**

- Indignant Heart: A Black Worker's Journal**  
Includes Afterword by Raya Dunayevskaya \$14.95

**by Eugene Gogol**

- Towards a Dialectic of Philosophy and Organization** \$27.95
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*Other publications*

- The Coal Miners' General Strike of 1949-50 and the Birth of Marxist-Humanism In the U.S.**  
by Andy Phillips and Raya Dunayevskaya \$8.00
- Dialectics of Black Freedom Struggles: Race, Philosophy & the Needed American Revolution**  
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- Pelican Bay Hunger Strikers: 'We want to be validated as human'** \$5.00

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# Women, incarceration and justice

On Jan. 13 the Minnesota ACLU hosted a seminar on “Women, Mass Incarceration and Criminal Justice” as part of a series of events, “Advancing Women’s Equality.” The moderator, Michele Goodwin, opened the meeting by noting that Lisa Montgomery was executed that day by the federal government. Despite Ms. Montgomery’s repeated attempts to get help against her torturers, the system’s failure to help her resulted in breaking her to the point that she committed a heinous crime. But that abusive history was not an issue in considering “justice” in her case.

## ABUSE OF IMPRISONED WOMEN IGNORED

The seminar showcased a new movie, *Belly of the Beast*. It was ten years in the making, partly because most people approached about funding did not believe that its topic—sterilization of imprisoned women—was really a problem.

The director, Erika Cohn, stated that denying a right to have a family is a violation of human rights. It is done to many but is most egregious in sterilizing women of color, which has been happening since the 19th century eugenics movement.

Goodwin describes how this practice is continued today in her 2020 book *Policing the Womb: Invisible Women and the Criminalization of Motherhood*, documenting the increasing turn to criminalize women for miscarriages, stillbirths, and threatening the health of their pregnancies. Women in prison give birth while shackled in leg irons, in solitary confinement, and even delivering in prison toilets. She mentioned one woman charged with murder for an accidental fall down the stairs resulting in a miscarriage. Such thinking is rooted in denying humanity to a large portion of society.

As the movie shows, even today, the doctors who perform sterilization of women in prison, mostly without their knowledge or consent, justify it by saying it is a service to taxpayers, saving money that might have to be spent on welfare for Black and Latinx children later.

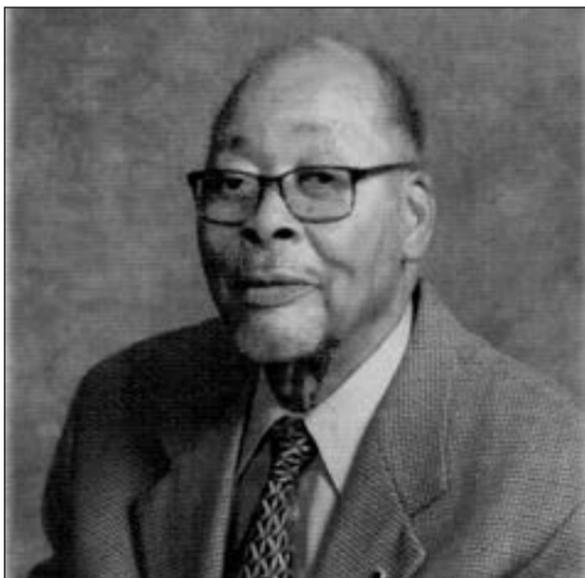
## WOMEN PRISONERS ORGANIZE

Women in general and women in prison in particular, have organized against the assaults on them. Examples are women’s responses to the AIDS epidemic, demanding their right to basic information and human treatment (see the history of *Shumate v. Wilson* case in California in the 1990s.) This now continues in their fight with prison authorities’ debacle with COVID-19.

The question came up: why is men’s organizing visible and leads to reforms, and women’s does not?

## Ray Bazmore 1926-2020

Raymond Harold Bazmore, long-time passionate advocate for social justice, died Nov. 4 at the age of 93 in Detroit, Michigan. Ray graduated from his home town high school in Aliquippa, Penn., and was a veteran of the U.S. Navy before he moved to Detroit.



## A JUSTICE SEEKER

All his life Ray continued to learn and to seek justice. On the G.I. Bill, he pursued education and a career in electronics, which led him to working in Audio Visual Technical Services with the Detroit Public Schools for many years. At the same time he earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Vocational Technology from Wayne State University.

He was active in civil rights organizations in Detroit: the Lions Club International, Central Methodist Church, and News and Letters Committees, where he continued to develop his ideas. There, he contributed an important perspective on discussions among Black freedom activists of the early 1970s whether to describe themselves as “Negro,” “Black” or “African-American.” He wrote in *News & Letters* under the name Ray Robeson.

Ray remained active and engaged in numerous social justice struggles after retiring, always reading widely and engaging in discussions. In 2020 he posted a yard sign denouncing the inflated property assessments by the city of Detroit and the lack of political will to return overpayments to taxpayers. Friends, family and comrades will miss his gentle wit and wisdom. —Susan Van Gelder

Cynthia Chandler, co-founder of Justice NOW, said women’s organizing has always had a larger understanding of the issue. HIV/AIDS (or COVID or sterilization) is not just about health. It touches on all aspects of life: housing, education and, especially, child custody. Viewing the problem more totally makes it hard to address through a mere reform.

Another reason the problem seems invisible is that those who witness it, who might want to come forward, are subject to retaliation. Women prisoners are already a captive population, but even “free” workers who witness the abuse are “discouraged” from speaking about it.

As we see over and over again, the problem with reforms is that no matter what their initial intent, they will be used to further demean and degrade those for whom they are aimed. The solution is not to make prisons more humane, but to realize a society based on caring for human beings, our shared humanity. —Ursula Wislanka

## VOICES FROM THE INSIDE OUT

### Debating Trumpism

by Robert Taliaferro

Heard recently this bit of idealism in a conversation between two white Wisconsin inmates: that any football player who kneels during the playing of the National Anthem is a traitor to the country. Both Trump’s minions pointed out one Black football player after another, from both teams, expressing disgust that they were “disrespecting the country, the flag, and those who have served her.”

## BELIEVING THAT TRUMP CAN DO NO WRONG

When asked if Trump’s recent actions to commute or pardon many of his convicted cohorts was treasonous due to his blatant disregard and subordination of the law—as he gave clemencies to individuals who lied or committed criminal acts for him—their response was a rousing, “No!”

Of course, they never have a reason why they feel as they do, though they swear they are not racists, xenophobes, misogynists or imperialists. Yet they never fail to embark on conversations that denigrate any social movement that is not “Trump approved.”

They feel Black Lives Matter, #Me Too, and similar social movements are conspiracies of the far Left to create a socialistic and globalist new world order. They listen to the same radio programs, religiously, as they feel that conservative AM talk radio is the only place where they can get “honest” news that does not cater to the “socialist Democratic Party agenda.”

Their heroes are people like Rush Limbaugh (one noted that he now is a fan of the Pittsburgh Steelers because he found out that Limbaugh is a Steelers fan), Michael Flynn and other staunch Trump supporters, and they believe all of the conspiracy theories that Trump and others have presented, regardless of how insensible they are.

Since the election, they have touted, and spouted, every single conspiracy theory known to the Trump realm of minions, and created some of their own, whining about how their beloved candidate was robbed by Joseph Biden and the Democrats.

These men are not ignorant; they are well-read and well-spoken. Like most Trump supporters, however, they feed off of each other like leeches feeding off animals who’ve crossed a stagnant pond. Though they say they aren’t racist, their rhetoric and ideas are so xenophobic, homophobic, anti-immigrant and misogynistic that it is hard not to think otherwise.

## REASONING WITH PREJUDICE A LOST CAUSE

What’s sad about Trump supporters is that they, like their icon, seek an audience; they are always looking for someone to debate so they can spout their rancorous dialogue, and if you try to reason with them, you are met with blank stares and a prevailing wall of prejudice.

Trying to reason against a prejudice is like trying to fight against shadows or ghosts. It is exhausting because one has to first get a person to realize that such things exist. Even if that occurs, rarely does it have any effect on the prejudice.

One can always argue any point, pro and con, but if a person is permanently blinded by the cataracts of rhetorical ignorance, then no argument, logical or otherwise, can change those ideas and beliefs any more than a candle can take the place of sunlight.

In 2021 we—as a nation—finally came to grips with what a divided and tribal country we are, and how far some people are willing to go to maintain and widen that social, cultural and ideological division. In that regard we are still walking with the ghosts of this nation’s founding fathers. Their mistakes and shortcomings are haunting every aspect of what the U.S. can accomplish in the future.

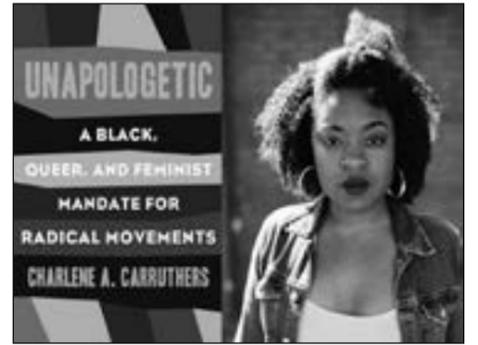
Donald J. Trump has shed light on those shortcomings. We can no longer complain that we can’t see the problems within the forest because of the trees in our way; the trees no longer exist. Trump napalmed them.

What remains is a barren cultural landscape ready to be replanted if we have the guts and the will. Here’s hoping that we do.

## Review: Unapologetic

The murder of George Floyd sparked massive, Black youth-led protests worldwide whose participants then looked for books to explain 21st-Century Black liberation movements. Charlene Carruthers characterizes her work, *Unapologetic: A Black, Queer, and Feminist Mandate for Radical*

*Movements* (Beacon Press, 2018), as “a book for all people who are curious about and committed to the struggle for Black liberation.”



## A MANUAL FOR LIBERATION

Carruthers credits her community organizing experience, mentors during school and college, and time spent in Africa, Palestine and Haiti for forming her voice. It is a manual for much-needed critical thinking by and for Black liberation movements, confronting their own explosive growth and an increasingly vicious assault from the Right.

Chapter I, “All of Us or None of Us,” quotes the foundational Black lesbian feminist “Combahee River Collective Statement” (1977): “We believe that the most profound and potentially most radical politics come directly out of our own identity... if Black women were free it would mean that everyone else would have to be free since our freedom would necessitate the destruction of all the systems of oppression.” Carruthers insists that this concept of identity politics means that the Black Queer feminist lens is essential to a radical, principled movement, which “people need to bring their full selves into the process of dismantling all systems of oppression [and to be] aided in creating alternatives of self-governance and self-determination” (p. 10).

The next two chapters call for reimagining the Black radical tradition, which “approaches the dismantling of capitalism, patriarchy and anti-Blackness in new ways while still being grounded in earlier movements” (p. 20). She does not limit this to Black liberation struggles in the U.S., nor to politics: “Black feminism, communism, socialism, liberation theology and hip-hop...have transformed the shape of Black struggle and life by influencing thought and action” (p. 24). She cautions that “liberation is a collective effort in which, even after freedoms are won, continual regeneration and transformation are necessary” (p. 25), an understanding reminiscent of Karl Marx’s call for “revolution in permanence.”

What kills the Black imagination? Anti-Blackness, which denies the humanity of Black people; Black-on-Black and gendered violence, “which can be eradicated by Black people only if it is done in tandem with dismantling the systems of capitalism and patriarchy” (p. 33).

Carruthers asserts that incomplete stories about the history of Black liberation have led to ineffective solutions and stories that don’t include critique are counterrevolutionary. Rosa Parks was not “just tired” in 1955 but a seasoned NAACP organizer. Bayard Rustin, the openly Gay architect of the 1963 March on Washington, was not allowed to speak there.

The second half of the book draws on Carruthers’ work in community organizing in Chicago, where she founded and has led the Black Youth Project (BYP100) since 2013. To combat the challenges within all contemporary Black liberation movements, Carruthers poses specific commitments and questions.

## THE NEED TO DEVELOP VISION OF LIBERATION

The commitments are: build many strong leaders; practice healing justice; combat liberalism through principled struggle. Thus, “movements can cultivate radical and even revolutionary means for liberation” (p. 85). The questions activists must ask—“Who am I? Who are my people? What do we want? What are we building? Are we ready to win?”—map out guidelines so that activists develop a vision of liberation for themselves, their organization and their goals.

Carruthers turns to a history of community organizing in Chicago since the 1970s, including the 19-year campaign to oust police terrorist Jon Burge and to gain reparations for his torture victims; #SayHerName; and justice for Laquan McDonald. This is a starting point for a working model of organizing. Her concluding mandate is “a call to organize...we must succeed for the sake of collective liberation” (p. 140).

Carruthers recognizes that “our collective imaginations must burst open in order to believe that liberation is possible” (p. 139). This reveals her underlying philosophic attitude.

—Susan Van Gelder

1. “The Combahee River Collective Statement,” in *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology*, Barbara Smith, ed., Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, NY, 1983.

# Georgia requires a new flag!

We can celebrate that the State of Georgia has elected two Democrats to the Senate, breaking the Republican stranglehold on federal legislation and showing that a last bastion of the old South is beginning to change. Things aren't there yet, though.

One reactionary leftover, hiding in plain sight for years, is the Georgia state flag which is a full-blown Stars

## Pompeo worsens war on Yemen's masses

*"Yemenis aren't falling into starvation. They are being pushed into the abyss by men with guns and power."*  
—A former top UN humanitarian relief official

In huge swaths of Yemen—particularly in areas controlled by Houthi rebels—famine and mass starvation are rampant. Of Yemen's nearly 30 million people, more than two-thirds are in food scarcity, with millions on the brink of actually perishing from starvation.

### DELIBERATE BOMBING OF CIVILIANS

A military coalition of Saudi Arabia and the UAE, in seeking to defeat the Iran-backed Houthis who control much of the North of Yemen, has waged a bombing campaign to destroy Yemen's infrastructure and ruin its economy. After six years of war on the people of Yemen, the country is now the scene of one of the greatest humanitarian crises in the world.

**The Saudi coalition airstrikes—thousands of them—often target hospitals and schools. The bombing has forced farmers off their land. Fields have been abandoned and food production has been decimated. The Houthis have frequently blocked food shipments and other aid from reaching areas they control.**

To add to this tragedy, U.S. President Trump's Secretary of State Mike Pompeo's parting shot before leaving office was to declare the Houthi a terrorist organization, thus creating draconian difficulties for food aid to reach famine-suffering masses. David Beasley, the executive director of the World Food Program, the anti-hunger agency of the UN which won the 2020 Nobel Peace Prize, said such a terrorist designation amounted to "a death sentence to hundreds of thousands, if not millions of innocent people in Yemen."

### U.S. ARMS SUPPORT YEMEN SLAUGHTER

For three-plus years the Trump administration supplied the Saudi coalition with the military weapons to carry on its war crimes against Yemen. Besides enabling Saudi's proxy war against Iran, it meant "America First" support for the arms industry. Raytheon Corporation has sold arms worth some \$5 billion to the Saudi-led coalition in the last five years. Nor should it be forgotten that arms sales to the Saudis for this campaign began under the Obama administration.

Yemen is the poorest country in the Arab world. Does this now mean that millions of its people are under a death sentence? And how many countries and groups bear responsibility?  
—Eugene Walker

## QUEERNOTES

by Elise

In the year before Transgender Day of Remembrance 2020, 350 Trans and Gender Nonconforming people, mostly women of color, were reported murdered, up from 331 in 2019. Many more murders are never reported, due to lack of support from family, society and government.

\* \* \*

Classmates and other supporters of Transgender student Avril held a vigil for her. She committed suicide after she was verbally assaulted in public by her school guidance counselor for wearing a skirt and banned from Lycee Fenelon High School in Lille, France, until she would dress "appropriately." The school administration and staff supported the counselor, going so far as to misgender Avril upon learning of her suicide. The incident raises the question of how Trans students are treated in schools across France.

\* \* \*

Brotherhood Inc. serves New Orleans' underserved and at-risk communities, including LGBTQ+ people, and the homeless and poor living with HIV/AIDS. It includes Trinity House, a group home which provides housing stability for homeless people living with HIV/AIDS. Brotherhood provides HIV/AIDS education, counseling, testing, and referrals, prevention and education. Brotherhood's board of directors is diverse in race and ethnicity, deliberately reflecting the diverse communities it serves. You can find this organization at brotherhoodinc.org.

\* \* \*

After Gay teenager Trevor Wilkinson was handed an in-school suspension for wearing nail polish to school, the American Civil Liberties Union and tens of thousands of people expressed their support for him online. The suspension is in force until he removes the nail polish. More than 85,000 signatures were gathered on Trevor's petition calling for Clyde High School in Texas to change its sexist policy prohibiting boys from wearing nail polish and makeup. Trevor is also protesting the school for violating his First Amendment right to freedom of expression.

and Bars Confederate flag except for the Coat of Arms of Georgia inside the circle of 13 stars in the upper corner.



The Stars and Bars Confederate flag.

It was made the official flag under Governor Sonny Perdue in 2003, and he knew exactly what he was doing. It is urgent that this flag be acknowledged for what it is and removed and that liberals and progressives know their history better and not be so easily fooled.



The flag of the State of Georgia even today.

Georgia has a lot of other problems. It has the lowest minimum wage in the nation, just \$5.15 an hour, and its Workers Compensation system has been stripped bare, so much so that it has created life-threatening situations for thousands of injured workers.

Georgia has also recently done poorly by failing to



Flag of the Eurasian nation of Georgia carried into the Capitol on Jan. 6 by a coup invader—presumably bad at Googling.

take protective measures against the COVID-19 epidemic. Cherokee County in the northwest of the state has been in the news worldwide for the flouting of basic safety.

In the Nov. 3 election and in the runoff, we witnessed some of the worst instances of voter suppression in over 50 years in Georgia. There have been several recent racist police killings.

While statues of Robert E. Lee and other Confederate and KKK figures have been removed across the South, the Stone Mountain Monument still stands in Georgia. This carving into Stone Mountain of monumental figures of Lee, Confederate President Jefferson Davis and Stonewall Jackson was carved during the revival of the Ku Klux Klan by Gutzon Borglum, who erected the busts of the Presidents into Mount Rushmore. As long as the Stone Mountain Monument stands, it remains a nuisance that attracts diehard segregationists from Georgia and around the country.  
—Former Southerner

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## HANDICAPTHIS!

by Suzanne Rose

The pandemic has been hardest on the elderly and disabled. Supplemental Security Income, which is cash to meet basic needs for food, clothing, and shelter, has been steadily collapsing. Over 230,000 people could lose the cash and medical benefits that they rely on. Social Security has closed its network of 1,200 field offices during the pandemic, making it almost impossible for those who need these benefits to get them.

\* \* \*

In Ghana people with disabilities face confinement and in some cases physical violence. Many people view disabilities as a spiritual sickness or curse that can be healed by prayer. People with obvious disabilities or using a wheelchair are ignored when trying to sell their goods on the roadsides or in public.

\* \* \*

There has been an increase in the number of women killing their disabled children. In several cases the mothers committed suicide at the same time or soon after. This heartbreaking fact cries out for a human response to a crisis most are ignoring. People with disabilities, including our children, are entitled to the same respect and dignity that other people have. They are entitled to a life.

## A green recovery?

continued from p. 1

accumulation, to rescue capitalism in crisis. Even some socialists join Joe Biden in touting it as a jobs program—rather than envisioning a move beyond a society based on wage slavery, through workers taking control of the workplace by means of revolutionary self-organization.

Biden's "Build Back Better" program supplanted the Green New Deal and green recovery, largely reducing

them to funding "clean" energy—including nuclear power and carbon capture and storage, a crutch to prop up fossil fuel burning<sup>1</sup>—and infrastructure, including roads and bridges, predicated on endless economic growth.

**Missing are the urgency of winding down all fossil fuel extraction and consumption, and radical restructuring of the physical layout of cities to minimize the need for things like commuting on those roads. Biden, with his party's backing, still wants to save the coal, oil and gas industries. Similarly, President Barack Obama signed into law the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, described as a "green recovery" bill—and then he presided over the fracking boom that turned the U.S. into the world's biggest producer of both oil and natural gas.**

Around the world, funding and deregulation for fossil fuel production and use have been a far greater portion of the past year's stimulus initiatives than investment in renewable energy, electric cars, energy efficiency and other "green" projects. The Trump gravy train for oil is notorious.

More to the point is what will continue to happen under Biden. Minnesota, under a Democratic-Farmer-Labor state administration, approved the expansion of the Enbridge Line 3 tar sands pipeline with a new route through protected land where the Ojibwe people have land use rights. It is a slap in the face of the Indigenous Minnesotans who helped Democrats carry the state in November. Indigenous and climate justice activists have been fighting the pipeline project for years.

### RADICAL CHANGE OR THE STATUS QUO?

The battle is on: is green recovery going to be a way to bring in ideas of the radical change we need or will those who want to use it to sustain the status quo win?

**Will "build back better" reinforce today's infrastructure, which is based on fossil fuels, intensive energy use, individual car ownership approaching 1.5 billion? Will it reinforce capitalistic exploitative methods and imperialist relations? For example, production of most solar cells and electric car batteries currently requires materials such as lithium and coltan that are mined by superexploited labor in countries like Chile and Congo. Much current solar cell production uses materials produced by Chinese companies that use Uyghur forced labor. The only way to break out of this kind of "building back" is through control by the workers, communities and peoples affected.**

If "build back better" and "green recovery" do not mean tearing up this capitalist society by its roots and building a new one on truly human foundations, then they will end up being funneled into building a new stage of capitalism, which will fall short of ending the march toward climate catastrophe. What is necessary and possible, and is struggling to be born through the various social and labor movements, is just such a new society, if the movements and their supporters fight for it in the battle of ideas as well as in activism.

1. See "Carbon dioxide removal sucks," by Gabriel Levy, peopleandnature.wordpress.com, Nov. 13, 2020, which is being unaccountably censored by Facebook.

# Vaccine rollout inflames global inequality

continued from p. 1

and holiday pay so they could (temporarily) remain on the job and—to quote a Dec. 24 order from Texas Health Commissioner [John Hellerstedt](#)—“administer their entire vaccine allotment with all deliberate speed.”

## RECOMMENDATION FOR PRISONERS IGNORED

Injections for nursing home residents were delayed by the Trump Administration's insistence on working through private drugstores [CVS and Walgreens](#), a program that wasn't prepared in advance. Some governors overruled Trump by mobilizing the National Guard: in the words of Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, “to take some of the load off Walgreens and CVS.”

The American Medical Association recommends that prisoners be in the 1A vaccine priority group, but only six states have placed them in the first category. The CDC failed to make the same recommendation, and the Federal Bureau of Prisons is using their first allotment to vaccinate staff. The rate of positive COVID-19 tests in prisons is [four times the general average](#), and the background negligence of prison staff has been exacerbated during the pandemic. [Shortages](#) of soap and hand sanitizer have required the prisoners to wash their hands with shampoo, then toothpaste. Obtaining disinfectant to clean common surfaces has also been difficult or impossible.

After 1A, most states intend on prioritizing their elderly populations for vaccination given that advanced age means increased risk of infection and death due to COVID-19. However, low-income people experience increased risk, yet they enjoy no similar prioritization. Despite what congressional Republicans—who slashed unemployment and blocked a \$2,000 stimulus—might believe, this isn't about buying a big screen TV but a life-and-death question of whether a household can afford food and water bills and rent, to be able to shelter in place through the pandemic.

[Tomas](#), a worker at a Chicago lamp factory, contracted COVID-19 and recovered, but he still struggles to make up the loss in pay since, like many low-wage workers, he has no sick leave. “At work, they don't help you. You have 10 days off and then after that you have to return to work. They don't care about you or how you're doing. Nothing. They just care about you getting back to work.”

## IN A PANDEMIC, DISCRIMINATION = DEATH

And the U.S. is a long way from fully acknowledging that women, Black, Native, Latinx, Asian-American, LGBTQ+, and people with disabilities experience institutional discrimination (per [CDC study](#): in health care, housing, education, criminal justice, and finance), which results in increased risk of COVID-19 infection and death. People in these at-risk populations lack a commensurate prioritization in the vaccine rollout.

**Vulnerable workers in the meatpacking, agriculture, warehouse, delivery, and transportation industries may soon benefit from sporadic prioritization in a handful of states. Overall, cold disdain predominates on workdays, when workers are met head-on by the extremely rigorous anti-humanist onslaught of private monopoly capitalism advancing toward state capitalism.**

The past year of intense human crisis has seen small businesses flounder and fail, leading to mass loss of jobs. The very largest corporations have taken advantage to seize market share and service it with fewer employees. Amazon workers [carry scanners that time their progress and encourage competition among coworkers](#). A year-end [deregulation of the trucking industry](#) cut drivers' rest period and extended the driving day by two hours.

In meatpacking factories, those who do the shoulder-to-shoulder work of prepping meat have seen at least three increases in the USDA's maximum line speed since 2018. Obama Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack (coming back with Biden) pushed for the same trigger-happy deregulation in 2010. “[Our backs hurt when we go faster, we're humans.](#)” said Luis Miguel Santiago Torres, a 30-year-old slaughterhouse worker in Baldwin, Ga.

## WORKERS STRUGGLE AND STRIKE

In [Kern County, Calif., farmworkers went on strike](#) for workplace protections in June as COVID-19 infections ballooned throughout the state, infecting dozens of workers at Primex Farms who were initially prohibited from wearing masks. The non-union shop promptly hired new workers without telling them about the infections. Veronica Perez is a striker profiled in [Mother Jones](#): “They use you until you can't give any more of you—and once you have a problem, they'll get rid of you like you're nothing.”

Strikes for better working conditions have been more and more important every year. Worker-activists of the Eight Hour Leagues who launched a transatlantic campaign from St. Louis in 1888 knew that constant extensions of the working day were ravaging their bodies. Had they not succeeded, the factories of that time would have

used up three generations of labor power in the span of one. Today, not only is the working day creeping back upward, but constant speed-ups are needed so companies can extract more surplus labor within the same working day. In sector after sector, workers are expected to do an eight-hour job in four. This has led to increased [injuries and deaths](#), workers [fainting on the job and waking up in hospital beds](#).

All the liberal theoreticians can say is that **thankfully these unskilled workers still have a job—perhaps one that offers plenty of overtime pay at that; now just bring back social safety net protections and that's sublime. But the real answer to this alien, frantic, life-draining nature of work in today's world is to remake the workplace—and all of society—from the ground up. Making a new beginning requires us “to surmount the antithesis, and [to surmount] looking at what is and what**

**happens as contradictory to what ought to be and happen”** (Hegel, quoted in [Dunayevskaya's Marxism and Freedom](#), p. 287).

It should be crystal clear that the present system failed the world over, and in the most deadly way, to care for those of us who inhabit it.

## NATIONALISM & GREED WORSEN PANDEMIC

On Oct. 16, high-income countries [blocked a World Trade Organization initiative to pause pharmaceutical patents](#) for COVID-19 vaccines. Vaccine-maker Pfizer is no stranger to patent litigation. In Feb. 2019 they sued to prevent Korean firm SK Bioscience from releasing a generic alternative of Pfizer's pneumonia vaccine.

[Mustaqem De Gama](#) of South Africa was adamant that the world needs more doses of COVID-19 vaccine, faster: “What this waiver proposal does is it opens space for further collaboration, for the transfer of technology and for more producers to come in to ensure that we have scalability in a much shorter period of time.”

**It's urgent for low-income countries to get vaccinations at a level where herd immunity will eliminate most of the risk of COVID-19 transmission. So far, lockdowns and economic losses have led to famines and a sharp increase in starvation, with 10,000 additional children dying of hunger per month, compared to pre-pandemic levels.**

If impoverishment persists, [United Nations projections](#) for the next few years include 13 million additional child marriages, two million more girls enduring genital mutilation/cutting, and 15 million more unintended pregnancies. More people will suffer and die from malaria, polio, and AIDS the longer health services remain bottled up in stopping COVID-19's spread.

**Tragically, many of the same countries who naysayed the pause on patents are hoarding most of the expected future vaccine volume up to the end of 2021.** “If we do nothing it's going to be well into late 2022 or early 2023 before even half of the low-income countries are vaccinated,” explained [Niko Lusiani](#), of Oxfam.

While the U.S., U.K., Canada and France will have enough vaccine many times over, other countries must scramble to get into the game. The CEO of Moderna reportedly used this sense of desperation as a bargaining chip, [warning European nations not to drag out negotiations](#). A September Oxfam communique reported that Moderna wanted to charge some countries [\\$35 per dose](#).

**This bidding war, combined with the reduction in circulating vaccine supply, will spell disaster for COVAX, an international fund to purchase vaccines and give them to countries that would otherwise be unable to procure them. Hoarder countries have been cynically donating to the fund on one hand even as they undermine it on the other. The Director-General of the World Health Organization, Tedros Adhanom, has warned: “I need to be blunt: The world is on the brink of a catastrophic moral failure, and the price of this failure will be paid with lives and livelihoods in the world's poorest countries.”**

On Jan. 6, paramedic Daniel Reyes spoke to [Reuters](#) in Mexico City as he waited to load a patient with COVID-19 onto an ambulance. “The whole system is completely saturated. There's no room in the public or private hospitals....We've been like this for three weeks now.”

**As countries flail in a second global wave of infections, Mexico has joined Brazil, Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, UAE, Morocco, Egypt, Nigeria, and many more who now hope to purchase doses of CoronaVac/Sinopharm from China, despite the lack of transparency surrounding these vaccines. A worker at a Chinese state-owned oil company reported in October that he and his coworkers had been compelled to sign a confidentiality agreement before receiving the shot. “For us, they can't make any guarantees. This is us making a sacrifice for the nation.”**



Temporary graves of COVID-19 victims in Iran, March 29, 2020.

Fars News Agency

[Serbia, Brazil, Bolivia](#), and [Guinea](#) are among the countries ordering doses of Russia's “Sputnik V” vaccine. Within Russia itself, “there is a disbelief in official information, by default,” said [Denis Volkov](#), a researcher in Moscow. “On the one hand, we are happy that we are first. But we won't get it ourselves—let it go through the trials.” [Indeed, only 38% of Russians have been willing to get a vaccine that Vladimir Putin has touted since August but not yet taken himself.](#)

## MODI KOWTOWS TO NARROW NATIONALISM

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who once proclaimed to the world that this will be “India's century,” appeared to kowtow again to narrow nationalism. On Jan. 2, the ruling BJP party pushed to [approve an Indian vaccine](#) made by Bharat Biotech for domestic use, right after two previous rejections on Jan. 1 and Dec. 31. Minutes from the meetings revealed that the medical panel told Bharat its vaccine would need to undergo more trials in order to demonstrate effectiveness. The panel preferred to approve only a generic alternative of AstraZeneca's vaccine being manufactured in India, but then reversed course after a BJP party leader complained. In Chattisgarh, health minister TS Singh Deo said the Bharat Biotech vaccine was “rushing into general use before trials are complete... This may also jeopardize the valuable lives and health of our citizens.”

**The cheap, public relations character of the COVID-19 response in country after country is a true reflection of how state power under capitalism strips the human individual of their dignified nature and replaces it with a commodity nature. This is to say, a human is something to be used up, or something to be kept alive so it can be used up.**

But there is more to human life than to get used up. For our society to go back to normal would be unthinkable—that normal is what got us here. Humans have a mind and a body to think and to transform the world and move within it. We want to choose how and for what reason we work. Only then does work become the self-development of our innate interests and talent, what the philosopher Karl Marx called our “quest for universality.”

Instead of relating to other people as things to be used up, we yearn to relate on a human level, to see oneself reflected in the life and dreams of another and cooperate to build the conditions that offer our best chance at contentment and happiness.

## Latin America notes

**Voices from a Migrant Caravan**—In the first migrant caravan of 2021, some 9,000 migrants from Honduras attempted to cross into Guatemala, seeking to travel to the U.S. They were confronted by Guatemala's army and police, who attacked them with tear gas and beat them with batons. Below are voices from that caravan:

*They have no heart, we are risking our lives. There is no work in Honduras, especially after the two cyclones and the pandemic.*

—Dixón Vázquez, 29

*I come asking for help to be able to support my children, because there is nothing there, there is no work and my children are starving due to unemployment. There is no support from the government.*

—Olga Ramirez, 28, a street vendor at a bus station in Honduras

Since 2018, more than a dozen massive migrant caravans have left Central America to seek opportunities in Mexico and, above all, in the U.S. On their way, they have faced repression by the police and army, discrimination and hate speech in the countries through which they pass.

\* \* \*

**Pandemic Housing Occupation in Brazil**—Thrown out of work by the pandemic, and with no money for housing, some São Paulo residents are doing occupations to have a place to live. One is the Jardim Julieta occupation, one of the “new favelas,” that is, spaces created to deal with the impact of the pandemic on the poor.

*The people here have lost their jobs and have been evicted from their homes. We are “pandemic victim residents.” We set ourselves a deadline to only stay until February, and we are all apprehensive and afraid of being left without a home, without any means to pay rent, and without knowing when the pandemic will end.*

—Buba Rodrigues, dance instructor

*I've been here for over three months. The mayor has not come here. I don't have access to hand sanitizer, a mask, and other things, plus I am unemployed. What should I do?*

—Maria Lúcia

*Without emergency aid, without income, I had nothing else I could do. I have always worked, I am not one who complains about work, but I was left with no option and this was available for the time being.*

—João Carlos, bricklayer

The Jardim Julieta occupation is under threat. The Urban Development Secretariat demanded the eviction of the families even during the pandemic. After the residents protested, and with anti-eviction protests occurring throughout Brazil, repossession was suspended until the end of the emergency period caused by the pandemic. (Information from [RioOnWatch](#), [www.rioonwatch.org](#).)

—Eugene Walker

# YOUTH IN ACTION

by Buddy Bell

“It’s important for me and for Thailand, the future of this country belongs to us. The parliament, the Cabinet... may be in power now, but the country needs the younger generations for the future,” says high-schooler [Akkarasorn Opilan](#). Since August, a youth protest to end military rule and strip the powers from the monarchy has been thronging Bangkok’s main streets, including children as young as 10. Many of the youngest students seek to reform a strict traditionalist school system that emphasizes rote learning. A sign read: “Our first dictatorship is school.”

On [Nov. 21](#), the “Bad Students” organization filled a major intersection at rush hour, where protesters in dinosaur and meteor suits proclaimed an end to the “dinosaur age.” “The dinosaurs are these government officials who have decision-making power over our lives...They’re conservative, old-fashioned and refuse to change. Their time is up,” said Pimchanok Nongnual. The protesters have continued marching despite water cannon and tear gas attacks, and a state of emergency declaration on Oct. 15. [They’ve reached out to Hong Kong and Taiwan](#), adopting some of their ideas, such as using umbrellas to protect against [a spray of water laced with chemicals](#) wielded by police. Another borrowed idea is to use emojis in horizontal decision-making, to vote on whether to rest or keep going, which can avoid the arrest of an apparent ringleader.

\* \* \*

Hundreds of students at Bogazici University in Istanbul [marched to the edge of campus on Jan. 4](#) to oppose Prof. Melih Bulu’s elevation to the position of university rector (president). Bulu is a loyal member of Turkey’s ruling party and was selected by Turkish President Erdoğan, who did away with student elections of university presidents in 2016. Students are demanding Bulu’s resignation and a new election to fill the post. A protester giving her name as [Selen](#) told *Agence France Presse*: “Academia is above ideologies and politics, but to appoint a rector to our university in defiance of the will of the university members is a political move.” The protesters and reporters who tried to cover the event were beaten by police and assailed with tear gas and rubber bullets.

\* \* \*

Rural Pakistani youth [pedaled 100 miles from Palangi to Kahuta in protest of flour prices](#). On Jan. 15, they surrounded a building in the Kahuta town square where Mujtaba Farooqi, a leader of Haveli Youth Alliance, demanded a resumption of government flour subsidies.

## Black homes matter

“What’s going on in Detroit? Since the Great Recession, 100,000 (one in three) Detroit families have lost their homes. We call it a hurricane without water.” Dr. Bernadette Atuahene, Professor of Law at Chicago-Kent College of Law and author of *We Want What’s Ours: Learning from South Africa’s Land Restitution Program* spoke [live on YouTube on Jan. 13](#).

**Dr. Atuahene explained that when housing prices plummeted in the Great Recession, Detroit homes continued to be assessed as if no change in market value had occurred. Detroit’s property tax rate is one of the highest in the nation. Meanwhile the city was going through the largest municipal bankruptcy in the country and under emergency management there was no capacity, no will and no control over the assessor’s office to make the required assessment adjustments.**<sup>2</sup>

In Michigan it is illegal to assess property at more than 50% of its value. Atuahene’s research found 55-85% of properties were illegally over-assessed. Furthermore, the lowest-valued homes were 95% over-assessed. Between 2010 and 2016, \$600 million in taxes was illegally collected and lost to homeowners. Over-assessment accounts for 10% of all reasons for Detroit foreclosures.

The Coalition for Property Tax Justice has three demands: that Detroit Mayor Duggan, up for re-election, create a fund to compensate homeowners; that the Wayne County COVID-19 moratorium on evictions continue until it is proved that properties were assessed correctly; and that Governor Whitmer require the state tax commission to enforce the Constitution.

**Congresswoman Rashida Tlaib added that 40% of Black-owned homes were lost in Michigan, the most in the country. “Black Lives Matter means Black Homes Matter; we’re going to keep having these town halls to speak the truth....Shame on those who pretend it didn’t happen. If anything shows how broken these systems are, this does.”**

Reverend Barber from North Carolina described systemic racism as “theft and death.” In 2009, banks were bailed out but homeowners were kicked out. There’s a collusion between banks, the government and investors who swoop down and buy these homes cheaply. We need the moratorium on evictions to continue: eight million people have fallen into poverty and 30 million face eviction. The movement responds when a man is killed on camera; we need to respond to these kinds of deaths as well.

For more information contact the Coalition for Property Tax Justice, [illegalforeclosures.org](#). —S.V.G.

1. One residence purchased in 2003 for \$80,000 was valued below \$20,000 after the Recession.  
2. Detroit property values have not recovered; that same residence is now listed as \$25,000.

# YOUTH

## Lived experience compels Marxism

No matter how you frame capitalism, there is no way to wipe it clean. We have to start with a conception of society centered on the development of humans. So what is socialism?

### News from Mexico

by Eugene Walker



Bertha Nava, mother of Julio César Ramirez Nava, murdered in Ayotzinapa on Sept. 26, 2014, and Omar García, survivor of that night.

**Mexico’s authoritarian military**—The brouhaha between Mexico and the U.S. as to whether or not General Salvador Cienfuegos, when he was the Secretary of National Defense under former President Peña Nieto, was involved in protecting and abetting a narco-trafficking cartel’s importing drugs to the U.S., misses the real scandal and tragedy of Mexico’s army and navy. It is their repressive, authoritarian role in Mexican society, historically and in the present moment.

While President López Obrador proclaimed Cienfuegos’ innocence, he has nothing to say about the growing role of the military in his “progressive” administration. The army has consistently stonewalled any thoroughgoing investigation into its role in the disappearance of the 43 Normalista students of Ayotzinapa in 2014 (see “The 5th anniversary of Ayotzinapa,” Nov.-Dec. 2019 *N&L*). This, despite much indirect evidence that troops were involved. The navy has a long and despicable history of human rights violations, again, never honestly investigated. Impunity reigns.

The reality is that López Obrador, in his first two years in office, has increased the military budget by some 40%. He treats the military as a sacred cow. If the narco-traffic gangs run roughshod over the country, do the armed forces have the same kind of power over the federal government? Who exactly controls Mexican society? What is the full role of Mexico’s authoritarian military?

\* \* \*

**The Zapatistas’ Declaration for Life**—On Jan. 1 the Zapatistas, together with hundreds upon hundreds of other organizations and individuals, on five continents of our planet, issued a “Declaration for Life”:

*During these previous months, we have established contact between us by various means. We are women, lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgender, transvestites, transsexuals, intersex, queer and more, men, groups, collectives, associations, organizations, social movements, indigenous peoples, neighborhood associations, communities and a long etcetera that gives us identity. We are differentiated and separated by lands, skies, mountains, valleys...*

*Only very few things unite us:*

*That we make the pains of the earth our own: violence against women; persecution and contempt of those who are different in their affective, emotional, and sexual identity; annihilation of childhood; genocide against the native peoples; racism; militarism; exploitation; dispossession; the destruction of nature.*

*The understanding that a system is responsible for these pains. The executioner is an exploitative, patriarchal, pyramidal, racist, thievish and criminal system: capitalism.*

*The knowledge that it is not possible to reform this system...*

*The commitment to fight, everywhere and at all times...against this system until we destroy it completely. The survival of humanity depends on the destruction of capitalism. We do not surrender, we do not sell out, and we do not give up.*

*The certainty that the fight for humanity is global. Just as the ongoing destruction does not recognize borders, nationalities, flags, languages, cultures, races; so the fight for humanity is everywhere, all the time...*

To concretize this, there is a call for meeting and discussions on the five continents. The Zapatistas with other Mexican Indigenous and community organizations are going to undertake a voyage to Europe next Summer and Fall to be “the bridge of dignity that connects the Europe from Below and on the Left with the mountains of the Mexican Southeast.”

I can’t believe there are Marxists who still call China socialist. China has imperialist ambitions to control the world. How is that socialism? China’s slogan now is “we must have exploitation now to ban it tomorrow.” Such a view looks at tomorrow through the realities of today. Marx, on the other hand, measures past and future from a post-capitalist human-centered standpoint.

The Sunrise Movement, Extinction Rebellion, etc., want a post-capitalist society, too. They critique the current situation from the perspective of the future, not the past. The Sunrise Movement was founded in 2017 by youth who are dissatisfied by where the planet and society are headed. It has as its basic principle a society free from the faults of the previous generation: climate chaos, wars, McCarthyism, etc. It’s a generation that wants to wipe things clean and start over. They explicitly turn away from the nationalism of “us” vs. “them” and try to figure out what internationalism is that is not just global exploitation.

### CAPITALISM CANNOT BE ‘REFORMED’

Extinction Rebellion seeks to end extinction of life on the planet and bring about a society free of the problems of today’s world. Such a society would respect the planet and all its inhabitants. They are one part of a movement whose prominent spokespeople include Greta Thunberg and even Bill Nye on one occasion.

Greta Thunberg represents the youth of the world looking for an alternative to capitalism’s destruction of life. Youth climate strikes, which happened all over the world, including countries such as China and Saudi Arabia, were a spontaneous movement, which included people with various views but all united in their desire to end the climate catastrophe. At the European Parliament on April 16, 2019, she said: “Our civilization is so fragile it is almost like a castle built in the sand. The facade is beautiful but the foundation is far from solid.”

Marx, too, saw that capitalism was on an absolute collision course with humanity and nature. Marx’s original concept of socialism as human development, which has been so tarnished by statist “Marxists,” speaks to today’s youth. The youth may not know Marx, but their lived experience brings them to similar views. —Alex

## VOICES FROM THE OUTSIDE

### Epidemic #2: fentanyl

continued from p. 1

**the capitalist machine, you are spit out, obsolete, not necessary. Capitalism is trying to convince you that this is your fault. Yet it is impossible to have any job security. At all levels of work, many jobs are replaced by robots.**

When I was growing up, people wanted to get into construction. That was a secure future then. You could make a living, put your children through school, etc. Now the “secure” job is a guard, becoming a part of the security apparatus, protecting capital from the discarded people on the street. In that job you set yourself against the people you came from. Even if you have a well-paid job, and try to “give back,” or go into politics in an attempt to change things for the better for your people, most times you get co-opted and end up only perpetuating this system. Going into the system is not a way to change it.

### CAPITALISM’S INHUMANITY

What I see on the street every day is what Marx projected as the absolute inhumanity of capitalism: creation of a growing redundant and discarded population.

There is no overcoming this with increased productivity by introducing new and better machines. Ever increasing productivity this way is what got us here. For example, today there are proposals to dredge the bay to allow bigger ships. Seeing the ships up close, you realize how huge they already are! There is more stuff going through the ports, but several orders of magnitude fewer longshoremen necessary to load and unload them.

**Capitalism has long outlived its usefulness. When people’s livelihood is taken away, they have a right to defend themselves. Yet we shouldn’t repeat the 1960s failed attempt to overcome capitalism with sheer enthusiasm for a new world. We have to transcend current relations. Marx’s Capital is the best book to explain every aspect of capitalism, especially how the law of value structures our relations which we have to take hold of for ourselves. Otherwise we’ll end up not making it, like the 1960s. Most people, even most Marxists, think that Capital is about economics rather than new human relations. If you think like that, you miss the boat.**

Marx pointed out his original contribution is the split in the category of labor: the contradiction between abstract labor, the content of value (machines), and concrete labor, the human activity. It is downright wrong to say Marx’s legacy is a labor theory of value. Marx speaks now to those who would break with value production and enlarge our concept of labor to be the affirmation and development of human essential powers (see “New perspectives on Marx’s Humanist Essays” in Nov.-Dec. 2020 *N&L*).

# WORLD VIEW

by Gerry Emmett

An estimated 250 million Indian farmers have been on strike since last September in opposition to a series of new laws, proposed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party. The laws are designed to allow big corporations to control the market and accumulate land. The strike, begun in Punjab and Haryana states, saw hundreds of thousands marching on New Delhi, the capital city.

**The farmers see this as a struggle for their continued existence.**

Capitalism follows its own logic regardless of history. But that history lives within the oppressed as the memory of dispossession and murder. India's farmers know the way agriculture was "rationalized" in 1920s and 1930s state-capitalist Russia and 1950s state-capitalist China at the terrible expense of their class.

## BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS

Modi's *Hindutva* ideology is a bizarre mix of ancient religion and modern high tech, but its essence remains the same inhuman law of capitalist accumulation.

## Massacre in Tigray

Thousands have died—including an undetermined number of civilians—and tens of thousands become refugees in the current conflict between Ethiopia's central government and the regional government of Tigray. The central government of Nobel Peace Prize-winning Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed is being aided in its war by the Eritrean regime of long-time dictator Isaias Afwerki.

This is a vicious conflict with ethnic undertones. Tigrayan civilians have recounted harrowing stories of murder, mass looting by soldiers, burning of factories, and rape. One young woman who escaped to Sudan said she was told, "Choose, either I kill you or rape you."

But the war in Tigray has more to do with the decomposition of Stalinism than it does with "ancient hatreds."

## NATIONAL LIBERATION VS. STALINISM

Following the overthrow of Emperor Haile Selassie in 1974, Ethiopia was ruled by a brutal Stalinist military junta, the Derg, led by Mengistu Haile Mariam. Up to 500,000 men, women and children were murdered in the Derg's "Red Terror," and countless more died of starvation as the economy was destroyed. Mengistu was later convicted of the crime of genocide.

The Ethiopian provinces of Tigray and Eritrea both had national liberation movements, which for a time were allied. The Tigrayan People's Liberation Front declared allegiance to the Stalinist ideology of Albanian dictator Enver Hoxha, while the Eritrean People's Liberation Front remained closer to the Soviet Union—which also supported the Derg, as did Cuba's Fidel Castro.

**Ultimately Eritrea gained independence. EPLF leader Afwerki became Eritrean dictator. Tigray's TPLF became the most powerful group in the Ethiopian government that succeeded the Derg. They dropped their Hoxhaite ideology.**

Last year, Prime Minister Ahmed—awarded his Nobel for a peace agreement between Ethiopia and Eritrea—attempted to unite all Ethiopia's regional political parties into his new Prosperity Party. The formerly dominant TPLF refused to join this, resulting in the current conflict.

The farmers' strike is in many ways a continuation of last year's workers' general strike. That also involved hundreds of millions of urban union workers and farmers protesting privatization and demanding relief for those suffering under the economic burden caused by COVID-19. Indeed, many rural strikers are urban workers who have been forced to return home to their villages as jobs were lost in the cities.

As in all genuine mass movements, social barriers begin to break down. Women have been leaders in many demonstrations, and 82-year-old Biklis has been a symbol. She said, "I will sit here till blood stops flowing in my veins so the children of this country and the world breathe the air of justice and equality."

Muslims have also become active, despite past violence, and despite the bigoted 2020 Citizenship Act that targets them for discrimination. Columnist Syed Abdur Rahman writes, "Even the women donning hijab are join-

ing the farmers, addressing the gathering and sitting in the protests for days. Muslims have been serving food to protesting farmers from day one" (*SIFY*, Dec. 9, 2020).

Dalit farm-labor unions have also joined the protests, thus implicitly challenging the dehumanizing caste system.

## THE ROLE OF REVOLUTIONARY IDEAS

This coming together of urban workers with the rural masses has long been the aim of India's Left. Many of the country's historic Communist and radical parties have been involved in recent upheavals, including some in government. Yet, as many have noted, Modi's government retains a significant popularity.

**It is clear that a struggle against his and the BJP's *Hindutva* capitalism has got to be a philosophical struggle as well. Contained within the many forces involved in the farmers' strike is a potential revolutionary humanism, emerging from India's concrete history, that can transcend not just Modi's anti-historic ideology, but also the inhuman laws of capitalism itself.**

As ever, this crisis not only brings Marx's *Capital* to mind, but brings it to new life.

There have been a number of rounds of talks between the government and farmers' representatives, but the farmers are promising to settle for nothing less than the full revocation of the new laws.

## Iran: assassination, imperialism, 'conspiracy'

Iranian nuclear physicist Mohsen Fakhrazadeh, a brigadier general of the Revolutionary Guards, was assassinated as his car convoy passed through the town of Absard on Nov. 27. No suspect was apprehended. Speculation fell on Israel, the U.S., and Iranian oppositionists.

The assassination of such a high value target, deep within Iran, shows the inability of the unpopular regime to protect even its most important figures. It followed the devastating July 2, 2020, attack on the Natanz nuclear enrichment facility.

This was a renewal of the war of assassination and sabotage that had been waged under the Bush and Obama administrations, during which a number of Iranian physicists were killed. That campaign ended when negotiations were entered toward the 2015 Iran nuclear agreement.

## IMPERIALISM, NOT CONSPIRACY

The timing was significant, falling in the transition period between the Trump and Biden administrations. Like many such deliberately murky events, it led to conspiracy theories as to "who benefits" that served to obscure the nature of imperialism which can actually be far stranger than any conspiracy theory.

For example, it isn't often noted that the CIA agent who organized the coup against the legitimately elected government of Iranian Prime Minister Mohammad Mosaddegh in 1953, Kermit Roosevelt, was also an anti-Zionist who gave a presentation on "The Arab Position on Palestine" to U.S. military leaders in 1948.

Likewise, the present regime in Iran is loath to admit that the 1953 coup would have failed but for the intervention of former Majlis speaker Ayatollah Kashani and his religious allies.

## REACTIONARY 'FRENEMIES'

Again, for all Ayatollah Khomeini's anti-American rhetoric as his reactionary forces hijacked the 1978-79 Iranian Revolution from the masses, within a few years his regime was secretly purchasing U.S. arms from Israel.

**Seen in terms of the various ideological covers for state-capitalist power, imperialism can only appear as cynicism—a hollow rhetoric of fraud and violence. Illusions in it can only lead to disaster.**

It served U.S. imperial purposes to allow the Iranian regime to massacre the Syrian revolutionaries who posed a real threat to world imperialism. This was utterly cynical. When Iran overextended itself, the architect of its Syrian genocide, Qasem Soleimani, was eliminated with equal cynicism.

## EU contradictions

German Chancellor Angela Merkel is retiring from politics this year, and Armin Laschet has succeeded her as leader of the Christian Democratic Union and likely candidate for next chancellor.

As the governor of industrial North Rhine-Westphalia, Laschet sees Russian energy and Chinese trade in cold economic terms typical of any bourgeois.

More telling is his position on Syria, the test of world politics. Laschet reduced the Syrian Revolution to a question of "ISIS and Al Nusra" versus "President Assad," thus openly opting for fascism over revolution.

## HALF THE WAY TO FASCISM

French President Emmanuel Macron, facing opposition from neo-fascist Marine Le Pen, has also tilted rightward. He has adopted an anti-immigrant rhetoric that echoes her Rassemblement National party in order to steal her voters. A bill to exempt police from public scrutiny has angered civil libertarians.

**The Netherlands government of Prime Minister Mark Rutte was forced to resign in January when it was revealed to have falsely accused over 20,000 families, largely immigrants and minorities, of child welfare fraud. The accusations led to bankruptcies and broken homes.**

Rutte's People's Party for Freedom and Democracy will be challenged in this year's Dutch elections by Geert Wilders' racist Party for Freedom.

Italy's government was thrown into crisis following the withdrawal of the small Italia Viva party from the ruling coalition. If the fragile, minority coalition remaining doesn't hold, new elections would likely bring former strongman Matteo Salvini's League and Georgia Meloni's even more right-wing Brothers of Italy into power.

## NEWS AND LETTERS COMMITTEES

# Who We Are And What We Stand For

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

This body of ideas challenges all those desiring freedom to transcend the limitations of post-Marx Marxism. In light of the crises of our nuclear-armed world, climate change, and failed revolutions, it becomes imperative not only

to reject what is, but to further work out the revolutionary Humanist future inherent in the present. The recreation of Marx's philosophy as Marxist-Humanism is recorded in Dunayevskaya's archives, *The Raya Dunayevskaya Collection—Marxist-Humanism: A Half-Century of Its World Development*, deposited at Wayne State University in Detroit and available to all.

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

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

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

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