

# RALLY, COMRADES!

THE VOICE OF THE LEAGUE OF REVOLUTIONARIES FOR A NEW AMERICA

## The Digital Revolution and the Transformation of Public Higher Education

As America's students study to pass their classes, the system of higher education is failing. Skyrocketing tuition forces millions of youth to forego college or go forward as debt slaves. Costs exclude more than a million students each year, while another five million graduate with crushing debt, now totaling \$1.3 trillion. Our "public" colleges and universities have faced such deep budget cuts they now get most of their funding from non-public sources.

Working class students pay by getting bank-financed student loans at double the interest rate those banks pay the Federal Reserve, depleting the meager savings that working families accumulate from their labor. Austerity in public colleges pushes 2 million working class students toward the predatory for-profit industry, with injurious effects, such as Corinthian Colleges, Inc.'s abrupt closure that left 40,000 students with defaulted student loans.

A post-secondary degree reduces the likelihood of unemployment and may provide enough income to cover one's debts. Yet, more than half of college graduates cannot land a job in their field. There are simply not enough good jobs for the millions of college graduates, even those with STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) degrees. Academic departments not favored by corporations – such as the humanities, ethnic studies, and liberal arts – are downsized.

The current higher education system is not only failing millions of students – but for 40 years it has also been failing the educators. College teaching has become a new poster child for the cheap, "just-in-time" economy: 90% of all faculty positions created since 1990 have been part-time or temporary; 80% of all college educators are now part-time or temporary; and 30% need some form of government assistance in order to pay their bills.

Tenured professors are experiencing a decline in job security, salary and shared governance, but low wages, precarious work, and lack of health and retirement benefits are impoverishing the lives of the contingent army of one million "professors." Their working conditions are preventing the high-quality and widely accessible education they thought they were being trained to provide – the education that our students need and that their communities demand.

These least-supported "contingent" faculties are the ones most likely to teach the neediest students: those first in their families to go to college, least prepared due to unsatisfactory underfunded K-12 education, and with the least economic resources for staying in school. Many colleges are now places where these teachers process undereducated students, so that millions of those students will be only semi-prepared for their own precarious jobs.

This downward spiral in teachers' working

conditions and students' learning conditions is rapidly accelerating as colleges chase the digital dream of online learning. As presently structured, this has been an experimental failure as large as the Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) through which it is sold. If organized to maximize student learning rather than profits, they might succeed. Instead, MOOCs have dismal completion and pass rates.

### WHY DEFUNDING AND PRIVATIZATION?

A central role of public education in the United States economy has been to educate and train new employees to take their place in the economy. The "digital revolution" is changing the nature and amount of human work needed and is therefore transforming higher education. Far fewer workers are needed in an economy based on electronic, automated production as demonstrated in the first decade of the 21st century when there was a net decline of 10 million jobs for the labor force. Digital, electronic technology makes possible the almost immediate and low-cost production and duplication of everything needed to satisfy material human needs, including new ways to educate more people. Yet, in private hands, it excludes the majority of humanity.

The "underhauling" of public higher education results from an increasingly laborless economy under a system of private ownership. Today, the overwhelming majority of jobs in the U.S. economy do not require post-secondary education. If corporations need fewer workers, they won't pay the taxes necessary to maintain human services and high quality mass education. On the 150th anniversary of the founding of public land grant universities, Bill Gates urged public university administrators to abandon efforts to increase public funding and instead to slash costs by implementing incentives for speedy student completion and the increased use of MOOCs and e-advising systems. The growth of MOOCs, online degrees and other educational technology has the potential to eliminate many faculty jobs and decrease educational quality for students. Already, many for-profit colleges use standardized online courses created by a single faculty member and administered by contingent, low-paid education workers.

Capitalism, an economic system based on the buying, selling and exploitation of labor, is objectively coming to an end because digital technology is labor-replacing. We cannot go back, but the way forward is up for grabs. The owning class is attempting to restructure society to maintain private control of socially necessary means of production. Though less dramatic than the National Security Administration's unwarranted surveillance program or police murders of unarmed youth, we see elements of police state

tactics on our campuses as well – in the surveillance of faculty, staff and students through hidden cameras and email monitoring, and the arming of campus police with semi-automatic weapons and drones. These are tactics for controlling freedom of speech and assembly. Democracy is sacrificed when a corporate ruling class must resort to brutal force to control a new class of workers, who are made antagonistic to a system that can no longer deliver what it needs to survive.

### FIGHTING FORWARD

Students, staff, and faculty are responding to the changing economy and these attacks by organizing to secure learning conditions and working conditions that have rapidly eroded. Graduate employees and professors have led a wave of unionizing in the few states where this is still possible. The displacement of college teachers is also the reason that the marginalized army of one million part-time and temporary college professors built a national organization – The New Faculty Majority – and a national movement to expose the onslaught of the last 40 years.

Students are the largest segment of the growing displaced, under-employed, college educated labor. They are increasingly acting in unison, sometimes with college faculty and staff, to demand debt relief and free high quality college education. In 2010, tens of thousands of students, education workers, and community members took to the streets and other protest sites for a National Day of Action, the first time that all sectors of public education, pre-kindergarten through Ph.D. came together to call on our government to fully fund education and other human services.

Students whose families fled to the US from poorer countries entered the fight for their right to an education, despite being undocumented. Thousands risked arrest by holding protests against both Republican and Democrat politicians, who have not supported a "Dream Act" to provide them the same tuition and financial aid as other students. They won victories, including Obama's 2012 Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) order allowing many undocumented

youth to hold jobs. But thousands of young people are not eligible for DACA or state benefits, and thousands more, or their parents, have been deported.

### POSSIBILITIES FOR A 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY EDUCATION

Electronic, digital technology offers the possibility of providing free high quality education to all. It could be a vibrant and flexible education that prioritizes the individual interests and needs of learners, organized to solve the problems of society, and to train all people to make meaningful contributions. This is possible right now.

The obstacle today is not electronic technology. Used in the interests of society, the productivity of digital technology can provide abundance. The problem is that the people do not have the political power to ensure that the technology is used in the interests of humanity and the earth.

The corporate control over the resources of society is leading to the decimation of our public rights and services, including public higher education. A new class is forming from the people whose labor is not needed and therefore have no way to sustain themselves and their families. This new class, including contingent faculty and underemployed and unemployed college graduates, is the proletariat of the 21st century, the class that is objectively revolutionary, because its very survival depends on the creation of a new cooperative society. This kind of society would organize the wealth and resources of society to provide for the needs and healthy development of all people and the earth.

A cooperative society is the practical solution to the problems facing students, faculty, and parents, millions of whom want broad, diverse and high quality higher education accessible to all. This can be brought about if the new class recognizes it is a class and builds the political power to restructure society.

### THE ROLE OF REVOLUTIONARIES

It is the role of revolutionaries in education – be they faculty, students, staff or com-

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# Inside: Transformation of Society Requires Revolutionary Strategy

The goal of the revolutionaries is a peaceful, cooperative society, based on the material foundation of the new means of production. To do this, we have to develop and influence the social force that will inevitably have to fight for a new society. This social force is the new class. New means of production are creating this new class. It is a new section of the working class, a new quality within it. This class cannot survive unless it changes the property relations. The actual program of this class is to abolish private property, and this communist program is in the interest of all society. This objectivity is its strength, our strength, and the enemy's weakness.

"Vision and Our Strategic Path" shows how the vast movement for the right to the basics of life is in reality a movement for the overturning of the system of class exploitation forever, replacing it with one based on peace and cooperation.

Strategy is defined as the scientific planning for large scale operations. For revolutionaries this means the task of preparing the class to emancipate itself and to transform society in its own interests. In all the various stages of the struggle of the working class against the ruling class, the revolutionaries always and everywhere represent the interests of the movement as a whole.

To succeed, strategy must be based on an objective estimate of the overall relationship of forces, the strategy and tactics of the enemy, their weaknesses and strengths, as well as our own. This method allows revolutionaries to consider every aspect of the battlefield, and use the objective forces underway to defeat the class enemy.

Revolutionary organizations are created to solve the principal problem of a specific quantitative stage of history. Today that problem is that the masses are going into battle against the most powerful ruling class ever in history, without any consciousness of the cause of the problem or the solution. Thus, making the new class conscious of itself, putting forth a vision and a strategy – a way to get there – is foremost on the agenda.

"The U.S. Corporate State and the Danger of World War," assesses the goals of the U.S. internationally to weaken, dominate or destroy its rivals for the world's markets and geopolitical position. It shows how war becomes so entangled as an instrument of policy that if the policy is going to be put forward, war becomes the inevitable means of developing and implementing that policy. Inevitably, this will shape the struggle, as the government prevents the American people's access to basic necessities, while it funnels trillions to war.

Revolutionaries use their examination of the environment to identify the key struggles, assess the thinking of the people, and identify the ideas that are needed to move our class in its own interests. The forms of these struggles vary, but they are all tied together by same process of transformation taking place in the world.

"Women and the Fate of Society," looks deeply into the historical position of women to show how women's integration into the class structure of society today marks a turning point in the fight for women's emancipation, placing women as equals with their male counterparts in the class struggle. Women stand the most to gain from the fight for class

power, against all forms of slavery, and for a society that guarantees human needs are met. Revolutionaries must unleash this power.

"The Digital Revolution and the Transformation in Public Education," shows that the role of revolutionaries in education – be they faculty, students, staff or community members – is not only to fight against the destruction of higher public education, but more importantly to raise the political understanding of those fighting to defend the public's right to an education, and to teach how the new technology is the objective basis for the creation of a society where education is part of the basic rights of every person to a cultured life.

"Book Review: *The American Crucible: Slavery, Emancipation and Human Rights*," shows how Robin Blackburn's book sets the historical basis and context for the us to see the scale of transformation that is underway, and the indispensable role of the human mind and will in shaping its outcome. It reminds us that human beings make their own history and yet at the same time we *are* our history. We do not choose the world we are born into, yet it is in this crucible that we set about making our own history. We stand at the threshold of something new that is emerging, and what we become is up to us.

## Higher Education... (Continued from page 1)

community members – to not only fight against the cuts, poor working conditions and rising tuition, but more importantly to raise the political understanding of those fighting to defend the public's right to an education. Revolutionaries teach fighters how the new technology is the objective basis for both the devastation of public higher education as we know it and for the creation of a better system. Revolutionaries are all of us who are committed to playing a role in securing a future where the abundance made possible by today's technology is used in the interest of all of humanity and the earth.

Revolutionaries recognize that to win, our class must move from the defensive – hoping to get back what they once had under the capi-

alist system – to the offensive – fighting for a new cooperative society that frees technology to serve the people's needs. Public ownership of the socially necessary means of production and the distribution of the social product according to need is communism. Today, revolutionaries help lay the basis for the working class to seek the political power to bring this practical solution into being.

The digital, electronic, automated revolution is destroying the capitalist system and creating the foundation for a world of shared abundance. Through study, collectivity, and planning, revolutionaries can help insure that this world comes to be.

## EDITORIAL POLICY

**Rally:** to bring back together and put in a state of order, as retreating troops [to return to attack]

**Comrade:** a person with whom one is allied in a struggle or cause

*Rally, Comrades!* is the political paper of the League of Revolutionaries for a New America. In this period of growing motion and developing polarization, *Rally, Comrades!* provides a strategic outlook for the revolutionaries by indicating and illuminating the line of march of the revolutionary process. It presents a pole of scientific clarity, examines and analyzes the real problems of the revolutionary movement, and draws political conclusions for the tasks of revolutionaries at each stage of development in order to prepare for future stages. It is a vehicle to reach out and communicate with revolutionaries both within the League and outside of the League to engage them in debate and discussion and to provide a forum for these discussions. Articles represent the position and policies of the League of Revolutionaries for a New America.

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## League of Revolutionaries for a New America WHAT WE STAND FOR

Tens of thousands of socially conscious people declare themselves revolutionaries in opposition to the degenerating social and economic conditions. The League's mission is to unite these scattered revolutionaries on the basis of the demands of the new class, to educate and win them over to the cooperative, communist resolution of the problem.

The demands of this new impoverished class for food, housing, education, healthcare and an opportunity to contribute to society are summed up as the demand for a co-operative society. For the first time an objective communist economic class is forming to become the foundation for a communist political movement. A new fascist State form, the naked rule of corporate power, has arisen to oppose this motion.

Society must take over these corporations or these corporations will continue to take over society. The new class must have political power to achieve

these goals. In the effort to achieve this political power the League supports all political organizations and sections of society that fight against the growing poverty, social and ecological destruction, fascism and war.

Nothing can be accomplished until the American people hold a vision of where they want to go and what they want to be. Creating and imbuing them with such vision is the overriding task of revolutionaries and the foundation of our organization.

We in the League face the future with confidence. We call upon all revolutionaries to abandon sectarian differences, to unite around the practical demands of the new class and to secure humanity's imperiled future.

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# Women and the Fate of Society

There is a struggle breaking out, and women are on its front lines. This struggle is a response to extreme polarities of wealth and poverty and to aggravated divisions based on “race” and “gender,” realities world capitalism has wrought. Women are suffering in the context of a growing equality of poverty worldwide. Women make up two-thirds of the world’s 796 million illiterate people. 60% of the chronically hungry are women and girls. Women in sub-Saharan Africa who spend about 40 billion hours per year collecting water are being joined in a survival battle for water in Detroit. Women and female-headed families are the fastest growing sections of the U.S. homeless. As recent “Sayhername” protests have documented, poor women increasingly face police violence alongside domestic violence, and are jailed for the same crimes against property as men. This is a social struggle that can only be resolved by a political struggle – a struggle over class power.

Women’s emancipation has been on society’s agenda since the creation of classes and the overturning of “mother-right,” i.e. the equality of women that existed through tens of thousands of years of human history. The majority of women today are at the center of a global new class, a structurally forced out of the economy by labor replacing electronic production. Today women make up more than half of the paid workforce and more than half of this new class. This class is revolutionary because it is outside of, and hostile to, the wages system. This new class cannot simply fight individual employers – it must fight the State and the property relations the State protects.

For the first time in history women are fully integrated into the class structure of society. This marks a major turning point in the fight for women’s emancipation. It places women as equals with their male counterparts in the class struggle. As electronic production destroys the old industrial economy and polarizes society, this equality is becoming an equality of poverty. This is not the equality for which women have historically fought. It has, however, placed women in a position to achieve the power necessary to achieve real equality for the first time in human history.

## WOMEN AND THE EQUALITY OF POVERTY IN THE U.S.

Women’s inequality was built into the historical development of capitalism. It has been determined by two aspects of capitalist exploitation – in the production process on the one hand, and on the other, in the reproduction of labor-power itself, the reproduction of human life. In the production process women’s historic economic dependency results in their unequal position in the competition for jobs so central to capitalism as a system. Meanwhile, under capitalism the reproduction of labor power has taken place largely outside of the wages system. In the personal, domestic sphere, dependent economic relations with individual men have been the dominant expression of women’s exploitation.

In the U.S., women are, and historically have been, disproportionately represented in

the lowest paid sections of the working class and have dominated the contingent workforce. The fight over women’s legal and political rights rests on this basis, and has been inseparably connected to the fight against chattel slavery and for women’s equal position under wage-slavery. Political concepts of dependence and independence, exploited by pro-slavery forces, had deep roots in women’s economic and legal dependence on men. A law of U.S. slavery going back as far as 1662 Virginia was that children were born slave or free according to the condition of the mother only. The ugliness and complexity of the fight for the abolition of slavery and for women’s and African-American suffrage has been indelibly etched into the evolution of the class struggle in this country. The fight for women’s voting rights was impossible in the U.S. until the fight against slavery was won.

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Revolutionaries rely on the program of the most oppressed and exploited to politicize for class power, against all forms of slavery, and for a society that guarantees that human needs are met. Women stand to gain the most from this fight. Revolutionaries must unleash this power.

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In the transition from small family farming to industrialization, what has been traditionally considered “women’s work,” including childrearing, housekeeping and caregiving, became separated from other work and remained outside of the social production process. As the market economy developed, the idea of the “family wage,” and an ideology of “separate spheres” of men and women’s work developed. A myth more than a reality for most working-class families, these ideas reflected industrial working-class aspirations, and became central to the social contract between capital and labor. Women, often forced to leave employment once married, were barred from public, economic and political participation based on this reality.

The Great Depression of the 1930s forced more married women to enter the public labor-force. Systemic inequality in the workforce, however, worked against working class unity. Black men and women faced the most temporary, degrading work as agricultural laborers or domestic servants. Both of these occupations were exempted from the Fair Labor Standards Act, the Social Security Act and National Industrial Recovery Act, and therefore Blacks did not share in the benefits of America’s New Deal.

As U.S. capital expanded after World War II, workers fought to crawl out of poverty and to get a “piece of the pie.” Access to birth control and the application of technology to women’s domestic work allowed many more women to enter the paid workforce, which they did in record numbers. The “Women’s Movement” of this time reflected the interests of women able to leave poverty behind. But it also reflected

the aspirations of all women for emancipation from economic dependence on men, expressed most visibly in the fight for equal pay, against domestic violence and for reproductive rights. All became political questions as women’s labor became central to wage-labor.

Globalization was built on contingent labor. The main advantage for employers of part-time and temporary work is its “just-in-time” nature, its lack of benefits, health insurance and pensions. Since wage work became possible, women have been disproportionately represented in the lowest-paid sections of the working class. They have dominated the contingent workforce as part-time, temporary workers, working at or below minimum wage. In times of peak labor demand the U.S. government encouraged temporary, seasonal work. Women from Mexico and elsewhere have worked alongside men in the U.S. as seasonal

ing class women of color, who understood the movement as essential to the right for poor women and poor communities to survive.

Headlines screech, “Male workers an endangered species.” Over the last 30 years U.S. male workers have experienced lower skills acquisition, lower employment rates, lower educational attainment, and lower real wage levels. Women’s status is not improving; men’s status is going down. “Equal pay for equal work” no longer means advancement for the vast majority of women today.

As workers are replaced in production, their families increasingly bear the brunt of the reproduction of humanity. The socialization of “women’s work” into the public health and educational systems of large-scale production under industrialization continues. But it does so within the context of commodification and privatization, resulting in an attack on all workers who cannot pay for the necessities of life.

Women’s class inequality and oppression is not new. What *is* new is that for the first time in history the fight for women’s emancipation is central to the fight against the oppression and exploitation of all of society. Women’s integration into the center of the new class means that the fight for the emancipation of women is now inextricably entwined with the fight for political class independence and for a cooperative society. Laborless production places “women’s work,” the birth, maintenance and caring that go into the reproduction of life, into antagonism with capitalism and indeed, any private property system. Women’s leadership on the basis of the political program of the new class is both possible and more necessary than ever today.

## THE ROLE OF REVOLUTIONARIES

Race and sex inequality are key ways Americans have experienced the class relationships that rule their lives. A-class concepts of identity, based in women’s domestic segregation in the period of industrial capital, are anachronistic. A politics of “difference” that proposes that women’s emancipation lies in fighting for the equality of women within the limits of capitalism and private property is a dead end street. Today the majority of the world’s population is outside the production process and the wages system. Women’s leadership in developing new concepts of work and life is key to the vision of a new society.

Ruling class parties use so-called moral issues that center on the changing role of the family, and how humanity reproduces and maintains itself, in order to corral working-class women into one or another bid for corporate women’s power. This obscures the reality that the revolutionary power of women lies in political independence, in a society that guarantees control over our lives, that meets the needs of all members of the human race and guarantees our stewardship of Mother Earth.

Revolutionaries rely on the program of the most oppressed and exploited to politicize for class power, against all forms of slavery, and for a society that guarantees that human needs are met. Women stand to gain the most from this fight. Revolutionaries must unleash this power.

# The U.S. Corporate State and the Danger of World War

World capitalist powers have “gifted” humanity with two world wars in the twentieth century. The goal was to re-divide the world and its resources among those powers. Part of the design was to destroy the USSR, which presented a main threat to both fascism and liberal capitalism. However, the USSR triumphed against fascism and was able to extend its influence to Eastern Europe and support for socialist and anti-colonial revolutions in Asia and Africa.

## THE GLOBAL SITUATION SINCE 1990

Some of the main features of the objective global situation show the instability in the global political economy. The demise of the USSR and the Eastern Bloc has changed geopolitical and economic realities across the globe.

First, the U.S. emerged as a unipolar power both economically and militarily and tried to turn the Russian Federation into a third-rate economic power, useful only for the extraction of natural resources for U.S. dominated global capitalism.

Second, while all that was taking place, China was steadily building its economic power, and by the beginning of the twenty-first century it loomed on the horizon as a main challenger of U.S. capitalism. China’s rise prompted the U.S. to devise a strategy to surround and vanquish it.

Third, since the early 1990s the U.S. has tightened its grip on world trade through the World Trade Organization (WTO), the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and more recently the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP).

Fourth, in the financial sphere the U.S. had already a tight grip on both the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank since the end of WWII. Its main private banks and financial institutions have become global giants dominating an international financial system.

Fifth, U.S. oil companies have dominated much of global oil production and markets.

Sixth, the U.S. military has tightened its grip around the globe by establishing AFRICOM (Africa Command) under EUCOM in October 2007 (and as a separate command in September 30, 2008), bringing the number of U.S. Unified Combatant Commands to ten.

Seventh, instead of becoming a third-rate country, the Russian Federation under Vladimir Putin has dealt a huge blow to the U.S. by rebuilding its economy contrary to the initial U.S. grand designs for it.

Eighth, the economic and financial crisis of 2008 that began in the U.S. and moved like a tsunami to the rest of the world has weakened the U.S. economy at a time when it has been wallowing in the mire in both Afghanistan and Iraq.

Ninth, as a consequence of U.S. global practices in all spheres to achieve its interests, blowback against U.S. policy has occurred as witnessed initially in the Arab uprisings in 2011, in which seemingly stable pro-U.S.

regimes have been quickly brought down.

Tenth, the U.S. created chaos in the Middle East, with the rise and expansion of Islamist armies across the Middle East and beyond, aided and abetted by its regional allies, such as Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Turkey and Israel. It is crucial to understand that Islamists such as al-Qaeda, which the U.S. has branded as “terrorist,” constitute the Islamist armies, such as al-Nusra and ISIS, which the U.S. is currently using as instruments of its geopolitical strategy. By using these forces, the U.S. is directly responsible for hundreds of thousands of deaths. Islamists’ victims are mostly Muslims who do not subscribe to the religious interpretation of Islam to which the Islamists subscribe. The overwhelming majority of Muslims follow tolerant Islamic interpretations of the Qur’an.

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## The stakes are high for humanity. A war against the Russian Federation and China would mean world war.

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Eleventh, the war in Ukraine has shifted the pressure onto the Russian Federation, with more intensity than it experienced during the 2008 U.S. – fomented crisis in Georgia.

Twelfth, the financial and political crisis engulfing the European Union, centered in Greece’s financial default, is wreaking havoc in world markets.

## U.S. STRATEGY: GLOBAL DOMINATION

Western capitalist powers, led by the U.S., build their strategy based on the objective situation that they have helped to create in large measure. To dominate the world, the U.S. has to eliminate all rivals. Clearly, the U.S. perceives China as its main rival. China has the second largest economy in the world, and has extended its economic activities, search for raw materials, and political influence across all continents in one form or another. U.S. strategy will have to deny China access to resources to prevent it from continuing to develop its economic power.

The U.S. will have to isolate China from current and prospective allies. Severing those relations would deny China political, military, and economic maneuverability. Once China is weakened, the U.S. would then be able to dominate China and the world. This might seem a tall order to any rational thinker, but the U.S. is the main player on the world stage, and it is compelled to pursue its strategic goal, because it is driven to that goal by the objective global situation.

## THE CENTRALITY OF THE MIDDLE EAST TO U.S. STRATEGY

The Russian Federation, Central Asia and the Middle East are the main areas from which to isolate China. Once those are vanquished, it would be easy to deal with the rest of the BRIC countries, and the Shanghai Group and

its allies. However, the main link in the chain in this strategy is the Middle East. U.S. domination of the Middle East would be a huge chunk gobbled up from Russian influence and would make it easier for the U.S. to deal a knockout blow to the Russian Federation. The Syrian port of Tartous constitutes the only warm-water port for the Russian fleet and serves as the forward defense of the Black Sea fleet. Putin moved quickly to annex the Crimean Peninsula to the Russian Federation to remove a direct threat to the Russian Fleet. Putin would not sacrifice losing a warm-water port. More importantly, U.S. success in dominating the region would present an extremely serious threat to the Russian Federation that would be even be more menacing than the U.S. current meddling in the Ukrainian-Russian crisis.

primarily on Egypt as it was the most populous Arab state, commanding a most important strategic location. In fact, the U.S. held talks with the international leadership of the Muslim Brothers, an Islamist organization the British helped establish in 1928 to counter both nationalist and communist forces that had been a threat to British occupation of Egypt. The U.S. thinking had been that a state governed by the Muslim Brothers would have positive relations with it, and the U.S. would dominate through them. That dream came to naught, especially after the Egyptian military ousted Egyptian president Morsi, a Muslim Brother, on July 3, 2013 in response to popular demand, when 30 million Egyptians took to the streets demanding an end to the Muslim Brothers’ rule.

## U.S. TENACITY IN PURSUING WORLD DOMINATION

The U.S. has not relented in its failed attempts to achieve its strategic regional goal. The plan has for decades called for the disintegration of the Middle East and the formation of over 40 entities based on sectarian and national loyalties. This is the lens through which the invasion of Iraq can be seen, and the current war in Syria.

President Obama has portrayed the war in Syria, for instance, as a matter of Sunni and Alawite (an offshoot sect of Shi’a Islam) Muslims fighting against each other, when, in fact, the so-called Alawite controlled state’s population is overwhelmingly Sunni Muslim, and so is the Syrian Arab Army loyal to the state. Similarly, U.S. policy makers have advanced plans to divide Iraq into three states (Sunni, Shi’a and Kurdish). The point behind these moves is to weaken the Arab world and maintain Israeli superiority in the region as a bulwark against forces that resist U.S. domination.

Iran has been in the cross-hairs of the U.S. since the 1979 revolution that ousted the Shah, a main ally of the U.S. in the Persian Gulf. Failing to topple the Iranian regime through the Iran-Iraq war that Saddam Hussein had launched in 1980, the U.S. continued to do so through instituting sanctions against the Islamic Republic of Iran. The latest episode of plans to vanquish Iran is represented by the nuclear negotiations between Iran on the one hand, and on the other hand, the five permanent members of the UN Security Council and Germany. Try as they might, the U.S. and its Western allies could not prevent Iran from developing its scientific base and resisting Western aggression in the region. More importantly, the U.S. has succeeded in creating chaos, producing refugees, destroying human beings and infrastructure, but it has not been able to achieve its regional or overall goal of domination.

It is clear from the historical record that the U.S. has integrated the instrument of war in its expansionist policy. The U.S. is relentless and tenacious in its quest for world domination. It will stop at nothing, even if that means increasing the probability of war. The stakes are high for humanity, because a war against the Russian Federation and China would mean world war.

# Vision and Our Strategic Path

Throughout history the development of humanity's tools beyond the subsistence stage has created the material basis for class exploitation. These class relations, exploiter to exploited, have been enforced by violence and war. People have dreamed of an end to the misery and slavery this has brought to the many, along with privilege for the few. Down the ages the oppressed have died fighting for this vision of a world free from scarcity, exploitation, class domination, and stupefying labor.

Now, labor-replacing technology in the form of computerized automation and robotics is eliminating wage-labor and destroying the capitalist system. The people must either organize to take power to control these vast productive forces in their own interest, meaning distribution of what is produced according to need, or we will perish.

This new means of productions is creating a new revolutionary class, one no longer tied to the capitalist system. In their demands for what they need, more and more they find themselves thrown against the naked power of the State, with its increasingly militarized police and its unjust laws.

The "law" of private property is what is standing in the way of our being able to create an economic system that conforms to the new conditions and for the common good. On this depends the very survival of humanity and the earth. Only with consciousness and a clear vision of the alternative will revolutionaries be able to fulfill their epochal task.

The few hold onto the means of produc-

tion as private property, as a source of extreme obscene private wealth, while everyone else starves. If this continues they also will find themselves on a planet their profit-driven system has torn apart by wars of plunder and polluted beyond its ability to sustain life.

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The vast movement for the right to the basics of life is in reality a movement for overturning the system of class exploitation forever, replacing it with one based on peace and cooperation.

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These means of production, in the hands of our class instead of in the hands of the billionaire class, could fulfill the age-old vision so many have dreamed of and died fighting for. These new means of production offer the potential to provide the people of the world all they need to live creative and fulfilling lives, materially, culturally, and spiritually.

The ruling capitalist class can do nothing about this contradiction. Their attempt to hold onto private property, as the material basis for capitalism crumbles and disappears, puts them on the defensive and out of step with reality. The material basis for their rule is being destroyed. The world they are trying to build is a fascist prison planet of earth-destroying wars and planetary plunder, controlled by the corporations and for the corporations. Their only weapons are violence, terror, confusion and the historically-evolved ones of race and

other ideologies of division. They can no longer house, feed, clothe, or educate the people. What propaganda will convince a person that their hungry child's belly is full?

A cooperative society is the only solution compatible with the new technologies

that are leaving capitalist relations in the dust. It is the ruling class and private property that stands in our way.

We are on the cusp of human history, with nowhere to go but forward, into a world of cooperation, peace, and unleashed creativity, in a world free of all forms of enslavement. That is, a world freed from the rule of private property. Today, scarcity is imposed by the ruling class. The new technology offers the potential abundance of everything we need not only to survive, but to thrive. Only with an understanding of what is possible, and how to achieve it together, can this practical vision become a reality. No longer can a small class of people be allowed to hold what we need and what technology produces as private property for their own gain.

The new technology gives us the ability to free ourselves from want, insecurity and

exploitation. Now, humanity's creative genius can be liberated to solve the problems created in past eras. We can come together to restore health and balance to the planet, raise the next generations of practical visionaries, explore the inner and outer cosmos, and create art in all its forms. We already have the means to freely share this vision. The new global forms of communication are being used to exchange revolutionary ideas, organize movements, and share ideas and strategies. People have at their fingertips the ability to spread this vision. There is no going back to the democracy of former times, but the dream of humanity for a truly democratic society is attainable only by going forward into a cooperative, communist society.

The American people, and humanity around the globe, are beginning to shake off the lies and are demanding political and economic justice. The vast movement for the right to the basics of life is in reality a movement for overturning the system of class exploitation forever, replacing it with one based on peace and cooperation.

Humanity can only move forward and fulfill the desire and vision of the ages. We are at an epochal crossroads. We will either organize to seize the power to bring this to reality, or perish.

*This is the second of two Building Block articles on strategy, tactics, and vision. Building Block articles help explain a basic concept of the revolutionary process, challenging readers to explore its meaning for political work in today's environment.*

## From the Editors: Global Austerity Measures – Fascism in Disguise

In 2010, immediately after Greece announced that its economy was about to collapse and that it was heading towards bankruptcy, the International Monetary Fund, the European Central Bank and the European Commission issued the first of two bailouts to avert a global economic disaster. Harsh austerity measures were demanded, requiring deep budget cuts that required the gutting of most social programs and the total elimination of others. The entire public pension system was cut to the bone, and steep tax increases were imposed on the population (not the corporations). The current bailout requires more austerity cuts to social programs, while almost all of the money goes to paying off creditors.

In the United States the merger of the corporations and the government is complete. This is true on both the federal and state level. Public property is being seized – called privatized – throughout the country. One corporate trade agreement after another is being created. Labor unions are being legislated out of existence, and right to work laws are being enacted. Public service jobs, the education system, the libraries, our water, and more are being turned over to the corporations. Our pension programs, child nutrition programs, unemployment insurance, and those social programs that care for the sick, the disabled, and the elderly are being slashed and elim-

inated. Emergency managers are replacing mayors and city council governments of major cities. And these are just a few examples.

Fascism today is based upon the objective social destruction of the capitalist economic system wrought by electronic production. A fascist program is being implemented by a global capitalist class to protect private property. In countries around the world, fascist economic and political policies have matured by varying degrees over the past 20 years. Since the 2008 global economic crisis, this modern fascism has been accelerated under the guise of "austerity" worldwide.

These fascist economic policies set the stage for the rise of social fascism. The U.S. presidential electoral campaign season is already underway. On the one hand are appeals to adopt a populist all-class social democratic program, that corrals independent political impulses and directs them into the Democratic Party. On the other hand is the dangerous, anti-immigrant, populist rhetoric, that strives to consolidate a social base of fascism. It unites with the social motion created by the increasing social destruction, to shape it to make fascism appear to be the simple and most obvious solution, the best of what common sense demands.

Revolutionaries in the U.S. make our contribution to the international fight against fascism, by uniting the revolutionaries at home

around the objective demands of the new class for the basic necessities of life. The revolution requires the formation of a politically conscious section of the new class. This section will be

formed by those who first come to understand that their economic equality requires them to unite politically around their common demands, regardless of race or identity group.

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# Book Review: The American Crucible: Slavery, Emancipation and Human Rights

*The American Crucible: Slavery, Emancipation and Human Rights*  
By Robin Blackburn,  
Verso Books, London, 2011

The crucible which is American history is a cascading nexus of interconnected causality which spans a world-historical epoch of more than 500 years. Human beings make their own history and yet at the same time we *are* our history. We do not choose the world we are born into, yet it is in this crucible that we set about making our own history. We stand at the threshold of something new that is emerging, and what we become is up to us.

Robin Blackburn provides a comprehensive description of a complex process, which shows the development of modern capitalism along with the conquest and exploitation of the Americas, the introduction of slavery, the revolutions that gave rise to the overthrow of the feudal regimes, and the fight for emancipation. Slavery provided the impetus for the development of capitalism, and capitalist development in turn extended the scale and intensified the pace of plantation labor. The revolutions for *liberté, égalité, fraternité* were in turn influenced by abolitionism and the revolutions in the Americas for emancipation, particularly the Haitian revolution.

By the end of the 17th century nearly all slaves in the Americas were African. Slavery had until then been a practically universal practice. In Africa slavery was widespread and represented a subordinate status, but was not based initially on race. Greece and Rome took captives as slaves from many ethnic backgrounds, and in the Middle Ages in Europe the word “slave” echoed the Slav peoples of Eastern Europe. There were also slave regimes in China and Korea, and various Islamic states practiced slavery.

## THE NEW RACISM

Racism in the modern sense was not the motive force for plantation slavery in the Americas. “The planters and merchants acquired slaves because they could make a profit from them.” (p. 94) The slave plantation represented a new kind of political economy, in which the slaves themselves were a commodity. It was a new type of enterprise, based upon a great intensification of slave work and subordination. The slave regimes were by-products of capitalism and colonialism.

The slave-based commerce of the Americas made a significant contribution to the accumulation of capital which led to industrialization, providing capital, markets, and raw materials. The slave plantation was constructed by and for the market, with the aim of maximizing commodity outputs. In Britain there was a dual process of primitive accumulation and of using the super-profits of slavery to finance the expansion of industry and credit. From 1760-1820 manufacture was

transformed by an “industrial revolution.” The expansion of the slave plantation fed into this transformation, and capitalist industrialization fueled the further development of slavery.

In the U.S. South, industrialization expanded the scale and intensified the pace of slave labor. Even though a mode of production based primarily on manual labor, some mechanical advances were introduced, including the cotton gin and steam transport. The planters were among the first to adapt steam power to bale cotton, grind sugar cane and to transport them to market on trains and steamships.

Even though the slave population became virtually all African by the 1800s primarily for economic reasons, there began a multi-layered process of constructing new racial identities based on skin color and social status. Slaves in the Americas grew from 1/3 of a million in 1700 to 2.3 million in 1770. Over 150,000 slaves per year were acquired from the African coast. “Slavery in the steam age was even more implacable than its predecessor, with the productivity of the slave gangs pushed up a notch.” (p.295) The number of slaves doubled between 1815-1860 – 4 million in the U.S. South, 1.75 million in Brazil, 250,000 in Cuba.

Those same decades saw the emergence of a new racism, assuming a racial hierarchy and using racial categories based on skin color, even though racial inferiority was also ascribed to the Celts and the Jews. Racial destiny was found to be inscribed in existing conditions. “The slavery of the New World permanently created, defined and embodied a violent subordination of blacks by whites, Africans by Europeans, ‘heathens’ by Christians, one race by another. The result was the coalescence of a characteristic racial ideology” (p. 95) in which slaves were viewed as less than human.

## EMANCIPATION AND THE HAITIAN PIVOT

Yet if the 19th century was a time when slave-based economies were established, along with the new racism that consolidated it, it was also the century of abolitionism, emancipation and revolutions. “The years 1776 to 1848 in the Atlantic world witnessed the creation of a string of new states and administered a revolutionary shock or challenge to the old order, and to colonialism and slavery.” (p. 175)

The American, French, Haitian and Spanish American revolutions were all interconnected, each radicalizing the other – with Haiti as the pivot. A kind of dialectic between reformist and revolutionary varieties of anti-slavery developed. Abolitionism itself would have become nothing without the elemental anti-slavery of the slaves themselves, and nowhere was this more evident than with the Haitian revolution.

The only successful large-scale slave re-

volt in human history, it channeled the mass longing for freedom into a ban on slavery. In France there was a surge of a new egalitarianism, denouncing privilege, including the “aristocracy of the skin.”

The American revolution was itself an exhibition of the interplay and interconnectedness of cause and effect as the opposing forces of the entrenchment of slavery and the battle for emancipation developed virtually simultaneously.

An appeal was made to natural rights, but without addressing race or slavery.

The U.S. Constitution, passed in 1787, did not regulate or even mention slavery, and forbade Congress from banning the slave trade for 20 years. The Constitution went far toward entrenching slavery as an institution. The plantations became a law unto themselves.

Haiti contributed to an idea of revolution that haunted the political landscape throughout the Americas. The abolitionists – William Lloyd Garrison, Wendell Phillips, Denmark Vesey, Frederick Douglass, Nat Turner, John Brown – were all impacted by the events in Haiti. “The idea of a revolutionary overturning of the slave order was abroad, and itself became an element of the political drama that led to the Civil War.” (p. 246)

In 1801 Thomas Jefferson promised every assistance to Napoleon in “reducing Touissant Louverture, the leader of the Haitian revolution, to starvation.” He supported a return to slavery and French rule. In return, the Louisiana Purchase allowed for the admission of slavery into the territories. Haiti was quarantined by the U.S., and Haiti was not recognized by the U. S. until 1862.

Abolitionism and the revolutions of which it was a part nevertheless did not stop slavery itself from advancing with great strides in step with the advance of capitalism particularly in the U.S. South, Brazil and Cuba. After the banning of the slave trade over 2 million new slaves were brought to the Americas, mostly to Brazil and Cuba, between 1804 and 1860. “The leading slave-holders and merchants of the U. S. and Brazil were by 1830 installed at the heart of the State and in a position to bid for slave-holder hegemony.”

The slave order and the fight for emancipation stand in direct antagonism to one another. On the one hand the Confederacy stressed continuity with the spirit of 1776 and state’s rights, while on the other Abraham Lincoln arose as the embodiment of a state power not under slave-holder control. As Karl Marx puts it, “the slaveholder’s rebellion was to sound the tocsin for a general holy crusade of property against labor.”

While the Civil War was ultimately decided in favor of emancipation, it did not end the hegemony of private property, and the suppression of chattel slavery did not prevent the reappearance of the ideology of racial exclusion and oppression which had butressed the old slave regimes. The defeat of

Reconstruction and the rise of the Redeemer governments in the South allowed for the re-establishment of white supremacy in an even more virulent form.

The balance of the 20th century saw the sway of capital swell to global dimensions; it was in this last expansionist phase of capital that the “second reconstruction” of the 1960s in the U.S. South allowed finally the full integration of the Black worker into the productive process of modern industrial capital. Even so, these last great reforms only permitted the completion of the transition from labor enchained to the “free” labor of wage-slavery. The subordination of a class changed its form, but the content remained the same.

## THE CONTENT OF OUR TIME: PRIVATE PROPERTY AND EMANCIPATION

*The American Crucible* sets the historical basis and context for us to look at the quality of our own time, both in term of historical continuity and discontinuity. Blackburn’s book ends on the cusp of a new epoch being born, a time in which old forms die away, but also in which the promise of fulfillment of the deepest yearnings of the people is heralded.

Electronics has the unique property of being a tool of production that for the first time replaces human labor. At the very moment that capitalist private property had reached the limits of its expansion, its death knell is announced with the introduction of new productive forces that spells the end of the very basis of wage-labor and capital. A new epoch is underway. The basis of everything changes – new classes, new forms of the fight for the liberation and emancipation of a subordinated, oppressed and exploited class.

The content of the crucible which is America contains not only the components of the development and reign of private property, but also the centuries-long battle for emancipation and equality. In that epoch in which capital was arising, a class in bondage arose to cast off its chains, chains reinforced by an ideology of white supremacy. Today the material basis of that inequality is receding, but the content remains in a new form. A new class of displaced, dispossessed and cast-off workers is arising, but it is in a battle for its very survival. They are Black and white, men and women, old and young. They only share a common impoverishment, expressed today by the growing polarity of wealth and poverty.

These are new times, and the forms may be changing, but the content persists: this time it is for the liberation of a global new class enchained by the yoke of private property, this time it is the inequality between the obscene wealth of a ruling class and the absolute poverty of a subordinate class. This time it is about the emancipation of a class and consequently all of humanity.