

NEWS & LETTERS

“Human power is its own end”—Karl Marx

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Amazon union vote hides workers' reality

On April 9, the vote tally was released in the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union (RWDSU) drive for union recognition at Amazon's giant warehouse at Bessemer, Ala. It was 738 in favor and 1,798 against with over 500 votes challenged, mostly by Amazon. Of the 5,800 workers eligible only 55% even bothered to vote. Leaving this as a mere defeat for labor hides more than it reveals about the present moment.

EDITORIAL

Powerful employers like Amazon have an immense advantage in union elections, having full access to workers in their authoritarian-run workplace. Some Bessemer Amazon workers contacted RWDSU and gathered over 3,000 union authorization cards for an election.

TURNOVER DERAILS ORGANIZING DRIVE

Unfortunately, their organizing drive started last June at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, dramatically limiting in-person access to employees. Amazon spared no expense, hiring union-busting consultants in an omnipresent anti-union propaganda campaign that included weekly mandatory meetings, one-on-one chats with managers, a daily barrage of emails and texting, phone calls, constant rumors of a possible closure, monitoring and planting company talking points in employee Facebook discussions.

Amazon's firings, contested as illegal by the union, and especially working conditions, drove a tremendous employee turnover. Turnover in the thousands per month was a huge obstacle to recruiting fellow workers to join the union. Amazon also grew exponentially during the pandemic, when many precarious workers lost their livelihood, making them desperate and afraid to risk

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THOUGHTS FROM THE OUTSIDE

Fred Hampton and the Idea of freedom

by Faruq

I happen to be in a city that doesn't sleep. I see many different story lines. However, in my mind, the only stories worth telling are about liberation struggles.

The concept of liberation struggles is lost on many people. This is a blatant reality, no matter the skin color. There are many discussions explaining the social conditions that foster the present reality. But the only discussion worth having is rigorous development of a transformative methodology that clearly moves us past the present social reality, i.e., capitalist oppression.

CAPITALISM SPAWNS BETRAYAL

A serious discussion of the idea of freedom has a critical aspect, it reveals within itself its opposite, the betrayal of human solidarity. A recent movie, *Judas and the Black Messiah*, tells the story of the state execution of Fred Hampton.

Judas betrayed Jesus for 30 pieces of silver, Bill O'Neal betrayed Fred Hampton for \$300. The state terrorists were so interested in finding a Judas within Fred Hampton's circle because Hampton was a powerful new young voice for human solidarity between various groups in Chicago, gangs and others: Black, Hispanic, poor whites and youth. He was an inspiration for a new kind of humanity, calling for a rainbow coalition, a phrase Jesse Jackson echoed years later.

Betrayal, what in prison is called “snitching,” is an aspect of capitalism. Capitalism creates a myth of an isolated individual. Snitches, Judases, are people who are

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ONLINE: www.newsandletters.org

The people of Myanmar unite against the military coup

by Bob McGuire

The day after the military staged a coup in Myanmar (Burma) on Feb. 1, mass marches crisscrossing the country displayed utter rejection of military rule. The rage of demonstrators, the numbers of actions and shows of resistance have only deepened in the three months since. Not even the rising numbers of martyrs killed by soldiers, more than 800, have muted the unarmed demonstrations of the opposition. Massacres by the military in Yangon and elsewhere have driven protest underground for brief periods or forced quicker unannounced actions.

Demonstrations against the coup were not confined to major cities like Yangon, Mandalay and Naypyidaw, the capital. Far from it. Participants by the millions have marched on a nearly daily basis in hundreds of cities, towns and villages, raising banners and flashing the three-finger symbol of defiance against the coup.

The marches are multi-generational. Students and young workers are prominent, as is the generation that rose in rebellion in 1988 and endured bloody repression at the hands of a previous military dictatorship, the SLORC. Other, even older participants, remember the 1962 military coup that crushed a civilian government.

Women have been at the center of this resistance. Women were pivotal in staging walkouts at textile mills in the first few days, and in starting and maintaining a general strike beginning Feb. 22. Women are sometimes, literally, the vanguard of mass marches, forming lines at the front despite the fact that soldiers confronting them have spared neither women nor children.

The military has repeatedly blocked telephone and internet access, with the intent of disrupting communications within the country and impeding information getting out to the world. Soldiers firing on crowds, especially targeting reporters and medical workers—800 lives is probably a drastic undercounting of casualties. Predominantly unarmed marches and vigils armed with, at most, slingshots, bricks and street barricades are matched against machine guns. Insurgents have employed creative

tactics like silent strikes and unannounced flash mobs to minimize effects of escalating military repression.

ETHNIC MINORITIES KEEP FIGHTING

Ethnic minorities in areas bordering Thailand, Laos, China and India, who have asserted claims to self-determination, have been targeted by all political forces in the capital in the years since independence. They have now joined in resistance against the coup—from Myitkina and villages in Kachin State in the north to Kawthaung more than 1,400 miles south.

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing led the coup on Feb. 1, making baseless claims of voter fraud in the November elections. Despite the landslide victory of the National League for Democracy, winning more than 80% of the votes over the pro-military parties, Hlaing succeeded in doing what Trump tried to do in the U.S.: he declared the elec-

tions null and void. The army, known as Tatmadaw, arrested Aung San Suu Kyi, leader of the National League for Democracy (NLD), and President U Win Myint on petty, transparently concocted charges of violating the rules of distancing during the COVID-19 pandemic, and then blocked them and the rest of the elected legislators from being sworn in for their five-year terms.

Because the nation has been ruled by a series of military governments, followed by a civilian government that acted only under the thumb of the Tatmadaw, Hlaing might have expected a fatalistic acceptance from the population. Instead, he discovered a people, many peoples, whose opposition continues to deepen.

The elected NLD legislators, stopped by the Tatmadaw from being sworn in, quickly formed the underground Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (CRPH)—the lawmaking body of Myanmar. They claim to be the new legitimate government, and CRPH banners abounded in marches. But, after months of daily marching and being shot down in the streets resisting the military coup, no one is going to settle for what had passed for normal political life before the coup, nor uncritically follow the NLD.

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One of the thousands of demonstrations in Burma against the military coup, this one in Mayangone, Yangon.

Biden's broken immigration policy

by Buddy Bell

The number of people who cross the border without documents is rising and has been for many years. This trend has remained steady through the transition from Trump to President Biden, notwithstanding the self-promotional lies and distortions of professional smugglers and ultraconservative members of the U.S. Congress. One statistic for 2021 actually jumped higher: the number of undocumented minor children crossing the border alone. They are mainly leaving Central American and South American countries decimated by a growing governmental contempt for human rights and democracy, propagated in part by decades of U.S. intervention on behalf of U.S. big business profits.

DESPERATE CHILDREN TRAVELING ALONE

The Biden administration is scrambling to build or recommitment enough facilities to house the children until custody can be granted to a family member. There are more than 20,000 children in shelters run by Health and Human Services (HHS), some of which are tent facilities like in Carrizo Springs, Texas, one of the first Trump-era sites to be reopened by Biden.

A couple years ago, tent facilities like Carrizo Springs were denounced by many Democrats as ill-equipped to house children. Now Republican members of Congress are claiming the children were better off “Remain[ing] in Mexico,” conveniently leaving out the levels of violence and harassment

which migrants are subjected to while waiting months for an appointment in the border zone. During the supposedly humane Trump era, about a third of asylum seekers missed their appointment dates, sometimes because they were kidnapped by gangs, detained by Mexican police, or in the hospital. Viviana, an asylum seeker from Cuba, had a miscarriage in Matamoros, Mexico: “I told them, ‘Listen, this is what happened to me. This is why I missed my court date,’ and they just said, ‘Sorry, there's nothing we can do.’”

Democratic Texas Congressman Henry Cuellar is the vice chair of the Appropriations Subcommittee for the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). He is the House Democrat who has taken the most money from private prison companies GEO group and CoreCivic (previously Corrections Corp. of America) and now likes to criticize the presence of more than 2,000 children waiting for days and weeks in Border Patrol cells, going so far as to send photographs to the media and tour the interview circuit.

Biden had pledged to end for-profit detention, but his Jan. 26 executive order to cancel contracts was limited to the Department of Justice and will not necessarily apply to DHS. While Biden cancelled construction of the border wall, he had no qualms in appropriating money to border wall construction during the 1990s. But now he wants to “direct federal resources to smart [high-tech] border enforcement efforts.” Border security contractors gave

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U.S. in Afghanistan: 20 years of betrayal

by Terry Moon

The U.S. is leaving Afghanistan to pursue its own interests, which is exactly the only reason it was ever in the country in the first place. The *real* mission there was

WOMAN REASON

would never again become a place that harbored terrorists who could harm the U.S. That doesn't erase the many brave and caring women and men, Americans and others, who did and do care about the people of Afghanistan and spent a good part of their lives doing what they could to give aid and treat them as the human beings they are.

THE WRECKING BALL OF U.S. OCCUPATION

But this has never been the case with the U.S. government, who for two decades brutalized and murdered the people while destroying their environment. Over 22,000 American lives were lost and 20,589 U.S. troops wounded in action. That horrible toll pales next to what the Afghans experienced: since 2001 over 157,000 people are known to have been killed by the war in Afghanistan—a gross undercount. And this does not include all those who died from war-related issues like rampant disease, starvation, maternal and infant deaths, femicides, etc.

Douglas Lute, a three-star Army general and the Afghan war czar during the Bush and Obama administrations, admitted how ignorant and unprepared the U.S. was when it invaded Afghanistan. He told government interviewers in 2015 (quoted in a must-read expose in *The Washington Post* titled, “At War With The Truth”): “We were devoid of a fundamental understanding of Afghanistan—we didn't know what we were doing...We didn't have the foggiest notion of what we were undertaking.”

Long before the U.S. invaded, in the 1930s Afghans were working to transform their society. In the 1970s, women's rights were again on the agenda along with land reform for two reasons: it was what Afghan women themselves were striving for and the new Women's Liberation Movement was sweeping across the world. Progress was decimated when the USSR invaded in 1979. The U.S. then armed what became the fundamentalists—including Osama bin Laden's faction—who were fighting the Russians, and neither of those sides cared about women or freedom for the Afghan people.

U.S. PUT THUGS AND WARLORDS IN CHARGE

After the 2001 U.S. invasion Afghanistan had a chance of becoming a place where its citizens could enjoy some freedoms, but at every opportunity the U.S. stopped it. An example is the *loya jirga* [grand council] of July 2002. (See “Solidarity with women of Afghanistan,” by Terry Moon, Aug.-Sept. 2003, *N&L*, p. 2) There the U.S. insisted that the decision-makers at the *loya jirga* be the forces responsible for countless brutalities under the former Burhanuddin Rabbani government. Whereas before the U.S. stepped in, participants said, “Men and women mingled openly and comfortably...discussing the compatibility of women's rights with our Islamic traditions.” This atmosphere was destroyed when the U.S. forced the postponement of the *loya jirga* while it strong-armed the former King, Zahir Shah, into turning down the nomination to be head of state to counterbalance the Northern Alliance, which the U.S. was courting.

After the U.S. destroyed any semblance of democracy, *loya jirga* participants reported: “the atmosphere...changed radically. The gathering was now teeming with intelligence agents who openly threatened reform-minded delegates, especially women.” The warlords came out controlling the armed forces, security services, foreign affairs, and ministry staffs—in short, the country. All thanks to the U.S.

Once the U.S. took the fate of the country out of the hands of the Afghan people, women had a divided view of how to move forward. Many have emphatically stated that the U.S. presence is their only hope of keeping the slim victories they have won of education for girls and the opening up of activities for women and girls in jobs, sports and simply taking part in the public life of their country. Other women, like Malalai Joya, have said just as emphatically “We in civil society face three enemies in my country: the Taliban, the warlords disguised as a government, and the U.S. occupation. If you in the U.S. can mobilize to get the U.S. and NATO troops out of my country, we'd only have two.”

THE U.S.'S INDIFFERENT ARROGANCE

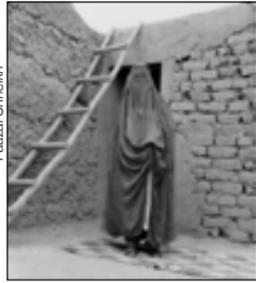
There's an indifferent arrogance in the U.S. “negotiating” with the Taliban, who continue to murder women for no other reason than they have a job, as well as others who do not adhere to their fanatical concept of Islam.

By negotiating with the Taliban—who all now seem to agree will take over Afghanistan in record time—the U.S. has given legitimacy (not to mention an entire country) to a group of thugs who are in the process of becoming the Afghan version of the Iranian so-called “Revolutionary” Guards, or the Burmese Tatmadaw. They will inherit a country awash in weapons and government corruption fostered by the U.S. throwing billions of dollars and billions more in weapons into a country where most people are incredibly poor.

Already the Taliban have assassinated 2,250 people

in 2020, an increase of 169% over 2019. This included attacks on schools; assassinations of women in public life; and an assault on a maternity hospital where 24 mothers in labor, children and babies were gunned down. “It is like taking the rarest pearls from our midst,” said Torek Farhadi, an analyst and former Afghan government adviser.

The Taliban taking power means far more than women being banned from working outside the home and leaving home only when accompanied by a male relative. Under the Taliban women



What many women were forced to wear under the Taliban.

ran clandestine schools for themselves and girls. They ran clinics for women who were forbidden to see male doctors. Girls pretended to be boys so they could walk the streets and perhaps get work to help out at home. When women and girls fighting back were caught they were killed. The Taliban gloried in public executions by stoning—an excruciating death. Ordering women to stay at home wasn't enough, they also ordered their windows be painted black so no one could see out. This is the hell that 20 years of U.S. occupation, billions of dollars and thousands of lost lives is helpless to keep from reemerging.

The U.S. wanted to destroy the Taliban, yet they are leaving them stronger than ever, empowering them so greatly that the U.S. is not even sure if it can maintain an American Embassy there. The U.S. leaving is a surrender and the whole world knows that truth. What's going to happen next is not because the U.S. is leaving, it is because they are leaving after damaging the country and the people's aspirations in unfathomable and hugely destructive ways. The surrender is not the reversal of the occupation, it's just the official recognition of the U.S.'s spectacular failure.

WOMENWORLDWIDE

by Artemis

In April five Canadian feminist activists with backgrounds in economics, sociology, politics, and union organizing released *The Care Economy Statement*. After studying the impact of and response to the pandemic, they agreed, it “has revealed that a more resilient future requires transformational change, not just a return to ‘normal.’” Caregiving is a societal responsibility, not just a personal one. Failures in the system have been a disaster for caregivers and those receiving care. “Deficiencies have weighed heaviest on women, racialized and Indigenous populations, and those with disabilities.” Evidence shows society would benefit from a “shift from thinking of care as an expenditure to understanding it as an economic driver through investment in people and good jobs.”

* * *

Through February, thousands of feminists demonstrated across France in support of “Julie,” the pseudonym of a 25-year-old woman. Between the ages of 13 and 15, she was groomed and raped over 100 times by 20 firemen, who staff ambulances. They responded every time she had anxiety seizures, which led to the need for sedatives, removal from school, self-harm, and suicide attempts leaving her with disabilities. Only three were arrested and charged with “sexual violation,” a minor misconduct charge, but not with rape. In France, all rape victims must prove in court they were forced, and feminists are demanding an age of consent law.

* * *

In March, Nawal El Sadaawi, an Egyptian radical feminist, Marxist, writer, activist, physician, researcher, psychiatrist, and university lecturer died at age 89. Her 56 books included *Women and Sex* (1972), a foundational text of second-wave feminism, and *The Hidden Face of Eve: Women in the Arab World* (1977), denouncing oppressions of women including sexual assault, prostitution, female genital mutilation (FGM), honor killing, and forced marriage. For her activism, the government fired her from the Ministry of Health, closed down her magazine *Health*, and imprisoned her for three months, during which she formed the Arab Women Solidarity Association and wrote *Memoirs from the Women's Prison* (1984). She held controversial positions against FGM, male circumcision, the veil, beauty practices, capitalism, colonialism, and all fundamentalist religions. She said, “Feminism was not invented by American women, as many people think. No, feminism is embedded in the culture, and in the struggle of all women all over the world.”

* * *

In February, the Illinois Prison Project, which helps to file clemency petitions and educates the public on behalf of those wrongly incarcerated, announced the launch of the Women and Survivors Project. It focuses on post-conviction cases in which women committed a crime but their circumstances were not considered, for example, survivors of abuse acting in self-defense, those coerced into assisting an abuser, etc. They also include cases in which the punishment was too severe such as a woman sentenced to six years in prison for stealing under \$300.

Review: #ChurchToo

by Adele

In 2017, a wave of victims of sexual violence and harassment began sharing stories and naming perpetrators, calling it the “Me Too Movement” after their use of the hashtag #MeToo on social media. Emily Joy Allison created the hashtag #ChurchToo to share her story of an adult youth group leader's attempt to groom her into being raped when she was a teenager. By the next morning, thousands had used #ChurchToo to tell their stories of abuse within the Church.

PURITY CULTURE BLAMES VICTIM

In her book, *#ChurchToo: How Purity Culture Upholds Abuse and How to Find Healing*, Allison describes her experience in which her parents stepped in before the predator could rape her. However, they blamed her for the grooming, made her apologize to the predator (whose other victims have also come forth), and berated her for many sessions lasting hours. As a result she developed feelings of disassociation from her body, panic attacks, bipolar disorder, and eventual estrangement from her parents. She only later realized they labeled her, a teen with no sex education, a “sinner” for something an older adult was doing to harm her. Receiving therapy, learning about sexual abuse, and studying similarities in #ChurchToo stories, she exposed how purity culture encourages sexual abuse.

In the 1990s, the religious Right began promoting purity culture in churches and, using federal funding, public schools. They present it as a wholesome, traditional, Biblical cure-all for society's ills. Allison explains that its teaching of abstinence before and outside of legal, heterosexual marriage “is not and never has been ‘the historic Christian position.’”

Another historically new aspect is fundamentalist opposition to contraception and abortion, which resulted from the unpopularity and failure of the religious Right's original issue of joining denominational forces to oppose desegregation. Their opposition to reproductive justice and promotion of the notion that women's only “value” is supposed “sexual purity” stems from white nationalism. Allison interviews women of color who describe being automatically stigmatized under purity culture, which is “steeped in white supremacy.”

A major factor in this climate of abuse is complementarianism, patriarchy posing as equality. This is the notion men and women have opposite, “complementary” natures, with men having more “reason” and leadership ability. Fundamentalists claim society would collapse if these roles are abandoned, while in reality, the doctrine of male headship over women in marriage and in churches encourages grooming, gaslighting, and abuse.

ANTI-ABORTION MELTS WITH RACISM

Teaching girls obedience to male authority and to despise their own desires causes detachment from one's own body and an inability to set boundaries. Allison explains the nervous system responses to trauma, fight or flight, also includes freeze or fawn “in which an individual may overly accommodate others in order to manage their [own] fear.”

Purity culture claims any violation of a woman's boundaries is her own fault for failure to maintain “modesty,” which is supposed to control supposedly uncontrollable male sexuality. In reality, predators are deliberate and calculating in sexual assault and in grooming, which is gradual boundary violation. Victims are retraumatized when told they are equal collaborators in “sin.” Men and LGBTQ people develop serious self-esteem issues when told their sexuality is supposedly excessive and sinful.

This book is important encouragement to demolish purity culture, which cannot be reformed and is always abusive and dehumanizing. Allison describes the difficulty of facing personal trauma and loss of relationships and communities upon speaking out as an abuse survivor. She tells survivors how to report experiences, reconnect with their bodies, and cultivate their own values. For those seeking new churches or religions, she describes characteristics of healthy communities valuing equality and humanity of all.

Readers – Share your solidarity struggles and learn about others' in each issue of *News & Letters*. See page 7 for how to subscribe or go to newsandletters.org

LA pits poor against poorer houseless

Los Angeles—On March 24, around 200 activists protested against a surprise eviction of the tent encampment in Echo Park, with just a one-day warning from Councilman Mitch O'Farrell's office. That evening, around 40 police cars surrounded the park, and police in riot gear pressured the tented folks to pack their stuff.



Tent with garden in Echo Park.

Buses were sent in to take people to hotels and motels which had, since March 2020, been contracted with the city to provide temporary beds for displaced individuals. Many resisted leaving their tents, and were allowed to stay until the next

morning, as fencing was put up all around the park. Helicopters circled overhead, two at a time, for 36 hours.

On March 25, 182 protesters and even reporters and lawyers were arrested for unlawful assembly and failure to disperse. Some of the houseless individuals who still refused to leave were also arrested.

There is antagonism between houseless people and the families and businesses close to them, here in Los Angeles. The real culprits are more powerful. For poor communities to scapegoat even poorer people is the way that the 1% keep us fighting for space and resources while they throw us bones.

About five years ago the tents started settling along the west side of the artificial lake in Echo Park. For a while the locals did not complain much. Those within the tent community took measures to regulate behaviors and to delegate chores, cleaning responsibilities and food preparation. A fully equipped kitchen tent was built, in wood and canvas with a stove, barbecue and refrigerator. Sofas were set up, and flower and vegetable gardens were planted neatly next to some tents.

MUTUAL AID IN THE PARK

Many people pooled their resources to share food, provided useful information to each other, and protected tent neighbors from aggressors—during the past year there have been four deaths in the tent community, by overdose or murder. People who had acted destructively were sometimes banned.

Most residents of the surrounding community in online debates took sides either for the homeless or for the local housed residents. Only a few voices spoke up to support both housed residents and tented individuals, and to demand that our taxes be used more effectively to assist mentally ill and addicted people to access better housing and mental health services.

Among the houseless there were clearly people with disabling addictions and emotional challenges, but others had fallen on hard times due to economic hardship. The number of tents had grown from around 10 in 2019 to around 40 and about 200 people, as the pandemic progressed—in spite of various temporary (and extremely regulated and restrictive) housing offerings by the city.

Most of the residents in the immediate area are first or second-generation immigrant families from Central America and Mexico, and often live in cramped quarters, so the park has been an essential space for social get-togethers and exercise. As a result of the growing population of houseless people at the park, many local residents had stopped going there.

My favorite time to walk at the park had been dusk, but the pathway had become dark due to people pulling the wires of street lamps to power their heaters, refrigerators, crockpots and phone chargers. So I had stopped walking within the park boundaries.

A young mother who used to meet me with her son at the play area has refused to spend time there. I was told that the park bathrooms were now used regularly for sexual encounters and drug use, even during the day.

During daytime walks last year I twice saw packs of

rats in the tent area. Lately I have seen a decrease in wild birds, and I worry about the condition of the water habitat for frogs, turtles, fish, and waterfowl.

SKYROCK-ETING HOUSING COSTS IN LA

There are at least 40,000 homeless people currently in Los Angeles County as housing costs have gone sky high. As a mental health worker at a program assisting the unhoused, and having personal friends who are, or have been, houseless, I am acutely aware of the many emotional, financial, and systemic barriers affecting people without homes.

In 2016 the City of LA, by a public vote, earmarked up to \$1.2 billion to develop permanent as well as temporary housing for struggling people. Very little permanent housing has been built. Temporary housing involves strict curfews, some case management and counseling, and requires clients to improve their conditions and become independently housed within a few months. These short-term solutions are insignificant in the face of increasing poverty and health problems throughout society.

—Anna Maillon



Banner displayed in Echo Park.

THOUGHTS FROM THE OUTSIDE

Fred Hampton and the Idea of freedom

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convinced they are acting in their own best interest at the cost of breaking their social ties. Prisons create snitches not only because they want information to use against others, but because it is a proven method of breaking people. Denmark Vesey, betrayed before an 1822 slave uprising, warned against trusting a slave who accepts gifts from a master.

These “gifts” represent attaching value to things, not one’s bond with other human beings. They reflect the fetishism of commodities. Putting value into possessions, especially at the cost of your human relations, is cruel and deadly. Prisons found that snitches become a lot more violent, animalistic, don’t care who they hurt, just to survive for the moment. Prisons had to create special yards for them, which, even according to their own data, were most violent, where new gangs were created as the snitches attempted to create some semblance of self-respect.

The Pelican Bay hunger strikers overcame the idea the system perpetuated. It re-established human solidarity across gang, i.e., racial lines. As opposed to the snitches the system used to keep people in perpetual solitary confinement, the idea of solidarity caught on with tens of thousands of California’s prisoners and many more outside prisons. The Agreement to End Hostilities was in a way a continuation of Fred Hampton’s vision, and before that of George Jackson’s “settle your quarrels...”, a step towards a new society for all. As the Agreement states: “We can no longer allow the California Dept. of Corrections to use us against each other for their benefit!! ...collectively we are an empowered mighty force...”

FREEDOM IDEA IS FELT BY MANY

Out here, the social connections are much looser than they were for that powerful moment during the hunger strikes. Even family connections are torn apart over money, mostly by the lack of it. How do we help human beings rethink their relations?

Fred Hampton said, “I am a revolutionary. You can kill a revolutionary, but you can’t kill the idea.” What he implied was that the idea should not depend just on me. When the idea appears, it does not depend on an individual, it is felt by many people. But it can get lost, forgotten, when its moment passes.

That is why we need to go into what is this idea in and for itself? It is not just a moment of new human relations. Reflection on it brings us back to what Marx meant when he projected that what it means to be human is to be free in our every-day activities and to see others as equally self-determining. This might seem like a utopian idea, given the persistence of racism. But we must keep in mind that racism is a social construct that we must work through. It threatens the realization of our humanity. We have to revisit how the Black struggle has always deepened the Idea of Freedom in this country, made it real, up to today’s Black Lives Matter.

Central America deal: troops at borders

Immigrants facing troops—Honduras, Guatemala and Mexico have signed an agreement with the Biden Administration to put more military at their borders to stop immigrants from attempting to reach the U.S. Mexico will maintain 10,000 troops along its southern border; Guatemala will send 1,500 military and police personnel to its border with Honduras, while setting up 12 checkpoints along migration routes.

The White House claims these actions will stop smugglers from trafficking immigrants and will reduce the dangers to unaccompanied minors attempting to migrate. The U.S. has also arranged for radio messages in Spanish, Portuguese and several Indigenous languages to be broadcast in a number of Latin American countries urging people not to come.

Vice-President Harris has been assigned responsibility for working with Central American countries to coordinate humanitarian and economic aid—a supposed carrot and stick approach.

However, the life and death conditions in much of Central America—with widespread drought driving people off the land, threatening gang activities, extreme poverty, plus two recent devastating hurricanes, and now the COVID-19 pandemic—makes the situation desperate for hundreds of thousands, many who feel they have little choice but to flee.

—Eugene Walker

Amazon union vote hides workers’ reality

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their new Amazon income and healthcare coverage offered upon hiring.

Even under these conditions Amazon workers nationwide had been staging work actions, especially after COVID-19 struck and nearly 20,000 Amazon employees tested positive by last October. Safety walkouts and demonstrations began as early as last March and spread to 50 work sites across the county. Over 1,000 Amazon workers nationwide reached out to RWDSU for help during the union drive. The overriding issue continues to be Amazon’s brutal and inhuman working conditions confronting those living on the edge.

TO AMAZON, ROBOTS & HUMANS ARE THE SAME

Amazon’s tyrannical conditions of labor begin from an algorithm that runs an army of robots that don’t get sick in a pandemic; they don’t complain about speed-up. The algorithm seamlessly weaves humans into the same production process, tracking their every motion on the job, constantly inching up quotas to meet the superhuman capacity of robots.

As Bessemer worker Jennifer Bates put it in her testimony before a Bernie Sanders budget committee hearing on “The Income and Wealth Inequality Crisis in America”: “Working at an Amazon warehouse is no easy thing. Shifts are long, the pace is super fast, you’re constantly being watched and monitored. They seem to think you’re another machine.”

The absolute limit to the long hours and inhuman pace of work is death. An Amazon-modeled online retailer in South Korea, Coupang, was cited for death-by-overwork when 27-year-old Jang Duk-loon was found dead from a heart attack after his night shift. Eight claims are being filed against Coupang for death-by-overwork in the past year. Amazon has twice the average rate of safety and injury violations for warehouse workers.

Workers are also demanding a living wage, which capital drives down even as worker productivity rises astronomically. Amazon occupies a former U.S. Steel mill site with jobs that paid in today’s dollars more in the range of \$50 an hour. At the hearing where Jennifer Bates testified, Bernie Sanders emphasized that worker productivity has skyrocketed even as capital demands they get paid less, adding that Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos, already the richest man in the world, had his net worth go up to \$182 billion, up \$77 billion since the pandemic started while ordinary workers struggle to survive.

DEHUMANIZATION OF LABOR IS PRIMARY

Yet the singular focus on pay inequality betrays the limited thinking of many, including union officials who are not in the workplace where the primary concern is the dehumanization of laboring activity. There, all intelligence and science, as Marx once put it, goes into the machine and its algorithm, while the human being is reduced to a material force.

In mass strikes and wildcats, rank-and-file workers have opposed the inhumanity of capitalist automation since the beginning of its introduction after World War II. Workers’ human solidarity begins with questioning the very nature of their life activity under capitalist production. As one miner asked during the 1949-50 general strike in the coal mines over the introduction of a monster machine, the continuous miner, “What kind of labor should man do?” Answering that demands a return to Marx’s humanism and philosophy of human activity.

A donation of \$8 to News & Letters pays for a subscription plus the **Pelican Bay Hunger Strikers** pamphlet to be sent to a prisoner.

To order see page 7.



FROM THE WRITINGS OF RAYADUNAYEVSKAYA

Editor's note: Since the term "Marxist humanism" has once again become current, but subject to the most varying, and often sanitized, meanings, we present Raya Dunayevskaya's "Two Worlds" column from the December 1961 N&L, originally titled "Marxist Humanism in New Books and Reviews," together with excerpts from her two-part Weekly Political Letter from that month on "Why the New Crop of Books on Marxist-Humanism? Why Not on Its American Roots? Notes on the Historic and Philosophic Origin of News & Letters Committees." The latter is found at pp. 87-96 of <https://rayadunayevskaya.org/ArchivePDFs/2906.pdf>. Once more, we face the questions she explored then: Why now, and how did these writers end up so opposite to where they seemed to be starting from?

by Raya Dunayevskaya

A whole new spate of books has been published this year on the Humanism of Marxism.¹ In contrast to the almost total silence which surrounded my *Marxism and Freedom* in 1958, which first published an English translation of the early Humanist essays of Marx, the reviews of the new books and the letters to the editors about them are numerous and exude enthusiasm. The most pretentious of these are by socialists who make each comment sound like a manifesto announcing the discovery of a new world. What they all fail to note is that the new books which started out as scholarly, eloquent treatises on "original Marxism," on Marx as a philosopher of freedom, ended by falling into the trap of the veritable conspiracy between the State Department and Russian Communism to force an identity between those two irreconcilable opposites—Marxism, a theory of liberation, and Communism, the practice of enslavement.

The shocking and—so far as the new authors are concerned—unintentional similarity of results arises, of course, from an affinity of belief in capitalism. Nevertheless, the "end product" sounds unbelievable in face of the authors' own denials of the Communist contention that there was a young, immature "left Hegelian" named Karl Marx, and there was "the scientific economist and practical revolutionary" whose theories comprise Marxism because of its founder Karl Marx—and the twain never met. Therefore, the "how" of the startling result is worth going into.

UNFOUNDED CONCLUSIONS

Let's first take the most profound of the recent studies—*Marxism* by George Lichtheim. It is a truly eloquent presentation of Marx's vision of world history as a "creative drama of human liberation." Mr. Lichtheim writes as passionately in defense of the truth that the young Marx and the mature Marx were one and the same:

"It is true that in later years he (Marx) took a less exalted view of the part which thought had to play in transforming the world, just as the concept of social revolution which would transcend philosophy by 'realising' its aims, disappeared from his writings; but it was never repudiated, nor could it have been, for it was precisely what he meant by the union of theory and practice." (p. 54)

As Mr. Lichtheim reaches post-Marxist Marxism,² however, his hatred of Lenin allows the scholar to write as if present-day Communism and Leninism are very nearly one and the same. No doubt Mr. Lichtheim thought he was attacking Lenin, not Marx. In fact, he was inexorably led to the rejection of Marxism for our era. The real trouble," he writes on p. 397, "is that Marxism tried to do duty both as a theory of society and as a philosophy of history and that its philosophical insights are hopelessly at variance with its scientific insights." Out of nowhere comes the sudden conclusion that "we" (that is to say, the exploitative, capitalist society against which Marx had rebelled, aged by a century) have "realized" Marx's vision of "the creative drama of human liberation."

Now it is one thing to rationalize one's acceptance of the status quo—men made of sterner stuff than scholars have often done so. It is quite something else to read into Marx such an analysis and hence a rejection of post-Marxist Marxism, not to mention an equation of Leninism with its Communist usurpers. This unfounded conclusion is even more vulgarly presented in the less important work—*Philosophy and Myth in Karl Marx* by Robert Tucker.

Prof. Tucker destroys the myth of two totally different philosophies—Humanism and "scientific economics"—by creating a new myth, which, however, he attributes to none other than Marx: "the myth of warfare of labor and capital was Marx's final answer to the problems of man's self-alienation" (p. 258). Only a man living in an ivory tower, far removed from the class struggle of everyday life, in the factory and out of it, could describe everyday reality as a "myth."

1. Representative of these are the two books under consideration here: *Marxism* by George Lichtheim (London, Routledge, and Kegan Paul, 1961), and *Philosophy and Myth in Karl Marx* by Robert Tucker (Cambridge University Press, 1961).

2. "Post-Marxist" is here meant chronologically. This was long before Dunayevskaya originated the category of "post-Marx Marxism as pejorative."—Editor

Rival approaches to Marxist humanism

BELATED 'DISCOVERIES'

Nevertheless, this book is hailed as "the best single study of Marx's early *Manuscripts*," by Daniel Bell, who has made a name for himself as a "scholar on Marxism." Mr. Bell achieved the status through innumerable writings (which include endless footnotes) that change their tone to fit the times. Especially illuminating for our purposes are the 1959 and 1960 versions of an article on "the historical Marx." The 1959 version was called "Rediscovery of Alienation" (*Journal of Philosophy*, Nov. 19, 1959).

Although it followed the Communist attack on Humanism in 1955³ by four years and the Hungarian Revolution which had raised the Humanist banner by three years, Mr. Bell had still not "rediscovered" Humanism. By April-June 1960, however, when *Soviet Survey* devoted a full issue on the subject chosen by the Russian Communists for their struggle against Humanism—"Revisionism"—Mr. Bell refurbished his 1959 article, this time entitling it "In Search of Marxist Humanism."⁴ By attributing what characterizes his writings—"Different times, different *Zeitgeist*"—to others, Mr. Bell manages to reduce the whole question of Humanism "to the relatively minute but important changes in the pace of work, such as extending job cycles, job enlargement, allowing natural rhythms in work, etc." This is supposed to make not only the worker in an automated factory happy, but to make "the concept of alienation...stand on its own feet, without the crutch of Marx."

Allegedly the "left" socialist Michael Harrington opposes all this—or so he tells us in his "Marx versus Marx" (*New Politics*, Fall 1961) where he pompously announces as if it were the first time these words were ever uttered: "I would suggest that both [Daniel Bell and Maurice Merleau-Ponty] are wrong, and that the mature Marx deepens the humanist categories of his early work." Despite this pronouncement and the further admonition that "the crucial task" is the relating of Marxist Humanism to the present day, Harrington spends 12 pages in this quarterly as he has previously spent the full page in the newspaper *New America*, Sept. 22, "The Rediscovery of Marx" not on "the crucial task," but to show off his "erudition" by referring to all sorts of works in German and French, works not easily obtainable, if at all, and not likely to be checked by the majority of his readers who do not know foreign languages.⁵

WORKERS' REVOLTS GIVE NEW MEANING TO HUMANISM

At the same time he studiously, and by all sorts of clever ruses, avoids any reference to my work with which he has been acquainted ever since its publication in 1958. I raise this question not in order to establish "first-edness." Not at all. As I wrote to *The New Leader*:

"The dispute over who was the first to translate Marx's 1844 Economic-Philosophic Manuscripts into English is a meaningful controversy only if it has a substantive relationship to the spirit of those essays and of

3. See the section, "Communism's Perversion of Marx's Economic-Philosophic Manuscripts" in my *Marxism and Freedom* (pp. 62-66).

4. Mr. Bell seems to have a predilection for titles which include the phrase, "in search of," without ever finding what he searches for. Thus, in April 1958 he wrote an article entitled "Ten Theories in Search of Reality: The Prediction of Soviet Behavior in the Social Sciences" (*World Politics*). I then wrote the editor that it was no accident that Mr. Bell, despite writing about a great number of "theories," had not included among them the fundamental theory of state-capitalism, "because, far from being in search of reality, the state-capitalist theory analyzes reality and does indeed yield fruitful and cogent analysis of Russia—its economy, its rulers, and its policies." Perhaps if Mr. Bell finally found himself, he wouldn't be subject to the compulsion to go "in search of" all manner of things that aren't there and blind himself to those staring him in the face.

5. Knowing foreign languages doesn't seem to help Michael Harrington to know the facts. Thus, he writes in *New Politics*: "This Marxist humanism is anathema to Communist ideology—and that is at least one factor in Russia's delay in publishing the *Manuscripts*." Now there was no delay by Russia in publishing these *Manuscripts* for the simple reason that when they were first published in Russian—way back in 1927—the Marx-Engels Institute was still headed by the great scholar Ryazanov who published them as soon as he could pry them loose from the vaults of the Second International, who had inherited them from Engels and kept them hidden from the world. To accomplish that, it took a successful proletarian revolution plus money. The excitement over them lasted a very short time since it coincided with Stalin's triumph over Trotsky. When the *Manuscripts* got published in their original German in 1932, discussion was again short-lived since Hitler was coming to power. It is true that Moscow didn't publish an English translation until the year after I did so in the United States, but that was due to the conception of the backwardness of the American movement which is held by most Europeans. The attack on them, however, began in 1955 (see footnote 3).



The coal miners' battle against automation was crucial to the emergence of Marxist-Humanism. This unique pamphlet presents both a participant's account of this vital but often overlooked page of labor history, and an account of how this new philosophy emerged from the historic encounter of the movements from practice and from theory. See page 7 to order.

our times. I was *compelled* to be the first to publish these Essays in 1958 because for fifteen years previous I had tried, in vain, to convince other scholars, writers, and publishers of the cogency of these Essays.

"When in the period between the [1953] East German Revolt and the [1956] Hungarian Revolution, the Russian Communists openly attacked those Essays (*Voprosy Filosofii*, #3, 1955), I once again began my round of publishers. This time the Essays were part of my book. I held that the Russian Communist attack on them was not academic, but a foreboding of revolutions to come. The following year the great Hungarian Revolution raised the Humanist flag clearly.

"Because Marxist Humanism, to me, is the only genuine ground from which to oppose Communist totalitarianism, I felt the compulsion to show that Humanism is not something invented by me, but came directly from Marx, who fought what he called 'vulgar communism,' writing that 'communism, as such, is not the goal of human development, the form of human society'...."

"As to whether I am European trained or American, I claim the latter especially since my work, in addition to reestablishing Marxist-Humanism,⁶ aimed at uncovering the American roots of Marxism which had for too long been hidden. I was, however, born in Russia."⁷

Now why all the anxiety to praise all works on Marxism except one by a Marxist-Humanist? The answer is really quite simple and has nothing whatever to do with "first-edness." A Marxist-Humanist acts always on the theory that, to use a Hegelian phrase, "the truth is concrete." He is therefore unwilling to transform the philosophy of Marxist-Humanism into an abstraction in which every "scholar" can "score points" as if it were some college debate held for the purposes of "grading." A Marxist-Humanist is concerned with reality, and philosophy's relationship to a world so rent asunder by crises that the very continuation of the human race is threatened. As we saw, the present outpouring of words—in books, in articles, in letters—has not illuminated the nature of Marxism half as much as it has exposed the class nature of the debaters.

What is important in the flood of writings is the historic framework which compelled the concern with Marxist-Humanism, that is to say, the political maturity of the age, the impotence of all propaganda on both sides of the Iron Curtain to exorcise the ghost of Karl Marx and rebury him, this time as a Humanist. **It cannot be done.**

Marxist-Humanism will remain alive so long as a new world on truly new, human beginnings has not been established—and it will remain alive thereafter not as a "means to an end," but as the "first necessity of life"—its breath, its work, its thought—the self-activity of the "all-rounded individual" gaining a new human dimension.

6. Dunayevskaya often used the hyphenated "Marxist-Humanism" to distinguish her variety from other tendencies of "Marxist humanism."—Editor

7. *The New Leader* didn't publish the letter although I had been invited to straighten out the record on the dispute that had been raised around my *Marxism and Freedom* in the magazine's issues of Oct. 30 and Nov. 13. In the Nov. 27 issue, one sentence of my letter appears incomplete without any indication that it is but one sentence of a whole letter.

Excerpts from the Weekly Political Letters

1950 was the start of a new epoch on a world scale.... The American workers raised, in a most concrete manner, the philosophic question raised by Marx regarding the division between mental and manual labor which characterized all *class* societies. **The crucial difference between the workers raising the question, "What Kind of Labor Should Men Perform?" and the learned who were raising the question about "the alienation of labor" turns on the positive aspects of Humanism....**

Daniel Bell's *The End of Ideology: On the Exhaustion of Political Ideas in the Fifties* serves at least one good function—it reveals the utter bankruptcy of the bourgeois intellectuals.

So far removed was the intellectual world from the real world of workers that the book's publication coincided with the birth of the African Revolutions *both* as actuality reshaping the world and as alive, independent, creative thought which many called "Humanism" or "African Socialism."...From the wildcats in Detroit to the Freedom Riders in Jackson, Miss., American youth, Negro and white, showed they were determined to tear up the crisis-ridden world they had not made, tear it up by its roots and remake it. **It is at this historic juncture that the bourgeois intellectuals in the U.S. caught the spirit the European intellectuals had caught the previous decade, and rediscovered the Humanism of Marxism.**

Not by accident, however, they failed to discover the

continued on p. 5

ESSAY Marx's Humanism under Marxology's knife

by Franklin Dmitryev

Mehmet Tabak, *Marx's Philosophy of Revolution and Freedom: A Critical Reconstruction*. Published by Mehmet Tabak, 2020. 179 pp.

Amid multiple deep crises, revolts have been challenging the racist, sexist, capitalist world system in both activity and thought, and those in turn have been met by ferocious counterrevolutions, fascist movements, and an onslaught of regressive, anti-rational ideology.

N&L has singled out the humanism in the women's struggles, the George Floyd protests, and Indigenous and climate movements. That is linked to the new interest manifested among the youth from those struggles in socialism, in Marx, in abolition, and explicit attacks against capitalism as inherently linked to what they are struggling against.

The challenge from below in ideas as well as activity naturally provoked both sympathy and stirrings of thought in some radical intellectuals. The term "Marxist humanism" has been bandied about and stretched to cover people who would never accept the label, from M.N. Roy to Cornel West.¹

ATTITUDES TO REVOLUTION AND HUMANISM

Nevertheless, the pull of previously held attitudes, including the assumption of the backwardness of the masses and received understandings of what Marxism is, make it very difficult for the radical intellectuals to escape the morass of academic eclecticism and what Raya Dunayevskaya, the founder of Marxist-Humanism in the U.S., singled out as post-Marx Marxism as a pejorative, which breaks parts of Marx's body of ideas off from the totality of his philosophy of revolution in permanence.²

In many cases, the word "revolution" comes to mean something far less than revolutionary, and many of these intellectuals have internalized the defeats of revolution, an internalization that has characterized so much of radical theory since the failure of the near-revolutions of 1968.

Mehmet Tabak's new book *Marx's Philosophy of Revolution and Freedom: A Critical Reconstruction* stresses the humanism of Marx—as well as Marx's critique of alienation and his concept of dealienation as the proletariat's self-emancipation—though he does not use the term "Marxist humanism." His earlier book *Dialectics of Human Nature in Marx's Philosophy* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2012) was rooted in the Hegelian-Marxian dialectic and was excellent within the limits Tabak set himself for both books: not relating any of it to today's world or entering into debates other than debates on interpretation of Marx. These are therefore works of Marxology, not Marxism. Still, the earlier book, written at the time of the Arab Spring and international Occupy movements, emanated a revolutionary spirit missing from the new book, written after years of counterrevolution and retrogression.

Sadly, Tabak goes to some length in this new, short book to misinterpret Marx's critiques of utopianism, moralizing, and Blanquism in a highly undialectical way, in order to reduce Marx to an ethically based utopian gradualist.

MARX VS. IDEOLOGY

The new book usually hyphenates "humanist" as "humanist-ethical," and charges Marx with an "unresolvable" contradiction between attacking morality as ideology and issuing his own moral condemnation of the alienation and

1. See "Cornel West and Marxist Humanism" by Christian Fuchs, *Critical Sociology*, January 2021. M.N. Roy, a founding Indian Communist, broke with Marxism by the 1940s, before Marxist humanism arose, while Cornel West describes himself as a "non-Marxist socialist."

2. On post-Marx Marxism as pejorative, see Raya Dunayevskaya, "Karl Marx—From Critic of Hegel to Author of Capital and Theoretician of Revolution in Permanence," Part III of *Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution* (University of Illinois Press, 1991).

Rival approaches

continued from p. 4

American roots of Marxism....

With the [1949-1950 coal miners'] strike, however, the question of labor even in its philosophic aspects became most concrete. The reason is simple: the actuality of a general strike involving no less than 100,000 miners could not be separated from the Automation which caused it as well as the revolution in thinking....

Now to return for a final look at that new crop of books on the Humanism of Marxism. **The avoidance of its American roots transformed Humanism into an abstraction. It was not done because of any international considerations. None of the authors has the universality of Marx. No, keeping the American roots hidden was the way to confine Humanism's world concepts to books instead of allowing them life....**

Old radicals who hail the present crop of books help keep hidden not only the genuine American roots as history, but what is even more crucial maintain a bourgeois division between philosophy and action.... [W]here socialists fail to see the workers not just as "muscle" but as the source of all theory, they inevitably fall into the trap set up by the bourgeois "scholars" of dividing thinking from doing, the Humanism of Marxism becomes an abstraction instead of something present in the daily lives of workers, youth, Negroes and other oppressed minorities....

slavery of capitalism. He goes so far as to call Marx "surprisingly thoughtless" for attacking "eternal ideas" like Pierre-Joseph Proudhon's "eternal justice." Tabak links that "thoughtlessness" with Marx's *Critique of the Gotha Program*, which attacked, as he quotes from Marx, the "verbal rubbish" of "equal right" and "fair distribution." He does not mention that Marx totally demolished that rubbish with a concrete, dialectical critique.

To Marx's rescue comes—Mehmet Tabak of eight years prior, explaining Marx's rejection of ideology that views morality as the creator rather than expression of real human relations:

"When we discuss law, justice, and morality in the Marxian context, we are necessarily discussing various moments of the superstructure. When we discuss them as moments of the superstructure of *bourgeois society*, we are also discussing ideological constructs. Ideological constructs necessarily involve inversion and alienation. In other words, the superstructure is an inversion of the alienated, 'sensibly-concrete' world...."

"Thus, criticism, as [Marx] tells us elsewhere, should not amount to moral denying *without* understanding and explaining the existing social relations in their historical context...."

"Real criticism must develop out of the criticism of the existing society and into its dialectical, revolutionary overthrow. This is not simply a logical necessity, but one that seeks to emancipate the working class, and therefore the entire society in real, practical terms." (*Dialectics of Human Nature in Marx's Philosophy*, pp. 107, 108, 135)

MARX A UTOPIAN?

Tabak further claims that Marx, despite criticizing utopianism, was himself a utopian who imagined a future based on his ethical/moral ideas. He tosses aside Marx's critique of utopians for inventing a future from their own heads instead of grasping the objectivity of the future in the present. Again, Tabak 2012 supplies a rebuttal:

"[Marx's] standard of criticism emerges out of the present conditions he seeks to explain, whereas his opponents either refuse to criticize the existing state of affairs or criticize them on the basis of a completely utopian or imagined 'idyllic' model....[U]nlike utopianism, 'the theoretical conclusions of the Communists' spring out of the development of the existing mode of production and the contradictory class relations on which this mode of production is based. They are not 'based on ideas or principles that have been invented, or discovered by this or that would-be universal reformer.'" (*Dialectics of Human Nature in Marx's Philosophy*, pp. 172, 138)

REVOLUTION REDUCED TO GRADUALISM

Finally, Tabak 2020 claims that Marx after 1850 subscribed to a "revolutionary gradualism." Since the only alternatives he presents are gradualism vs. Blanquist conspiracy, it is clear that Tabak is opposing revolution as a historic act of masses in motion. Naturally, to Marxist-Humanists, that overthrow is only the first act of revolution in permanence, but without it you do not even reach first negation, let alone skip to the negation of the negation in the creation of a new human society.

One of Marx's sharpest critiques of Blanquism was published in April 1850, during his so-called *Blanquist period*. Remarkably, Tabak quotes it as supposed proof of Marx's repudiation of his views in the March 1850 Address to the Communist League on permanent revolution. Tabak quotes Marx and Engels as follows:

"It need scarcely be added that these conspirators do not confine themselves to the general organizing of the revolutionary proletariat. It is precisely their business to anticipate the process of revolutionary development, to bring it artificially to crisis-point, to launch a revolution on the spur of the moment, without the conditions for a revolution. For them the only condition for revolution is the adequate preparation of their conspiracy. They are the alchemists of the revolution.... Occupied with such scheming, they have no other purpose than the most immediate one of overthrowing the existing government and have the profoundest contempt for the more theoretical enlightenment of the proletariat about their class interests." (*Marx-Engels Collected Works*, Vol. 10, p. 318)

But that is the critique that Marx always held, from his very first writing on permanent revolution. The fact is that two months later, the June 1850 Address to the Communist League, written by Marx and Engels, was based on the March Address and still anticipating an impending "new revolution." So Tabak's timeline makes no sense.

His forced identity between conspiratorial coups and revolutionary masses in motion is behind his chronologi-

cal confusion. He wrongly claims that the 1850 Address was "plotting an armed insurrection" and was "in agreement with the Blanquists" (p. 79).

All this is in service of foisting on Marx, post-1850, a position of "gradualism." The myth of Marx as Blanquist around the time of the 1848 revolutions, after all, originated with Eduard Bernstein, who wanted to revise Marxism into reformism, rather than revolution, and to base socialism on an ethical justification.³ As a result, the word revolution is once again totally separated from its reality and now Marx is turned into its enemy. His philosophy of revolution in permanence is kicked to the curb by *Marx's Philosophy of Revolution and Freedom*.

There is absolutely no hint of this evisceration of the concept of revolution in Tabak's earlier book, though it repeatedly expressed his "hope to further comment on Marx's theories of revolution and communism in a future work" (p. 172).

Once permanent revolution is sidelined in favor of gradualist "revolution," the depth and totality of the needed uprooting of human relations can hardly live up to the profound critique of alienation that is central to both of these books by Tabak. Several times he quotes Marx's 1844 "Private Property and Communism" on communism being the negation of the negation, without ever mentioning what is so central to Marxist-Humanism, that "communism, as such, is not the goal of human development, the form of human society,"⁴ which is featured in the writing of Raya Dunayevskaya on page 4 of this issue. This reinforces a certain abstractness in his concepts of dealienation and revolution.

REVOLUTIONS RENEW MARXIST HUMANISM

Marx's Humanism was brought back onto the historic stage in the 1950s, not by "critical reconstructions" abstracted from contemporary crises, but by revolutions, from East Europe rising against "Communist" domination to Africa claiming independence from Western imperialism. It began with the workers' battles against automation, when, as Dunayevskaya points out,

"The American workers raised, in a most concrete manner, the philosophic question raised by Marx regarding the division between mental and manual labor

which characterized all *class* societies. **The crucial difference between the workers raising the question, 'What Kind of Labor Should Men Perform?' and the learned who were raising the question about 'the alienation of labor' turns on the positive aspects of Humanism.'**

In other words, where radical intellectuals stopped at the negative, the somewhat abstract critique of alienation, the striking workers, in their battle against the new concrete form of alienation—the technology of automation—brought out the positive in the negative.

As Dunayevskaya comprehends it:

"Unless the fusion of mental and manual activity were re-established *within* a man so that his body, his mind, his heart were all functioning as a *human entity*, there would be no new society.

"Without the re-creation of the *whole-ness* of man, the abolition of private property would not be a great improvement; communism was *not* 'the goal of human development, the form of human society.' In a word, Marx was against any exploitation of man by man; he wanted new, truly human relations, beginning with labor at the point of production. He insisted that you could not counterpose the individual to 'society' because the 'individual is the social entity'; the only proof that freedom was real, was that it was for all, and meant doing and thinking incorporated in the same person."⁵

It is unfortunate to see a scholar of Mehmet Tabak's caliber regress from his profound earlier work.

More than that, it tells a tale of the tacit defeatism prevalent in contemporary Marxology and Marxism, academic or otherwise.

To rediscover Marx's Humanism but subject him to one-sided, undialectical misreading only in order to re-bury him as a "gradualist" and ethical utopian, only serves to deepen the separation of the intellectual both from the revolutionary ideas of Marxist-Humanism and from the concrete movements from practice that are on this historic stage and reaching for Humanism, socialism, the abolition of capitalism and its apparatus of repression, and the creation of a new society founded on new human relations. Those movements demand a new relationship with the movement from theory.

3. See "Marx's Theory of Permanent Revolution, 1843-1883" in *Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution*, pp. 158-62, and "The 'Blanquist' Myth" and "The Address to the Communist League of March 1850" in Hal Draper, *Karl Marx's Theory of Revolution*, Vol. 2 (Monthly Review Press, 1978), pp. 591-92, 599-612.

4. "Private Property and Communism," in Raya Dunayevskaya, *Marx's Philosophy of Revolution in Permanence for Our Day* (Haymarket, 2019), p. 340.

5. From the letters excerpted on pages 4-5, this issue.



"From the Depths," by William Balfour Ker

ATLANTA RACIST FEMICIDE

The article on *N&L*'s website, "[Massage parlor killings were a racist femicide](#)" by Terry Moon, is closer to getting to what the March 16 massacre in Atlanta was than anything else I have seen or heard. I am a proponent of the



use of the term femicide as I believe that it more accurately describes the killing of women as a worldwide phenomenon that can be found in all cultures. I was lucky enough to be acquainted with Diana Russell,

so I learned to understand the term. So thank Ms. Moon for using it and using it correctly.

Lois
Rogue Valley, Ore.

Thanks for your powerful piece on racist femicide posted on the website. Yes, perhaps Asians were targeted, but much more likely Asian women were targeted, though pointing out they were Asian is important, because there is a hell of a lot of racism against Asians these days. Too much femicide is simply "accepted."

Revolutionary
Mexico

"Massage parlor killings were a racist femicide" was written the morning after the massacre. Since then, there have been good and bad developments. The police officer in Atlanta who said the killer "was having a bad day" had previously worn an anti-Asian T-shirt and it was seen on social media! As Moon states, the mainstream media downplay the femicide aspect and stress anti-Asian racism, as if it is separate from both femicide and anti-Blackness. But I am also hearing of support from Black and Palestinian groups for the victims.

Feminist
Michigan

The killer's denial of anti-Asian and anti-woman motives has been treated with astounding sympathy by police and politicians. If we took his words seriously, his claim that he was removing temptation was in fact a threat to kill every woman that he encounters.

Bob
Kansas

Violence against women is ubiquitous and endemic, but I'm optimistic because it is recognized, even as the growth is ter-

On the 150th anniversary of the Paris Commune



The great social measure of the Commune was its own working existence....Working, thinking fighting, bleeding Paris – almost forgetful, in its incubation of a new society, of the Cannibals at its gates – radiant in the enthusiasm of its historic initiative!

– Karl Marx

Just as Historical Materialism did away with Hegelian idealism in theory, so mass activity, at its highest point of creativity—the Paris Commune—did away with statist fetishism by disclosing "the political form for achieving economic emancipation."

– Raya Dunayevskaya

READERS' VIEWS

rifying. My frustrations for many years have been because I had been a witness where I could not intervene. At 94 years I've seen a change as our consciousness grows; at least we have the idea, and see the oppression of women as part of the total fabric of our life as a human species.

Veteran
New York

WOMEN RISE IN AUSTRALIA

Re: "[Women from India to the USA fight against misogynist violence](#)" (March-April *N&L*). Here in Australia women are rising up, following rape allegations by Brittany Higgins, a Liberal Party staffer who claimed she was raped by a fellow staffer in March 2019 in the Parliament House, Canberra, office of her employer, the Minister of Defence. After much hesitation, Ms Higgins publicly aired these allegations in February 2021.

This predictably prompted much airing of complaints by women Members of Parliament and female staffers about widespread patriarchy and sexism in the Federal Parliament. Discussion of these and related incidents continue to dominate the media here.

What started with Brittany Higgins's rape allegation has resulted in renewed discussions of these issues, and has forged a movement which in March 2021 resulted in a massive upsurge of an estimated 100,000 women and their supporters demonstrating across Australian cities and towns against patriarchy, sexist attitudes, and crimes against women in society at large.

Paul
Sydney, Australia

CHAUVIN AND RACIST USA: GUILTY!

What really pissed me off is that those defending Derek Chauvin tried to use as an excuse that George Floyd died because of bad health and because he was using drugs. With that logic, everyone that the police abuse would have to be 100% healthy and drug free when, in fact, most people are not 100% healthy or drug free. Most likely they have some problems. Police should assume that people are *not* in the best shape. When they say they cannot breathe, you should believe them. But beyond that, we've seen police throw pregnant women to the ground, push 75-year-old men so they fall backwards and crack their heads on the sidewalk and then just walk away. Clearly, at least some of them don't give a damn if someone is ill or not.

Feminist
Chicago

The other day it was amazing to me to see how many "Black Lives Matter" signs were up in what I know to be predominantly white neighborhoods. Additionally, I saw what is going on in Chicago, and then another killing of a Black kid in Minnesota. More and more people that I talk to, normally conservative Black folks, are now nearly shouting that enough is enough and proposing changes in a variety of ways. Black folks, especially those directly affected by the negative impact of the criminal (in)justice system on all levels, from law enforcement in the communities to how Blacks are disproportionately treated when it comes to confinement and releases, are fed up. When you see staunch conservative Black community members becoming activists and advocates for change, you know that the world is never going to be the same.

Robert T.
Wisconsin

ATTACKS ON CIVIL LIBERTIES

Civil liberties are under threat again: 84 anti-protesting laws have been proposed or passed—including immunity for drivers who drive into protests and injure or murder protesters—largely in Repub-

lican-controlled states! Many Republican lawmakers don't really believe in the right to assemble, but do believe in murder, as long as the correct people (think minorities, even white folks who really believe in freedom) get murdered. Do their Republican constituents really believe in Constitutional rights?

Scared
Illinois

We can't let up fighting for elections, despite their limitations. Right now there are hundreds of bills in Republican-controlled state legislatures limiting voting access. These guys are working as hard so they can make voting harder. It's important to recognize Stacey Abrams's leadership in 2020 and going forward.

Subscriber
Dutchess County, New York

BLACK LIVES MATTER



Chad Davis flickr.com/photos/146321178@N05/499588956771

Black Lives Matter is so much more mature. In the 1960s we fought police brutality and asked for more minority officers and Civilian Review Boards. But that didn't change systemic racism. BLM is addressing systemic racism but there is still not enough attention to the shift in ideas.

Steve
Detroit

When I read that Trayvon Martin was murdered almost a decade ago, it hit hard. The instant thought was that he would have been 27 now, he would have had the opportunity to grow up, to continue his life in a new realm. All that potential destroyed in—literally—seconds. I'm glad that, at the very least, his name has not been forgotten and the anger at his unnecessary death still motivates us to fight for freedom and an end to racism.

Long-time freedom fighter
Chicago

AMAZON WORKERS RESIST

Amazon workers worldwide have expressed solidarity with Bessemer, Ala., workers. A solidarity strike at a warehouse in Italy declared "From Piacenza to Alabama—One Big Union." The Italian strike focused on supporting delivery workers, who, as in the U.S., work for subcontractors. U.S. workers report being forced to "pee in a bottle" to make their quotas. An Italian worker described their condition: "We are held hostage by an algorithm which calculates daily routes for us and demands an average of 140 deliveries during an eight-hour shift." His sign read "We are not packages" (*Financial Times*, "Amazon protest fires up Italy's gig economy fight," April 7, 2021). Whether in a 2018 strike staged by thousands of European Amazon workers in four countries on Black Friday or at Bessemer today, workers declared, "We are not robots!" Workers asserting their humanity are challenging the foundation of the capital/labor relation.

Ron Kelch
Oakland, Calif.

BERTA PRESENTE!

I was pleased to see that the March-April issue of *N&L* ran an excerpt of a statement marking the fifth year since Berta Cáceres was murdered in Honduras for her tireless defense of Indigenous Lenca land. This land is still threatened, especially by the hydroelectric industry

and other corporate interests allied to the Honduran government and the U.S. Department of State. Also under attack is the people's striving for democracy, and Berta Cáceres was deeply involved in Honduran pro-democracy movements opposing the U.S.-supported military coup in June 2009. When watching her speeches online, and when I happened once to be in her presence in February 2012, I was always impressed by how she would not hesitate to vocalize the self-determination of women and LGBT people as integral to her work with the Indigenous organization COPINH.

Buddy Bell
Indiana

BURMESE MASSES REVOLT

"[Masses resist Burma's murderous coup](#)" (March-April *N&L*) is really well done in bringing out the mass movement, the beginnings of solidarity with minorities and dissatisfaction with the National League for Democracy and Aung San Suu Kyi. I will look for websites and pages to share this editorial with the movement.

Activist
Michigan

THE EMPIRE STRIKES OUT

The planned U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan highlights how a generation of politicians turned U.S. strength into weakness, which was so glaring in Trump's reign. The Bush-Cheney-Rumsfeld administration's imperial overreach was emboldened when 9/11 handed them the opportunity to invade Afghanistan. That invasion quickly shifted from subduing Al Qaeda to trying to annex the country, the region, and the Middle East to a U.S.-dominated capitalist-imperialist new world order. They were drunk on the imperial delusion that the U.S. could remake the world based solely on its military and economic might. That's why the "logical" but catastrophic next step was to invade Iraq, which had nothing to do with 9/11.

Franklin
Chicago

MAATI MONJIB RELEASED!

The France support committee for Maâti Monjib learned with joy and relief of his provisional release on March 23. (See "[Support Maâti Monjib, who is on hunger strike!](#)" *N&L* website, March 15.) The historian, journalist and human rights activist had been on hunger strike for 19 days to denounce his arbitrary arrest in Morocco. The committee is delighted with this first victory in this struggle led by Maâti Monjib, his family, friends, activists and support committees. He thanked all those who gave their massive support by participating in the actions launched by the France committee. The committee specifies that the fight for justice and truth is not over until Maâti Monjib is cleared of all charges and as long as journalists and citizens are detained for their opinions. We will still need everyone's support! We remain mobilized and united.

Abdelaziz
France

To our incarcerated readers

Prisoncrats 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.

**A COLOMBIAN VIEW:
WHAT IS SOCIALISM?**

Thanks for the document you sent on socialism (the Spanish translation of *What Is Socialism? A Marxist-Humanist Symposium*). In Colombia the discussion



is between reformism and socialism. It has been difficult to achieve a practical and theoretical unity of revolutionaries. The repression of social movements and political organiza-

tions has been terrifying. This frightened the population, a victim of massacres, and the Left, a victim of disappearances and assassinations.

The world ignores the heinous crimes committed against the Colombian population. Paramilitary groups control the neighborhoods. Drug trafficking is powerful in society and present in all state institutions. The Right achieved great popular sympathy as a result of manipulation. One has to understand the county's reality.

Let's not lose the socialist North, but try to understand Marx's concept of permanent revolution. It is necessary to fight the dogmatism that shaped revolutionaries of the 20th century and their vanguardist, mechanistic conceptions. They believe the future is written and it is enough to unfold the parchment of destiny to find socialism, going back to the 1960s, '70s, '80s, '90s. This moment is interesting.

**Marxist-Humanist
Colombia**

TREVOR WINS!

Gay teenager Trevor Wilkinson, suspended from Clyde High School (Jan.-Feb. 2021 *N&L*, *Queer Notes*, p. 9), and all students at Clyde won a victory. The school board voted unanimously to end the sexist dress code. All students may now wear

makeup, nail polish, jewelry and piercings. The petition for Trevor amassed over 400,000 signatures in the end. I'm so glad for this victory.

**Elise
Chicago**

DETROIT SCHOOL FIGHT

Since "Reopening schools mirrors class divide" (March-April *N&L*) was posted, I learned that in the Detroit Public School District, if too few teachers return to the classroom, they will teach on a big screen and the children in the room will be under the supervision of school support staff. Vaccination priority for them is not even discussed. Paraprofessionals are no way adequately compensated for skills, commitment and compassion they bring to classrooms where they were never meant to be the sole adult in the room. How can the in-person aide coordinate with the remote teacher to facilitate effective learning? COVID-19 is spreading exponentially in Michigan; Detroit high school students have been infected through after-school sports. Yet Gov. Whitmer has steadily eased social distancing restrictions, and as of March 26 stated that she has no plans to reimpose them. The state budget is being held hostage by the Republican-controlled legislature, which promises to withhold school funding if the state's reopening does not continue. They have already made it illegal for Michigan's state and local health departments to issue public health restrictions.



**Susan Van Gelder
Detroit**

SUEZ ACCIDENT

When considering the mammoth ship that ran aground in the Suez Canal, there is an internal economy of scale issue involved that conflicts with the external costs. The internal matter is that direct benefits involve volume while direct costs involve the surface of ships, a quadratic relationship that favors size. But oil tankers ran into the externality decades ago with the Exxon Valdez failure, with its

billions of dollars in liabilities for Exxon-Mobil. This did not carry over to vessels just carrying "containers," eight of which were stranded in the Suez Canal with live animals aboard. At the time it was unclear how long it would take to move the "Ever Given" ship. I read that among all other items that were delayed for delivery, perhaps the most impacted and crucial is wood pulp for making toilet paper. So, yes folks, if this had not been resolved, we may have had yet another global run for toilet paper.

**January
Chicago**

WHAT PRISONERS WANT

I strive to self-educate with relevant knowledge and stay current on world events. *N&L* expands my intellect with like views. *N&L* improves my mind to self-advocate. I appreciate the intellectual journeys *N&L* takes me on.



**P.J.
Prison USA**

One cannot add to the only paper that brings prisoners and others news that would otherwise be left unspoken, but ask for more information on places the U\$ is at war with, why, etc. and revolutions in said place for the people. One can simply ask for more places to be covered.

**A.H.
Tracy, Calif.**

VOICES FROM BEHIND BARS

I would love to continue to receive *N&L* as well as to thank all donors who help people in prison like myself to receive it. You share what mainstream media is too scared to, is told not to, or has a special interest regarding what's shared. As a poor minority in prison, I am usually affected by laws I have no power to change. I am a negative statistic. "Prisons enable COVID" by Robert Taliaferro (March-April *N&L*) relates to me. COVID-19 has

limited programming. As of late we've been out to the yard about two times in over two weeks. Any time an officer gets sick, it ruins programming for the entire facility regardless of where that officer works. If there are actually any inmates sick, it forces us to be on "modified" program, aka lockdown, for a longer amount of time.

**J.R.
Soledad, Calif.**

I'm here in a Maximum Security prison, doing a life sentence in Colorado. I appreciate *N&L* because it gives me a wider and honest view of what's really going on in the world. Unlike most newspapers and news channels, it is not full of fascist propaganda. I want to thank *N&L* for coming into my cell and being a part in the rise and revolution of my people.

**Prisoner
Cañon City, Colo.**

Well, first off, I love your publication. Thank you for telling us the truth of what's going on all around the world and locally. Being aware is power, a power to help others with knowledge that's up to date. Sharing together in working toward liberating people. This publication unites us all inside prison with the people outside these walls. I cannot afford to subscribe myself and wish I could. I as well as a few others who care and treasure being informed share this publication in my unit. If you would please find a donor to help me receive a renewal, I would greatly appreciate their contribution more than they could know.

**E.J.
Adelanto, Calif.**

Your paper is a blessing to dozens of us. We share it and read it, and discuss it until the pages are worn thin. Please find a donor to pay for my subscription.

**A.B.
Prison USA**

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.

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Chauvin's 'guilty' verdict a rare victory

When Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin was found guilty of second-degree murder, third-degree murder and second-degree manslaughter, those gathered at George Floyd Square in Minneapolis where Floyd was murdered, and others outside the Hennepin County Government Center where the trial was held cried: "Guilty! Guilty!" "George Floyd! Say His Name! George Floyd!"

EDITORIAL

The murder of Floyd had spurred the largest wave of protests in decades, bringing demands to defund the police—and abolish the criminal injustice system—from the margins to the center of politics.

DEMONSTRATORS DANCED IN THE STREETS

The verdict sparked new marches and new pain. In Washington, DC, demonstrators danced in the streets. In New York, hundreds knelt in solidarity with Floyd near Penn Station, while others marched across Manhattan Bridge and in Brooklyn. In San Francisco, a demonstrator's sign spoke for many: "Justice for George Floyd Is No More Cop Terror." A vigil was held in Houston, where Floyd was born. In Louisville, where Breonna Taylor had been gunned down by cops invading her home, protesters gathered outside the Jefferson County Hall of Justice. Hundreds more marched in vigils and demonstrations across the U.S. in the hours and days following Chauvin's conviction.

What exactly had been "won" with the guilty verdicts? While the prosecutors did present George Perry Floyd Jr. as a real human being, the comprehensive case they built against Chauvin was as a "rogue cop," a bad apple. There were no charges against the two other cops who stood by and did nothing while Chauvin murdered Floyd; no charges against the Minneapolis Police Department; and nothing indicting the systematic racist policing that year after year, decade after decade murders and incarcerates Black and Latinx men, women and children in unconscionable numbers.

Protesters pointed to what happened during the trial, as police continued to kill about three people a day:

- * Daunte Wright, 20, was shot and killed by a police-woman in a Minneapolis suburb.
- * Thirteen-year-old Adam Toledo, unarmed, was shot down in an alley by a Chicago policeman.
- * Sixteen-year-old Ma'Khia Bryant was killed, shot four times by police in Columbus, Ohio.
- * Mario Arenales Gonzalez, 26, died after police in Alameda, Calif., pinned him facedown to the ground for five minutes.

The Chauvin verdict is in, Los Angelenos react

Los Angeles—On April 21, after the guilty verdict against Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin, several hundred people gathered on 8th St., west of Downtown, in support of Black Lives Matter Los Angeles's (BLMLA) goal to abolish the Los Angeles police protective league.

PROTESTERS SPEAK

Melina Abdullah, founder of BLMLA, stated: "Lies of police include Derek Chauvin's statement that George Floyd died of pre-existing medical conditions. A new murder by police in Columbus, Ohio, is the killing of 16-year-old Ma'Khia Bryant. I am grateful for the energy of this crowd."

A speaker honored the hundreds murdered by the LAPD and LA County Sheriff's deputies, singling out Wakiesha Wilson, Daniel Hernandez, John Horton, Kenneth Ross Jr., Kevin Brown, Ezell Ford and Eric Garner, who was choked to death in 2014 by New York City police. His last words were, "I can't breathe."

Another speaker stated: "We need to get a court order to stop police brutality on peaceful protesters. Policing in this country started as part of chattel slavery. We are working for a world fit for all human life."

The sister of police victim Daniel Hernandez stated: "It was the people that found George Floyd's murderer guilty. LAPD judges and criminalizes us. We demand accountability."

'IT WASN'T THE SYSTEM, IT WAS US!'

Lisa Hines, mother of Wakiesha Wilson, killed while in police custody, stated: "Of the hundreds of people killed by police, is this the only one convicted? It wasn't the system—it was us being in the streets. I'm grateful for you all being here."

A woman spoke against recent LAPD police force in full riot gear ousting scores of tented homeless people from Echo Park in the Latinx and white neighborhood near Downtown. (See page 3.) She stated: "Abolish this

These police killings, and the lies cops tell to cover them up, are the daily truth of Black and Latinx life in the U.S. Although for once a victim received a long, long overdue measure of vindication, it was because of the power, organizing and creativity of the Black Lives Matter movement that spoke to tens of thousands over the last half-dozen years, and, most poignantly, since Floyd's murder.

VICTORY WAS MADE IN THE STREETS

As one Los Angeles demonstrator, whose 21-year-old nephew had been killed by Los Angeles sheriff's deputies in 2018, said: "The people taking to the streets got us guilty verdicts yesterday... not the system. The system isn't for us." "He should still be here," Mr. Floyd's brother, Philonise Floyd, said of Daunte Wright. "We have

to march. We will have to do this for life. We have to protest because it seems like this is a never-ending cycle."

As Black Lives Matter Global Network stated: "This verdict does not change what we know all too well: White supremacy still exists. An oppressive, racist system cannot and never will deliver justice for our people. It will never keep us safe. What we saw today was some form of account-

ability—not justice."

Black Lives Matter has birthed a new generation of activists, including Minnesota Teen Activists, organized after the Floyd protests last summer, who called out hundreds of Minneapolis and St. Paul high school students in a walkout commemorating Wright and Floyd. The same scene was repeated in hundreds of U.S. cities as new youth entered the movement by the thousands. One guilty verdict cannot tranquilize the new consciousness that burst out in the past year.

Black demands for freedom have—from the founding of the U.S.—put American civilization on trial. From the colonial period through the American Revolution, from the Constitution onward, the colonies and then the USA were built on racism. It was only due to the resistance of the enslaved Black masses together with the Abolitionists who brought forth the Civil War, that any seeds of democracy were sown and watered.

Again and again in U.S. history those seeds have been trampled by racist jackboots under cover of law; denied sustenance by government edict and private classist-racist interests. Again and again the Black liberation struggle has been born anew.

That struggle will not rest content with the conviction of a few officers. It has indicted the systemic racism of the whole society, and it aims for new, human beginnings.

s—once and for all. Reparations would be justice for A.J. Weber and 20-year-old Daunte Wright."

A man named Albert stated: "Policing is part of U.S. capitalism that started in order to catch runaway slaves. From the 1669 Casual Killing Act to what is going down in 2021, 352 years later, Black lives begin to matter." And not so distant history shows that in the 1990s, racist LAPD Chief Darryl Gates went to Southern states to recruit white supremacists into the LAPD.

We were just one of the large and small groups that gathered throughout this country on April 19 to hear the verdict in the Chauvin trial, including one inside the Capitol by the Congressional Black Caucus. Others took place in Minneapolis, Chicago, Washington, D.C., and in LA at the corner of Florence and Normandie, site of the 1992 LA Rebellion (after the four LAPD police who beat Rodney King almost to death were acquitted by an all-white jury). Black journalist Earl Ofari Hutchinson has stated that Derek Chauvin's trial also put America on trial.

The LAPD takes over 50% of the city's budget, leaving many social services without adequate funding. They consistently ask the city to increase their budget. We need to abolish this capitalist system that accepts white supremacists like Donald Trump as political leaders, and poverty for so many as the billionaire population grows.

We need a society of new human relations. Police departments are part of the capitalist system with its white supremacy and racism. We want a society without exploitation and domination, and without an economy based on the profit system—a society where people of all races have equal opportunities and living standards where every person can develop their individual talents and capacities.

News and Letters Committees has projected dialectical philosophy as part of masses in motion for social revolution to create this new society. —Basho



A march through downtown Minneapolis calling for justice for George Floyd on April 19 during the jury deliberations in the Derek Chauvin trial.

VOICES FROM THE INSIDE OUT

U.S. social lynching

by Robert Talliaferro

Now that the jury has delivered Derek Chauvin's verdict, we are faced with the question of how we got here in the first place. We have to ask: why is it that 156 years after the end of slavery and 245 years into our national existence we are still discussing and witnessing the institutional and social lynching of Black folks—young and old, male and female—in this country?

'NO ONE IS SAFE'

Lynchings don't require a rope and tree to bear the "strange fruit" which once graced Southern trees, nor do they need cross-burning or night-riding Klansmen, for us to understand the practice. All socialized lynchings require is the desire to treat a person of color in an extraordinarily negative fashion for no other reason than because they are Black or brown.

Black and brown people are subject to social lynchings every day, and no one is safe. A Black person can be as dignified as a renowned Black educator in Boston, or have the integrity and honor of an Army Lieutenant in Virginia, and none of that means much because the color of one's skin often dictates how they are viewed.

They are subject to social lynchings when a 14-year-old Black child in New York is accused of stealing a phone and physically assaulted by the accuser or when they are murdered by a white man simply because they were running in a white neighborhood or when they are harassed in a restaurant in Philadelphia.

A BIASED CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

The practice doesn't stop with the threat of being killed or falsely accused; people of color, especially Black men, are systemically subject to institutionalized lynchings by the way they are treated by the U.S. criminal justice system—starting with law enforcement in the community, followed by inadequate representation in the courtroom, and ending up with inequitable treatment during incarceration, with both the initial length of sentences and the hoops they are required to jump through to finally get released back into the community.

Chauvin had a diverse show trial jury judging him, something that rarely happens with defendants of color who are generally judged by all-white juries, presided over by white judges and prosecuted by white prosecutors while being represented by overworked, mostly white, public defenders who are often more interested in talking their clients into taking a plea, regardless of their degree of guilt or actual innocence.

The deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and so many others are not just their killers' fault. Oh, the person who pulled the trigger or used the knee to extinguish a life is sure as hell primarily responsible, but the problem this country has faced when it comes to race goes well beyond those individuals: it is a cultural problem, a national problem transcending a few transient individuals.

U.S. HAS 245 YEARS OF RACIST HISTORY

It is a problem that has been festering for over four centuries. It is a problem of politicized justice where judges and lawyers are pawns of politicians, and where those same politicians are defined by their own personal agendas rather than the will of those they serve. It is a problem of media fear-mongering that promises fair and balanced reporting as long as it appeases the corporate shareholders and enables the politicians.

It isn't all about Black lives mattering, or women's lives mattering, or Asian lives mattering, or the LGBTQ community's lives mattering, or any other color in the rainbow's lives mattering. Those concepts should be understood as inalienable rights that require no further definitions or explanation.

We, as a culture, have to cumulatively take responsibility for the fate of every single person we witness being culturally and socially lynched. Until we can do that consistently, no life will really matter.

For Black, or other, lives to truly matter, we need to live beyond just the tragic moments in time. We have to be more than just a movement defined by events or talking points on the nightly news. We have to be better than the sum of our parts or we will always fail. If that happens, the death of George Floyd will be only another statistic which will eventually end up on this country's historical cutting room floor as if it didn't happen at all.

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Russia threatens Ukraine invasion

A seven-year-old war in Ukraine, involving Ukraine and Russian-backed separatists in eastern Ukraine, with Russia's ominous, close presence, recently underwent an escalation. Russia's president Vladimir Putin ordered tens of thousands of troops and armored vehicles, including tanks, to its eastern border with Ukraine, the region known as Donbas, where pro-Russian militants have organized their own territory. This "training exercise" also involved a flotilla of Russian amphibious assault ships outside Ukraine's port city of Mariupol. Many worried whether an all-out war with Russia was imminent. Most recently, however, Russia has begun withdrawing troops, but leaving some military hardware close at hand.

WHAT'S AT STAKE?

Russia seized the Ukraine's Crimea Peninsula in 2014. Crimea had been part of the old Soviet Union (USSR), first part of Russia and then assigned to Ukraine. (This after Stalin had exiled the Crimean Tatars in the 1940s.)

With the collapse of the Soviet state-capitalist empire, Ukraine became a prize or pawn in a continuing struggle, with the U.S. and Western Europe seeking to tie Ukraine to its orbit, including the possibility of joining NATO, while Russia, particularly under Putin, was determined to keep Ukraine under its influence. Hence, a second Cold War is in the offing.

With the 2014 Russian annexation of Crimea—which

Becoming new men

Editor's note: We are approaching the 10th anniversary of the historic 2011-13 hunger strikes against indefinite solitary confinement in California's prisons. That the struggle is not over was clear on April 9, when a federal judge ruled that the California Department of Corrections (CDCr) is in such flagrant violation of the settlement agreement that monitoring of their compliance should be extended for at least another year (to learn more see ccrjustice.org/home/press-center/press-releases/federal-court-rules-ongoing-constitutional-violations-california).

The settlement was a result of a lawsuit filed by the hunger strikers calling attention to a number of inhuman practices common in prison, such as indeterminate solitary confinement, setting prisoners against each other, abuse of confidential information, etc. CDCr agreed to some reforms, and, as is usual, proceeds to ignore both the spirit and the letter of the agreement they made.

Below is a statement from one of the hunger strikers on his continuing struggle within the prison.



Since my release from the Security Housing Unit (SHU), it's been an uphill battle to win the rights and freedoms that the prison bureaucrats don't want us to have. Our objective has always been recreating liberation schools, but it's a challenge even to get our own self-help groups. Inside these razor-wire slave plantations CDCr and guards want to implement their own government organizations, equipped with their own staff and curriculums that seek to make people into robots. It's as if they want you to be a police-minded individual, who will hunt down people and, instead of helping them, call the police.

Neither communities of color nor society as a whole need this type of behavior. We need alternative solutions that are designed to help people meet their needs, not hinder them. Most of the guards don't care about people or they would let us meet our own needs without interfering when they see it's working. We also need a curriculum that is useful. For that we need to create our own groups. I've heard that is possible in a few prisons, but not all.

The other challenge we face are the Non-Designated yards. The general population and the special needs yards have been merged. [Special needs yards were created by CDCr to separate people deemed at risk from the general population. They were used for those who betrayed other prisoners by telling on them, sometimes with complete falsehoods.] We see this as a ploy by the guards to create violent attacks so they can put us back in the SHU and have people in society thinking we are the worst of the worst. This is not going to happen. We have been collectively proving CDCr wrong by not engaging in violent attacks on each other, but by settling our quarrels verbally.

SELF-DETERMINATION INSIDE

The self-help groups we created are teaching men how to be men. We've learned that by overcoming our old way of thinking we can solve problems through listening to each other and express what's needed to bring change to a problem or a situation. We only bring to play solutions that work for all. We are building bridges with all ethnic groups. We engage in study cells we call "circle keepers," where men share traumatic experiences they've had and come up with different ways to bring healing. This is just one step forward in our development.

By self-reflecting we realize we are all different. But we adapt to a way of life that taught us how to survive our circumstances, such as controlled environments like solitary confinement. Now, being out of the SHU, we are still at work, moving in the right direction. Change is going to happen. I am sure of it. As long as we are consistent with our study and analysis, the productive transformation will be possible. We will become new men. The Struggle Continues.

—M. Shakur

Putin tried to cover over by backing separatists in eastern Ukraine—an on-again off-again conflict has taken place. Some 13,000 have been killed in the conflict between Ukrainian soldiers and the separatists.

The U.S. and European allies have imposed financial sanctions on Russia. Behind this posturing of sanctions and saber-rattling lies the threat of a greatly expanded war—and this by powers that are nuclear-armed. The Line of Contact trench warfare between Ukraine troops and Russian-backed separatist has been called the new Berlin Wall.

Meanwhile, Ukrainians of whatever stripe are caught within the maelstrom of this developing new Cold War, subject to the competing ideologies, West and East, far away from any genuine self-determination.

—Eugene Walker

QUEERNOTES

by Elise



Members and friends of Homokomando jog past watching Polish police on their Gdansk Equality Run.

In Gdansk, Poland's Vice President Monika Chabior joined hundreds of other pro-LGBTQ+ activists in the Solidarity Workouts in March. Participants exercised in many of Poland's parks and public spaces, draped in Pride flags, to support, in part, the members of the sports club Homokomando, who had been assaulted by 30 masked, cowardly men. Some of the workouts attracted heavy police surveillance. State-controlled media called them COVID superspreading events, even though participants were socially distanced and masked.

* * *

Ten-year-old Transgender girl Kai Shappley testified to the Texas Senate State Affairs Committee that she does "not like spending my free time asking adults to make good choices," adding that Texas lawmakers have been attacking her since she was in pre-K for being Trans. She was opposing a bill labeling parents who support their Trans children as child abusers, equating them with child molesters, child pornographers and child traffickers. Not one Committee member had any questions for Kai or her mother, who also testified. Protesters have delayed anti-Trans legislation in a few states, but not in Texas, despite polls indicating that two-thirds of Americans, and even a majority of Republicans, oppose them.

* * *

Queer-Art, originally founded in 2009 to support Queer artists who lost mentors because of AIDS, hosted an online exhibit *Response to Anti-Asian Shootings in Atlanta*, to fight anti-Asian hate. The organization continues to give platforms to LGBTQ+ artists to display their art. Responses include a painting of a non-binary person captioned "Against empire, patriarchy and capitalism towards love and care." The statement of Red Canary Song protests racism, white supremacy, colonialism and the patriarchy, and supports decriminalization of sex work. It is important to note that the debate about decriminalizing sex work continues.

* * *

On March 31, International Transgender Day of Visibility, President Joe Biden announced his support for the Equality Act, which would add gender identity and sexual orientation as protected categories under anti-discrimination provisions of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. Also on March 31, Australians posted on social media their support for Trans people, so they know they are recognized and their accomplishments are celebrated.

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Politics erases science

Detroit—The City of Detroit COVID-19 vaccination accessibility is far superior to the surrounding suburbs, yet Detroit's vaccination rate is only 28% compared to 40-50% in nearby suburbs. After complaints about online scheduling, Detroit officials switched to a well-run call center for its drive-up clinic, later adding pop-up sites in schools, recreation centers and churches. Mobile clinics are ready to roll. Through the winter, word of mouth encouraged participation and vaccine hesitancy dropped.

MICHIGAN NIGHTMARISH VACCINE ROLLOUT

In contrast, vaccination access in the rest of Michigan was a nightmare. The Republican-controlled state legislature removed Governor Whitmer's emergency powers to issue public health mandates. Parents threw temper tantrums to demand that school athletics resume. People abandoned masks and flouted social gathering limitations. Meanwhile a new, highly contagious virus variant is spreading; hospitals are overloaded; deaths are rising among younger patients. Serious side effects from the vaccines are thousands of times less frequent than injuries and deaths from texting while driving. Data shows school athletics and gatherings are the locus of the new outbreaks.

Why do one in five Americans oppose vaccinations? Americans today—fortunately—have no experience of diseases like smallpox—death rate 70%—or polio, because vaccination against these deadly diseases has reached "herd immunity." Ignoring history creates "anti-vaxxers," who blame vaccines for conditions like autism but overlook the 4,000-plus synthetic chemicals in the environment, food and water, any of which could contribute to autism, infertility etc. The vast majority have never been tested for health and environmental effects.

Uncritical thinking feeds the lies; for example, "Coronavirus isn't real and doctors call flu cases COVID-19 because they make \$3,000 for each case," which then becomes their basis for discounting 570,000 U.S. COVID deaths.

Uncritical thinking allows people to equate "data" with "what I choose to believe." It is no different from the lies in politics ("the U.S. Capitol was stormed by Black Lives Matter activists dressed up as Trump supporters"). Over 300 years ago, G.W.F. Hegel identified a similar reaction against critical thinking.

There is good reason to mistrust science in a capitalist society, driven by profit above all else. Still, scientific process—research, evaluation of evidence—has yielded solid public health practices and weapons against deadly disease. Without herd immunity, the power to manage this pandemic is slipping away. —Retired Science Teacher

Stop illegal evictions!

Detroit—Detroit Eviction Defense (DED) and Detroit Will Breathe/Black Lives Matter held a rally of over 100 people near Detroit Police Headquarters on April 10 to stop illegal evictions perpetrated by the police.

In December of 2020 Ms. Whitney Burnley was forced from her home by her landlord and three police officers. They stole and destroyed her property, including her children's Christmas gifts. There was no paperwork or advance notice, although she had text messages with the landlord showing that she had paid her rent.

According to a DED attorney, police can remove squatters from buildings without a court order. Ms. Burnley's landlord made this false claim after she rejected his sexual advances. DED and Detroit Will Breathe/Black Lives Matter are helping her get a new place and possessions; her furniture was in pieces on the lawn when DED activists came by that day. The United Community Housing Coalition and Lakeside Legal are trying to get compensation.

Like the "#MeToo" movement, other women have come forward about police throwing them out without paperwork; one had also refused sexual advances.

WORKING TOGETHER IN DETROIT

The Left has not done well analyzing the relations between evictions, the right to housing and the larger freedom movement, but in Detroit anti-eviction and Black Lives Matter have long worked together. It is estimated that in Detroit 40% of residents have experienced either eviction or foreclosure in the past decade.

In my senior building a woman became ill and wound up in a nursing home. Sometimes this tenant was confused, but many of her neighbors looked out for her. After the paramedics took her to the hospital, the building manager refused to tell her friends and neighbors where she was. Based on misinformation from the building manager, Michigan Adult Protective Services assigned a state-appointed guardian, who cancelled her lease without consulting her.

The building manager opened the apartment, allowing other tenants to take her possessions and threw the rest away. She rented the apartment to new tenants within a month.

A humane building manager would have helped her get a caregiver. The Tenants' Council and United Community Housing Coalition are working on getting her compensation and a new place.

—Steve Fletcher

Burmese unite against coup

continued from p. 1

FREEDOM STRUGGLE WIDENS

The focus of many rebels' efforts is now to reappraise their previous government and envision what a post-coup Myanmar would be. They are concluding that a new Burma would have to include autonomy for peoples like the Karen, Chin, Kachin and other ethnic and language groups who live in more than a third of the country. Many expressions of regret were raised, even among democracy activists in the Burmese-speaking Bamar majority who had displayed indifference or even hostility toward minority peoples' grievances against Tatmadaw attacks and who were fighting for equal rights and, above all, self-determination.

Some said they most regretted not speaking out during the military campaign of genocide and expulsion of 700,000 Rohingya Muslims. Now they comprehend their silence as enabling military atrocities and making impossible a national unity of anti-regime forces. That mistake came from the top. San Suu Kyi had not only failed to speak out, she had defended the genocidal conduct of the military in international forums.

SAN SUU KYI MISLEADS

It is all the more surprising because her father Aung San, respected as "Father of the Nation," promised autonomy for ethnic groups in 1947 in the Panglong Union Agreement on the eve of independence from the UK. When he was assassinated months later, those promises remained only on paper.

It was partly because of her position as Aung San's daughter that San Suu Kyi became the face of resistance after the counter-revolution of 1988, even paying the price of family separation and house arrest, for which she deservedly won the Nobel Peace Prize. As his daughter she would have been the perfect one to revive the Panglong Union Agreement. In 2016, when she became civilian leader, she did visit the Panglong Monument in Shan State at the site of the 1947 signing. But the very next year she was defending the army's genocide of Rohingya Muslims, for which she rightly heard calls for her Nobel Peace Prize to be revoked.

But leave it to the military after the coup to help promote unity across ethnic lines that had been so glaringly missing. As the body count of the opposition has grown, some have compared attacks against protesters now to what ethnic areas faced for decades.

At the end of March, the military carried out airstrikes targeting the Karen population, killing and injuring children and driving thousands across the Thai border. That same weekend, soldiers killed over 100 more marchers. At that point most of the ethnic armed rebels in their home areas had taken sides with the pro-democracy opposition against the coup.

On April 1, CRPH issued a proposed Federal Democracy Charter making equality and self-determination a principle of toppling the regime and creating a new constitution. But guarantees of equality and self-determination promise to be of no value to Rohingya Muslims still in Rakhine State or anxious to return from exile to reclaim their homes if it ever becomes safe enough. That is because enforcement would be left to the individual States, and the Arakan Army of Rakhine State is the one ethnic armed unit that has not explicitly joined the opposition to military rule.

On April 16, CRPH formed a National Unity Government (NUG) from its elected officials together with representatives from ethnic groups still demanding self-determination after decades of resistance to the central government. Some groups like the Kachin Independence Organization, formed 60 years ago, had never accepted the 2008 Constitution that provided the basis for the NLD to take "power" with no control over the Tatmadaw, police or border troops.

Voices of resistance from within the country have demanded that the nations trading with Myanmar impose sanctions on coup leaders. The U.S. has imposed sanctions against 10 individuals in the military kleptocracy and two of their entities. Retailers like H&M have canceled orders from textile plants within the country after the coup, resulting in layoffs of more than 200,000 textile workers.

BIG OIL PROPS UP FASCIST TATMADAW

The Tatmadaw is the dominant oligarchy in Myanmar, accumulating wealth from oil, gas and mineral resources. The wealth that did not stick to the fingers of the generals at the top of the military hierarchy was used to elevate living conditions for soldiers and their families high above what the civilian population could afford. It

has made Tatmadaw soldiers regard themselves above and apart from the civilian population.

Thus, international sanctions remain symbolic unless the generals' biggest cash cow, the Yadana gas field, is included. France's Total and the U.S.'s Chevron funnel nearly \$600 million in hard currency to the Tatmadaw each year. In 2007 Chevron successfully lobbied to be excluded from a round of U.S. sanctions on Myanmar.

Chevron now has an army of lobbyists at work in D.C. expecting that they can once again deflect sanctions that would reduce its profits but cripple the finances of the Tatmadaw. Chevron is claiming that Myanmar's power needs depend on its continued production. Opposition figures have proposed that production continue, but that Chevron and Total pay their fees into an escrow account available to the next legitimate government.

International solidarity has included protests in the U.S. against Chevron and in France against Total. (See article this page.) Solidarity vigils took place all across Germany and Ireland, often led by Burmese emigres including Rohingya. Banners in Myanmar marches thanked supporters from Taiwan.

But Russia and China vetoed a UN Security Council resolution condemning the coup, just as they had prevented UN diplomatic intervention in the first days of the Syrian Revolution when Bashar al-Assad's troops fired on unarmed peaceful protesters.

Likewise, China has kept arms and ammunition flowing in, and oil flowing out. There was reason for protesters in many cities to display pictures condemning Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping and to burn Chinese and Russian flags. Another sign simply read: "WE HAVE NOTHING TO LOSE BUT OUR CHAINS"—after Karl Marx, a revolutionary that Xi and the rest of the Communist Party of China have not heeded for over 70 years.

Closer to home, coup leaders, despite their absence of support, have been propped up by neighboring governments. The regional association ASEAN at its summit meeting on April 23 overstepped its stated policy of non-intervention in the internal affairs of member nations, offering legitimacy to the military junta by inviting Gen. Hlaing and allowing him to endorse empty platitudes on non-violent treatment of protesters and release of prisoners. ASEAN ignored the demand of NUG that a representative of the opposition also be invited.

Three months of defying the coup has provided time for the forces of old revolutionaries, youth, workers and women to work out what they are fighting for, beyond deposing the military caste that has ruled them. Mutual hatred of Tatmadaw seems to be an opportunity to bridge long-time divisions between the Burmese-speaking majority and the peoples long fighting for self-determination, who have drawn blood when Tatmadaw forces attacked minority strongholds. The politicians of NLD have taken the lead in the National Unity Government. Will they be tainted by the compromises they have made with the military? We owe millions of freedom fighters in Myanmar our solidarity, and watchful attention to their next developments in thoughts and action.



On April 24 in Kankone Village, hundreds demonstrate led by women and children in a demonstration against the military takeover of Burma.

Nway Co

No funding to Tatmadaw



Urszula Wislanka for News & Letters

San Ramon, Calif.—On April 16 several dozen mostly Burmese people gathered in front of Chevron's headquarters to publicly ask the management, the employees and the public at large to stop funding the bloodshed in Burma. Chevron has been paying the Burmese military since 1990, making the generals into billionaires. Many signs called on Chevron to "respect humanity, reject Myanmar military coup," "stop funding slaughter in Myanmar" and "China policy/Burma slavery."

A Burmese man from Pegu (now spelled Bago) told us that over 700 have been killed, sometimes as many as 80 in a single day in his city, the youngest a 7-year-old. Hundreds were wounded that day and over 3,000 arrested.

CHILD PROTESTERS GUNNED DOWN

An 11-year-old girl wrote a letter before going out to join a demonstration. She said, "if I'm shot, don't worry about my body. Fight on. If we win, my death will be worth it." She was shot in the head that day. Many young people write similar letters before going to demonstrations.

A member of Amazon Watch related what Chevron, then Texaco, which merged with Chevron in 2001, did to the Amazon rainforest in Ecuador. In order to save \$3 per barrel, they deliberately dumped more than 16 billion gallons of toxic wastewater, spilled 17 million gallons of crude oil, and left hazardous waste in hundreds of open pits dug out of the forest floor.

After decades of legal actions, the courts found Chevron liable for \$6.1 billion in clean-up costs. Chevron refuses to pay, and stated they will keep fighting the judgement "until hell freezes over, and then they will continue to fight on the ice" (for more on that, check out amazonwatch.org). One protester held a sign, "Chevwrong: INhuman energy."

This was not an isolated protest. Every week since the Feb. 1 coup, the Free Burma Action Committee holds a protest in San Francisco. We will keep opposing the U.S. corporations as well as China's support of the terrorist state of Burma.

—Urszula Wislanka

Agroecology in Xico

Veracruz, Mexico—Last August, a friend and I left Mexico City and decided to settle in the misty mountain of Xico, Veracruz. We rented a small cabin and began learning how to work the land. After several months of hard labor, we now have our own lettuce, spinach, tomato, and corn and the beans are growing promisingly. But this is just the beginning. Here are some of the difficulties upon which we have reflected in the past months.

THE COMMODIFICATION OF LABOR

Our landlords run the biggest agroecological project in the zone. They sell organic food in a store in the capital city of Veracruz. It is astonishing to see that their great respect for nature is matched with their great disrespect for human life.

Here labor is a commodity paid at market price. It couldn't be otherwise when the aim is to accumulate wealth, and despite this accumulation being "environment-friendly." Due to the handcrafted character of the products, its final price can just be afforded by the middle and upper classes, but not by the workers themselves.

Many other projects in the region, though in a smaller scale, are grounded on this same contradictory foundation. "Their" workers are small farmers who can't find the time nor the economic resources to work on their own land. It's not unusual that they end up selling it to big land owners at a very low price. That is undermining a social force—labor and the laborer—that could help defend humanity and nature from capitalism.

Several questions come to mind: Can we build a deeper concept of "agroecology" that doesn't contradict human emancipation? What would be the new meaning of production in such a project? Then what would human relationships be like? Can that deeper concept be built beforehand by individuals or groups, and then shared, or does it need, from the beginning, the broadest participation of small farmers, peasants, Indigenous people and other subjects from below? How would this new concept of "agricultural work" relate to a new concept of "labor"? How do we make such a recreation possible?

—Biking Snail

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Marx speaks to youth alienation

Today people live in perpetual confusion, alienation and misery. More than any previous generation, our humor, media, music, books, computer games, etc., are filled with self-harm, nihilism, and depression. Japan has admitted they have a crisis of young people shutting themselves away and committing suicide. The social relations put an end to any idea of progress or any utopia. There is nothing, no future. As David Hume said, “No man ever threw away life while it was worth keeping.”

Young people, from white to Black, Trans, Gay, and other marginalized people keep taking matters into their own

hands and taking to the streets. Within their alienation is a reach to overcome the hopelessness: Black Lives Matter, Amazon workers’ struggling for unionization, international Women’s Liberation Movement, etc.

We fight against unfreedom: in China, the struggle against institutional racism, fight against post-truth politics of the Trumpists, and we support the class struggles going on in today’s COVID world.

Our time of total crises calls for a philosophy that will help us not only to understand the problems at the root of our misery but also to give us hope we can create a new society. For that we need the philosophy of Marx, his revolutionary humanism!

DISTORTIONS OF MARX ONLINE

Where do we even start to understand Karl Marx? The usual place young people look is online. It will almost always lead you to “Marxists,” not Marx himself. You might get the writings of Stalin, Mao or even non-Marxist intellectuals who claim that Marx is outdated and no longer relevant to our present day.

So we must ask ourselves once more, where do we start? The best place would

YOUTH IN ACTION

by Buddy Bell

“Despite our grief, we are still optimistic. Our voices are more powerful than before,” said Pamela Elizarraras Acitores, quoted in Vice News. Elizarraras is a climate activist and photographer who created digital portraits of her peers from around the world in order to project their aspirations and demands on the next UN climate change conference, COP26, which will take place in November. Uriel Medina of Colima, Mexico: “I hope that by seeing all the mobilizing the youth around the world are doing, COP organizers understand that we don’t need three doctorates in climate mitigation to be worthy of having an impact on decisions that will affect our future. Youth participation is fundamental for fighting climate change.” Derrick K.E. Nyamede of Accra, Ghana: “This upcoming COP, I am hoping there will be more solution-driven talks within world leaders and more commitments from them. We already have the solutions to climate change, but it is [still] on them to implement these solutions.” Catalina Santelices of Talca, Chile: “It is not true that young people are not interested in anything. We are here, we are interested, and we want to change things. Change needs to happen now because by the time we are old enough to be in a position to make decisions, it will be too late.”

The reactionary French Senate voted on April 1 to dissolve the 114-year-old National Union of Students of France (UNEF) over its insistence on protecting exclusive student meetings where women and racial minorities can meet to discuss discrimination. UNEF President Melanie Luce told the New York Times the safe spaces are needed because “they lead to powerful and frank conversations.” The Senate amendment to remove the union’s funding still has to go to the National Assembly for a vote.

On April 20, 30 South Korean college students sat in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul while other students shaved their heads. Their action was to visibly protest a plan by Japan to dump more than 1 million tons (264 million gallons) of irradiated water from the Fukushima reactor site into the ocean. One unnamed protester interviewed by Malaysian channel The Star TV said, “Japan made a reckless decision and threatens the lives of our people.” Protesters also denounced John Kerry and the rest of the Biden administration for tacitly supporting Japan’s decision.

More than 60,000 schoolchildren and community members in Japan have signed a “Stop Extreme School Rules” petition. Signers demand that the federal government outlaw harmful and/or intrusive local school rules. Local rules require that all textbooks be brought home daily, mandate white underwear, ban winter clothing and scarves, and ban permed or dyed hair—other than for students whose natural hair color is not black, who must therefore carry a certification card or dye it black. Many of the policies effectively single out children in mixed-race and refugee families for increased harassment.

be to read Marx himself, but, unfortunately, today Marx has little chance to speak for himself. At this point the use of Marx makes him merely into a puppet, for others to project their voice onto him. There are career “Marxists” who claim to not only represent him, but correct him.

This isn’t new. It’s a trend that has been happening since Marx’s time, which makes interpreting Marx quite difficult. But there is an answer to this problem: Raya Dunayevskaya’s first book, *Marxism and Freedom, from 1776 until Today (M&F)*. She seeks to clear away the misconceptions, falsifications and to re-establish Marxism in its original form, which Marx called “a thoroughgoing Naturalism or Humanism.”

WHAT MARX NEVER SAID

What is this “thoroughgoing Naturalism”? It isn’t a vulgar materialism concerned only with the way natural science presents the world. It isn’t what some represent as “dialectical materialism,” a phrase Marx never uttered in his life. It also is not an idealism concerned only with philosophical thinking, resolving problems within the mind alone.

“Thoroughgoing Naturalism” is a unity of idealism and materialism. “Thoroughgoing Naturalism or Humanism distinguishes itself both from idealism and materialism and is at the same time the truth uniting

both.” (M&F, Dunayevskaya is quoting Marx’s “Critique of the Hegelian Dialectic,” p. 42)

What exactly is this? It is Marx’s view of history. As Dunayevskaya wrote later, “To Marx, what was crucial was that man was not merely object, but subject, not only determined by history, but its creator. The act of world history is the self-development of labor, its class struggle.” (*Philosophy and Revolution*, p. 49) As Marx put it in *The Manifesto of the Communist Party*, “The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles.”

Our history is a process of overcoming alienation within our relations in production, whether it be proletarians/capitalists, peasants/lords, or slaves/slave masters. Each is an act of realizing freedom! M&F presents a history of various struggles, which may appear as just spontaneous actions of people striving for freedom. Yet Marx projected a movement from theory that met this Reason that lives among the masses.

This isn’t a “law of history” as Stalin would put it. It is a dialog with masses in real contradiction within their mode of production. Marx’s movement from theory included his vision of overcoming the separation of mental and manual labor (man’s self-reproducing, creative activities). Humans always seek a unification of both to become truly and fully human.

MARX IS CONTEMPORARY FOR YOUTH

Why is Marx’s view of history so important? The point of *M&F* is to capture this movement of history from Marx’s time to the present, which meant 1957, when *M&F* was published. This history isn’t one humans controlled. Marx called all history to the present a “pre-history.”

Only new human relations, freely associated producers, create an opening to address what it means to be human—realizing the unity of materialism and idealism in life. This makes Marx a contemporary for youth, looking for a way out of life under capitalism’s hopeless future and absolute misery.

It’s about time *M&F*’s neglect—by radicals, intellectuals and the public in our contemporary society—has changed. A new movement for radical humanism can not only work for today but prepare us for the future. The massive influence of orthodox Marxism, market socialism, post-structuralism and other so-called “alternatives” has not only confused the radical Left but left us in constant failure. All these “alternatives” are outcomes of the failures of movements at the time.

M&F’s large subject matter on history and humanism can mean the difference for a successful movement toward freedom.

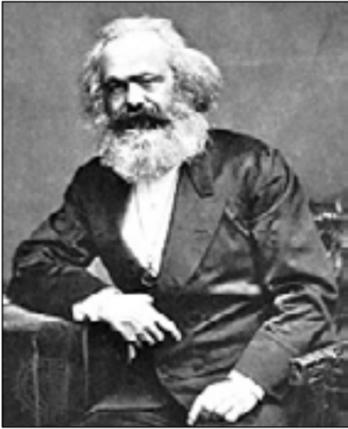
—Will

Marxism and Freedom

dialectically presents history and theory as emanating from the movement from practice, re-establishing the American and world humanist roots of Marxism.



Raya Dunayevskaya



Karl Marx



HANDICAPTHIS!

by Sam Rose

Many people with disabilities are falling through the cracks when trying to get their COVID-19 vaccines. Some are confused about age limitations, and some are unable to get transportation to and from vaccine sites. There have been people knocking on apartment doors in some cities like New York and Boston offering rides to seniors and others who need them.

* * *

Film director Mohamed el-Ansary and script writer Ramez Abbas in Cairo have made a TV series dealing with disabilities called “El-Qadiya 404” (“Case 404”), after the computer error message when failing to communicate. The scripts were written by a disabled person, and it stars 25 disabled actors for the first time in the Arab World. Their purpose is to increase inclusion of people with disabilities in the media and arts and to tell their stories. The first season, covering 12 themes over 10 episodes—including sexual abuse, bullying, exploitation, stigma and discrimination—was released on social media during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

* * *

Up to half of all people killed by law enforcement officers are people with disabilities, according to a 2016 study by the Ruderman Family Foundation, located in Boston. Many have mental health issues that law enforcement is not trained to handle. Media accounts of police shootings seldom report when the victim was a person with disabilities. The Foundation is guided by Jewish values and advocates for the advancement and inclusion of people with disabilities.

* * *



Whitney Mitchell at the July 25 demonstration.

Whitney Mitchell, who is Black and a quadruple amputee, was the fiancé of Garrett Foster who was shot and killed by a U.S. army sergeant at a protest on July 25, 2020. The sergeant drove his car into the crowd of protesters at a Black Lives Matter protest in Austin, Texas, and then shot Foster, who was carrying a gun. Then, on March 29, Mike Ramos, an Austin police officer, dumped Whitney out of her wheelchair onto the street at a protest against the murderers of Foster and Alex Gonzales, Jr. A video documents Whitney struggling with the officer as he pushed her towards the sidewalk. Whitney was dumped out of her wheelchair and was unable to move. The cop looked at her, shrugged, and left her in the street without her caregiver, who had just been arrested for trying to stay with Mitchell.

Biden’s immigration policy is broken

continued from p. 1

more money to Biden’s 2020 campaign than to Trump’s, a 55%-45% split. From 1994 to today, the U.S. government’s annual border security budget grew from \$1.5 billion to more than \$25 billion.

POLICY HAS INHUMAN EFFECTS

Andrea’s six-year-old son Juan, fled Venezuela with his grandmother because the family was receiving death threats. The pair were detained at the border, then Juan was placed in an exclusive facility for minors. In the face of sluggish staff, Andrea traveled twice from her home in California to Arizona with a group of activists to pressure for Juan’s release. “How can they do this to a child? He’s never been separated from his family... I said, ‘Please, give me my son.’ They wouldn’t do it.” Juan was finally released on April 12 after 10 days.

Neha Desai of the National Center for Youth Law was quoted in the *Washington Post* saying that “the [HHS/DHS] vetting process is wrongly grounded in the presumption that a child is safer in government custody than with a parent or relative.”

Myriad health risks, including COVID-19, and the risk of sexual and physical abuse are always present in a detention setting. This is especially true when facing a lack of suitable facilities and extreme staff shortages, which is apparent when staff from unrelated agencies NASA and EPA are asked to deploy to the border.

It is incumbent on government agents under the Biden Administration to make a custody decision that has the least risk of harm for each individual child. Members of society must make sure that political and business considerations will not play any role.

WORLD VIEW

by Gerry Emmett

It has been said, “The Revolution is an idea; you can’t kill an idea.” The thousands who gathered in Idlib city on March 15, the 10th anniversary of the beginning of the Syrian Revolution, lived that truth.

There were no illusions. The half million dead, tens of thousands still detained and tortured, and 12 million displaced make illusions impossible. One banner read: “A decade of global abandonment.”

Yet as Hana Dahneen told reporters, “We came to renew the pledge we made in 2011 when we decided to oust Assad.” She spoke for the large crowd singing “Freedom, freedom, freedom!”

Ghazala al-Saeed, displaced from his village, said “We came to send a message that we are continuing our revolution, the Revolution of Dignity, the Revolution of the Detainees. We demand the right to a safe return without the Assad regime and the release of the detainees from prison.”

FREEDOM IS THE ESSENCE OF HUMANITY

A group of artists contributed their work to the gathering, declaring that “a cry for freedom from a person is the cry of freedom for which the revolution was launched.” Their mural depicted, among scenes of the revolution, a man bandaged but unbroken, still uttering that cry.

The philosopher Hegel would say these revolutionaries are aware of freedom as their essence, aim, and object. Freedom, not as something that they have, but freedom as what they *are*, as human beings.

COVID-19 hits India

A second wave of COVID-19 is devastating India. Each day there have been over 300,000 new cases reported, and over 3,000 people dying. A new, more transmissible strain of the virus, first reported last year, is spreading rapidly among India’s population of 1.4 billion.

India’s health care system has been stretched past its limits. International aid has been slow in coming. Families have had to resort to mass cremations. This is a crisis that will have worldwide implications.

For one, India has the third largest pharmaceutical industry. It produces 70% of the world’s vaccines—and with so much needed at home, vaccine shipments, most of them meant for poorer countries, have been slowed or halted. Even with the halt, it still isn’t enough for India.

ECONOMIC IMPACT

India also has one of the world’s larger economies. With the pandemic, it declined by 10% in the last year, and that is expected to continue. This will affect other countries as well—both poor ones, like Brazil and South Africa, which are also suffering second outbreaks, and the U.S. and European countries that outsource work to India.

This will only deepen capitalism’s world crisis.

In the midst of this, the historic farm protests have continued. Thousands of protesters remain camped outside Delhi, the capital. The Modi government has accused the camps of being “super-spreader” events, while farmers say the government is using the pandemic to demobilize its opponents.

Modi’s own party, however, has held massive (and unnecessary) campaign rallies, while the striking farmers have tried to provide free healthcare.

The Syrian Revolution can’t be killed

Hegel would say that this truth demands a real world development. That is easier to understand if one thinks of the Syrian Revolution in its original context of the Arab Spring. It was clear that revolutionaries in Egypt, Palestine, Bahrain, Libya, saw their struggles as deeply connected.

Ivan Radic



Protesters on Feb. 21, 2021, in Vienna, Austria, demanding a “Free Syria!”

Likewise, at least some of us in the Occupy movement held on to the revelation we received from experiencing the unity between Madison, Wisc., and Tahrir Square.

Homs and Kafranbel, though distant, became more real than our own yesterdays. No wonder the powers of the earth trembled, then lashed out or cravenly betrayed.

RESISTANCE TO ASSAD (ETC.) CONTINUES

It has been said, “We thought we were fighting Assad, then we realized we were fighting the world.”

In the “cradle of the revolution,” Daraa, occupied by Russia, a low-level insurgency continues, with attacks on Assad’s military and police func-

tionaries. There remains a smoldering opposition often openly expressed. It still exists among many Druze in Suwayda, as well as in the eastern region now occupied by the U.S. military.

Further, countless Free Syrians in exile have remained active in the struggle.

THE IDEA OF FREEDOM LIVES

The idea of Free Syria hasn’t been killed. What it has become is, again to borrow from the philosopher, a manifestation of the “world spirit” more profound than what Hegel thought he witnessed at Jena in 1806. Napoleon met his Waterloo in 1815 and faded.

The Syrian Revolution is more akin to the Paris Commune of 1871, a collective act that becomes a category of thought, of reason, necessary for the self-understanding of humanity, and the comprehension of history.

Recall the banner Free Syrians raised at Kafranbel in 2014: “If you are human, you have to care for the Syrian people. If you are human, support us to bring Assad down.”

If humanity is ever to become free and self-determining, it will only be through grasping the significance of these historic acts, with their suffering that judges the world, and their endless openness to a more creative, humane future.

Africa in the crosshairs of world imperialism

The capitalist world remains in a deep crisis and now faces a crossroads. U.S., Chinese, and European imperialism all have aging populations and mounting debt burdens. They will need to find new sources of labor to exploit, and natural resources to plunder, in a next round of primitive capitalist accumulation.

Africa has over 1.3 billion people. It is the youngest population of any major region, and three-fourths of its labor force works in the informal economy. It has abundant mineral wealth. It is a target.

Neocolonialism and corrupt state-capitalist regimes have laid the groundwork. U.S., Chinese, and European corporations keep African workers in mostly low-paying positions, reserving management to themselves.

MILITARY FOLLOWS THE MONEY

Europe, especially France, is building trade routes through North Africa and down the West Coast. China has expanded its Belt and Road Initiative with billions in investments, mainly in East Africa.

At the same time, the U.S. has a string of 29 “temporary” military bases from Niger to Somalia, and a huge permanent naval base in Djibouti. China also has a naval base only a few miles away, which is able to dock a large aircraft carrier.

Much of this is supposed to be directed at pirates and terrorists. But, coincidentally, it serves to dominate the trade routes.

NEW BATTLE COMING SOON?

Labor exploitation is already intense, from sweatshops to mines. Child labor is a particular problem. There are an estimated 73 million child laborers, 1 in every 5 children, the highest rate in the world.

A recent statement by S’bu Zikode of Abahlali baseMjondolo, the South African shackdwellers’ movement, captures the dynamic in much of Africa: “The poor are not poor by choice. It is the history of colonialism, apartheid and land dispossession that keep us in poverty. The commodification of land and state corruption keep us poor.”

South Africa’s African National Congress government, which can sound liberal or even revolutionary, yet works hand in glove with global capitalism, is a state-of-

the-art exploiter. It is now engaged in a struggle with the Congress of South African Trade Unions, the Communist Party-led federation that has been one of the pillars of its rule, and the independent National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa.

Right now the ruling class is talking about moon bases, Mars colonies, and high-speed vacuum tube shipping across continents. Whose sweated labor will pay for those dreams? What new brutalities might lie hidden in those fantasies, to be turned against ourselves as human self-alienation always is?

Human solidarity requires we pay very close attention to Africa. The relative indifference to the 1998-2003 Congo War—which killed millions, grew from the Rwandan genocide, and was fueled by mineral wealth—remains one of contemporary society’s deepest shames.

Academic tragedies

A wildfire that broke out April 18 forced the evacuation of the University of Cape Town, South Africa’s campus and destroyed a major part of the library. The Jagger Reading Room housed thousands of historic African films, letters, and manuscripts, many relating to the anti-apartheid struggle. Also lost were thousands of indigenous artworks and over 85,000 books.

Scholars around the world recognize this as a tragic loss for African studies and for all humanity.

THE IDEA OF FREEDOM

Another kind of tragedy took place in April when Howard University announced the closing of its Classical history division, the only such department at one of the historically Black colleges. Students and scholars, including Cornel West, have objected.

It will be a loss. It is no accident that Aristotle appears in Chapter 1 of Marx’s *Capital*. And Nat Turner has rightly been called the Black Spartacus. The red thread of humanity’s struggle for freedom underlies rationality itself, and as a recent Nobel laureate wrote, “The Trojan women and children were sold into slavery long before the First Crusade, long before England or America was made.”

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.