

# NEWS & LETTERS

Theory/Practice

'Human Power is its own end'—Marx

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50¢

## Unstoppable line spells no relief



by B. Ann Lastelle

*"But suddenly you find that it isn't just one foreman but a hierarchy of control over you. Why? You can do the work... They are there to see that everything is subordinated to that one function, of extracting from you as much labor as possible."*

—Raya Dunayevskaya, "Cooperative Form of Labor vs. Abstract Labor," March 1951

Machine operators on our filling and packaging lines are expected to relieve each other for breaks and lunches. There are no regular relief people or shutdown times. This rotation means that one operator is filling two, sometimes three, positions during those periods of time. There are safety concerns raised by this procedure in general, but it is particularly difficult when we are not fully staffed or when there are new, untrained people on the line, as has been the situation on third shift for months.

Rotation for breaks and lunches has been a constant source of tension on third shift between the supervisor and the crew, which has asked repeatedly to shut down the line for breaks and lunches or to add a person to help relieve. One woman on the crew brought up at the kickoff meeting the unsatisfactory arrangement made for relieving on the previous night. The supervisor first attributed the problem to people taking "excessive" time for breaks and lunches, then blamed another woman whose training he said should be complete (thus freeing up her trainer) while she maintained that it was not.

The crew and the supervisor finally came to an agreement, but not before the supervisor had twice singled out the woman who had initiated the discussion: "I will

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## Black World

### Fight Right's onslaught in '98 election



by Lou Turner

The vicious right-wing assault on what's left of the meager social agenda of the Democratic Party coalition of civil rights, labor, women's and social advocacy organizations for the poor and working class this election year is cause for great alarm. The serious political consequences of a right-wing Republican sweep in key elections this November seems to have flown beneath the political radar of Black and left forces. The demobilization of Black and working class America by Clinton Democrats virtually assures it.

Called the most "retrograde and ineffectual Congress" in recent memory by nothing less than the *Washington Post* (Oct. 19), the outgoing Republican-controlled 105th Congress has blocked legislation controlling the tobacco and managed health care industries, along with legislation to increase the minimum-wage and outlaw hate crimes.

According to a recently discovered House Republican leadership document, a section of which is entitled "Presidential Priorities the Congress Stopped," Republican leaders in the House of Representatives, working with Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott of Mississippi, boasted that their successful killing of the Hate Crimes Bill was a "win for conservative priorities."

There is no more damning evidence of how ruling class politics contribute to the neo-fascist atmosphere now being felt throughout the country than the Republican leadership's characterization of the Hate Crimes Bill as a "proposal that criminalizes motive rather than punishes violent crime." In other words, even after James Byrd is dragged to his death and decapitated in Jasper, Texas, because he is Black, even after Matthew Shepard is brutally beaten to death in Wyoming because he is gay, Republicans feel it their bounded duty to protect the rights of home-grown neo-fascists from having their motives criminalized by "big-government."

It is all too easy, here, to now separate the horrors of this neo-fascism in American life from the more mundane anxieties over the economic crisis that the working class faces. This is the pitfall that all too many social movements and political organizations stumble into. As depraved as these inhuman acts of violence are, no less

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## Prison warehousing and police abuse spotlight decaying U.S. society

by D.A. Sheldon

In an unprecedented move, the London-based human rights group, Amnesty International, has strongly criticized the U.S.'s criminal (in)justice system for a variety of abuses, ranging from excessive use of force by police to the inhuman treatment of prisoners. For the first time in its history Amnesty is devoting its resources to a worldwide campaign focused on the U.S. In the past, the group tended to ignore such brutalities under threat of losing funding from U.S. agencies, but with the proliferation of atrocities in this so-called land of the "free" it has been forced by human rights advocates around the world to challenge the system.

### U.S. CRIMINAL INJUSTICE

The head of Amnesty International, Perry Sane, has called Texas a "conveyor belt of death" for leading the nation in executions. As of Aug. 24, Texas had executed 11 people this year. Seventy-four people were put to death around the nation in 1997, half of them murdered by state officials in Texas—the highest annual number of executions carried out in the U.S. and Texas since the Supreme Court reinstated the death penalty in 1976.

In addition to executions becoming a weekly routine, the racial disparity of those subjected to it is evident in the large number of Blacks and Latinos on death row. Prosecutors are more inclined to seek capital punishment convictions against Blacks, especially when the victims are white. There is also a dramatic rise in the number of children and the mentally ill caught up in this system of death.

A prime example is Horace E. Kelly, a Black prisoner convicted in 1984 for the murder of three in Southern California. Kelly, 38, is a severely disturbed individual with an IQ hovering in the 60s. According to testimony and prison logs, he suffers from severe mental illness and is unable to communicate coherently. When asked



Chicago participants in national Oct. 22 protest against police brutality and the incarceration of a generation.

why he was on death row, he answered, "I'm here to go to college." Yet even with all this, the state of California is planning to use its death machine against Kelly.

The U.S. is one of a few nations in the world that still "legally" kills its youth, even though the United Nations has long condemned it for imposing capital punishment against children. U.S. officials simply turn up their noses to less powerful nations and organizations like the UN.

Another area raised by Amnesty is the treatment of foreigners by the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS). The INS has degraded the notion of "Bring us your hungry, tired, persecuted masses to the land of opportunity" to a draconian approach that says: "If you have no skills that we, the capitalist class, can exploit, then you'll be delivered to a detention facility where our keepers will treat you less than human, at which time we'll hold you until we can legally force you back to your country of origin without regard to the consequences."

The INS has become the nation's largest law enforcement agency.

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## Homage to Kosova: brigade of aid

*London*—For nearly ten years now the Kosovan Albanians (90% or more of the population) have endured a complete suspension of human rights in all aspects of their daily life. Hospitals and schools, libraries and sports facilities are all barred while teachers, for example, work unpaid, teaching pupils in private houses with virtually no resources.

Serbian President Milosevic, time and again, has promised to reopen the schools but reneged on his promises. Now primary schools are reopened but pupils are segregated and Albanian children continue to be denied proper resources while their unpaid teachers continue to pay taxes towards the wages of their erstwhile Serb colleagues. No wonder the European Trade Union Committee on Education (chaired by Doug McAvoy) has described the schooling in Kosova as an "apartheid" system of education.

### CONVOY BEARING SOLIDARITY

As the escalation of violence reached the news here, with the massacre in Drenica, Workers Aid for Bosnia, who had already organized a visit of representatives of the teachers and miners' unions of Kosova to Britain last year, met with representatives of the Kosova Crisis Center in London to discuss what we could do. It was agreed that as before in Bosnia, the value of sending even a small convoy of aid with its accompanying publicity and message of solidarity would be enormous.

We also agreed to try and find opportunities for the Kosovans themselves to speak to teachers and others about the real situation. The Kosovan community clearly felt that there would be ethnic cleansing in Kosova on a scale much worse than Bosnia.

At a conference on the effects of privatization held in Bosnia in March the miners from Tuzla, in northern Bosnia, put forward a motion of solidarity with the miners of Kosova which was passed unanimously, and they promised to collect food from the surrounding mining communities if we could organize a lorry to collect it and take it to Kosova.

Prisoners from the American gulag speaking out about the U.S. system of injustice and alternatives for a human world—find it only in *News & Letters*

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Because of time limitations it was possible only to send one lorry, taking hospital equipment to the women of Srebrenica living in Tuzla. It would then collect the food from the miners and take it to Kosova, accompanied by two cars from Britain.

To our surprise we got the necessary visas from the Serbian Embassy though to avoid impassable paperwork we had to limit the aid to two tons.

Our journey through Europe went almost without a hitch, and on arrival in Tuzla, Bosnia-Herzegovina, we found that the miners had successfully collected food, more than we could take. After a lengthy discussion with the two members in the lorry who met up with us after taking some stage lighting equipment to a summer school in Sarajevo, it was decided that our best hope of getting the lorry through was for the two cars to go on ahead and fax the necessary letters of invitation, details of the situation, the best route and so on.

### TERRAIN OF REPRESSION, STRUGGLE

Our journey through Serbia was straightforward with the minimum of waiting at the border. We paid the

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## ON THE INSIDE

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# Sojourner Truth's feminist legacy

by Jennifer Pen

Sojourner Truth's life, legacy and mind have been central to the Women's Liberation movements of her century and ours. Her bold renaming of herself, her challenges to white and male authority, and her break with Frederick Douglass over women's rights after the Civil War, were highlighted by Raya Dunayevskaya as exemplifying "the vanguard element of the Black dimension" and "Woman as revolutionary force and Reason" (*Women's Liberation and the Dialectics of Revolution* [WLDR] 49).

However, the meaning of Sojourner Truth's life is currently being contested in the academic and feminist worlds. These current debates have been prompted by Nell Painter's full-length biography, *Sojourner Truth: A Life, A Symbol* (Norton, 1996). Painter contends that the received image of Sojourner Truth is a myth, constructed from the writings of 19th century white feminists (and continued by their 20th century inheritors). Instead of amplifying Truth's own voice, Painter mutes it by claiming that it is essentially unrecoverable.

Painter is concerned by what she sees as Truth's malleability into a symbol for everyone's agenda. She maintains that white feminists use a "colossal Sojourner Truth...as an electrical presence who terminates debate" (Painter, 284-285).

Responding to such tokenism could lead readers into an appreciation of Sojourner Truth's intellect, but Painter goes in the opposite direction: She often dismisses her subject's thought. In contrast, Raya Dunayevskaya sees in Sojourner Truth a new kind of person, a new kind of subjectivity, born in relation to the Abolitionist and Women's Liberationist movements. Such "an original character...instead of being simply 'one in a million,' combines yesterday, today and tomorrow in such a manner that the new age suddenly experiences a 'shock of recognition,' whether that related to a new lifestyle or the great

## Woman as Reason

need for revolution here and now" (*Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution* [RLWLKM] 83).

Painter provides a wealth of new details of Truth's life and gives a sense of the scope of her activities. However, Painter reduces this life to trivialities. Thus, her adoption of the name "Sojourner Truth" is described as solely religious, to the utter banishment of the political moment. Painter trivializes her subject's need to sojourn as a psychological disappointment in not being a home owner.

How do we hear the meaning of "Sojourner Truth"? What Dunayevskaya caught from Truth's name and life was the "type of Reason that discloses that intelligence is related to one's experience and aspiration and is not merely a matter of literacy or illiteracy. It is the drive to freedom that determines one's philosophy and that makes one see what Marx meant by 'history and its process.'" (WLDR 54).

Painter misses that "drive to freedom" by focusing on the ways some white reformers found Truth to be entertaining. While Painter decries this racism, she does not offer us Truth's subjectivity or voice as a counterpoint.

Thus, Painter does not make much of Sojourner Truth's break from Douglass over the issue of votes for women, when she called him "short-minded" for sacrificing women's suffrage to the pragmatics of passing the 15th Amendment. Instead, Painter prefers to pit one Black woman—the powerful orator and poet Frances Ellen Watkins Harper—against another, Sojourner Truth, on the basis of Truth's being favored by Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton (223-226). This is an inexplicable strategy which gives more power to white women intellectuals than to Truth's own powerful testimony, while dividing Black women.

When Painter reaches a topic she knows better than

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# Dr. Barnett Slepian

As we go to press, Dr. Barnett Slepian has been gunned down in his home, shot in the back by an anti-abortion fanatic. Dr. Slepian is the third doctor who performed abortions to be murdered since 1993. Why did it take until the end of 1997 before a task force was formed to investigate the killings? Just as this country let civil rights workers be murdered by the score before raising a finger to protect them or pretend to catch their killers, so too, abortion providers have been forced to beg for help from the U.S. government.

An outspoken critic of anti-abortion fanatics, Slepian, it is said, "believed women had the right to have an abortion and he followed his conscience"; he was in upstate New York where other attacks had occurred; and his name was on the hit list printed on the fanatics' web page. The two-page advisory he was sent, only the morning before his murder, was a pathetic excuse for the government protection he should have had. The murder of abortion providers must be stopped. Women have the right to control our own bodies, minds and lives!

—Terry Moon

## Defend Taslima Nasreen!

Taslima Nasreen, the exiled Bangladeshi feminist writer, returned to Bangladesh last month to be with her mother who is suffering from terminal cancer. Her return after a four-year exile in Sweden was greeted by a series of protests in Dhaka by thousands of Islamic fundamentalists calling for her death. Nasreen has appealed to the international community to put pressure on the Bangladeshi government to provide protection.

Nasreen fled Bangladesh in 1994 after the government, headed by the former prime minister, Khaleda Zia, arrested her for insulting the "religious sentiment of the people" and for advocating sex outside of marriage. This arrest showed the Bangladeshi government's capitulation to the Islamic fundamentalist forces who had issued a fatwa against Nasreen and who were protesting in the thousands for her arrest and/or death following the publication of her 1993 novel *Lajja* (Shame), a forthright condemnation of religious fundamentalism. (See *N&L* Oct. 1994 for review). Though the government has made no moves to follow through on the arrest proceedings from 1994, it has equivocated on giving Nasreen full protection.

Nasreen's writings have explored women's lives and issues with a fearless honesty that is clearly threatening to the misogynistic patriarchal order of fundamentalism. Her openness, especially about sexuality, is one of the reasons why Nasreen has become such a controversial figure in the Third World, with many going so far as to condemn her for pandering to Western media attention, rather than working for women's rights.

Many have likened Nasreen's case to that of Salman Rushdie. Though Iranian President Khatami recently released Rushdie from the death sentence issued by the late Ayatollah Khomeini, Rushdie still lives under threat, as seen in the statement made by the Ayatollah Fazel-Lankarani that "All Muslims are duty-bound to execute the sentence against the apostate Rushdie, even if this government is not inclined to do so." Nasreen's case, like Rushdie's, is not one created by the media, but by a world in which religious fundamentalism has increasingly stolen the space of social life and thought—so that advocating "sex outside of marriage" is seen as a crime against humanity (but calling for someone's public hanging is seen as the rightful religious sentiment of the people).

It is important that Nasreen receive the wholehearted support of the international feminist community.

—Maya Jhansi

## Rapes in Indonesia

Martadinata (Ita) Haryono, an 18-year old rape counsellor working with ethnic Chinese women and girls who were raped during Indonesia's May riots, was murdered in her home in Jakarta on Oct. 9. She had worked for Volunteers for Humanity, one of the human rights groups which first made public the gang rapes during the upheaval that brought down the dictator Suharto but not the military government.

Despite worldwide pressure from women's and human rights groups, the government continues to question whether any rapes took place, calling them "rumors" because they were not reported to the police, which would only have invited a second rape. It has now been documented that at least 168 rapes occurred in organized assaults, undoubtedly by plainclothes units of the military or police. Twenty women were killed or killed themselves after heinous assaults.

The government was quick to announce that Haryono was murdered by a burglar, and that anyone saying otherwise would be arrested. But rape counsellors and human rights activists who have been investigating the rapes have been subject to constant threats and intimidation. A gynecologist who testified before a government fact-finding body about the rapes received a telephone call afterward saying his daughter would be raped unless he stopped "meddling"—he did. Another doctor agreed to work with a human rights group only after sending his family abroad.

Members of Volunteers for Humanity believe the May rapes are not isolated from the mass rapes reported in East Timor and Aceh (two areas forcibly occupied by Indonesia) over the past two decades. Reports of rapes by military personnel in Aceh became public only recently. "It is not a matter of arresting people and punishing them," said Fr. Sandjawan Sumardi. "We have to solve the whole issue of systematic state violence."

—Anne Jaclard

## WAC coffin action

*Memphis, Tenn.*—Each October, Women's Action Coalitions (WAC) across the country organize "Coffin Actions" to remember lives lost to domestic violence. This action serves as an opportunity to distribute literature and raise awareness about domestic violence. For a week, Memphis WACsters hold a silent vigil at the corner of Highland and Poplar during morning and evening rush hours.

Our coffin displayed and our candles lit, we receive many reactions from passersby. Some honk and wave in support, while others honk and give us the finger. I wonder if these people who react negatively aren't the ones adding to the statistics!

Last year when we took the "Coffin Action" onto the University of Memphis campus, a guy lunged at a woman in WAC, pretending to hit her. As he walked away laughing with his friends, we stood in utter shock and disgust. The victim of this sick "joke" followed the guy out to ask him about his action. He told her it was a joke. I ask you, when will the joking end?

I wonder if this same mentality is one of our major problems with domestic violence. It is under-reported for many reasons. Women fear for their lives, or the lives of their children if they report domestic abuse. It is also under-reported because women aren't always taken seriously by their friends, family and the authorities. Often a woman must lose her life before her assailant is punished, if punished at all.

As women, we must pull together and fight this ugly battle. Women must stop dying at the hands of their partners, while their partners go free. **Get informed, organize and take action.**

—Jamie

## Women Worldwide

by Mary Jo Grey

More than 50 women activists from Korea, Okinawa, Philippines and the U.S. met in October with Congress and U.S. government officials to protest murder, rape and sexual exploitation committed by U.S. military personnel in Asia. The East Asia/U.S. Women's Network Against U.S. Militarism, an international coalition of women's groups, is demanding changes in U.S. military agreements that allow such violence against women, by protecting the military from being held accountable for crimes committed in another country. The Okinawa Women's Peace Caravan is calling for the dismantling of 42 U.S. military bases.

\* \* \*

Since early 1998, there has been a growing campaign of terrorism against abortion providers in Canada's British Columbia. Letters have been sent to hundreds of health care workers asking for the names of doctors who provide abortions or refer women to doctors who do. The letters have been traced to a Texas anti-abortion group, Life Dynamics Inc., a sophisticated intelligence-gathering operation which offers the services of 8,000 "Spies for Life." They seek out home addresses, phone numbers, photos and license plate numbers of abortion providers and are closely linked with the American Coalition of Life Activists whose leaders publicly call for the murder of doctors and clinic staff.

## Young Women's Day of Action rally



*Chicago*—Young women of color stole the show at a rally here Oct. 21, as part of the "Sixth National Young Women's Day of Action" coordinated through Hampshire College in Amherst, Mass. With their creativity energizing both the speaker's platform and the audience, teenagers, a majority of them young Black women, made up much of the crowd of about 150 at the Thompson Center Plaza. They read poems, performed skits, emceed and cheered on as their friends spoke. Much thought and work had clearly gone into their participation.

Planned to coincide with the anniversary of Rosie Jimenez's death from a "back alley" abortion in 1977 just after the infamous Hyde Amendment outlawed public funding for abortions, the Day of Action addressed reproductive rights and sexual freedom in the context of issues such as racial and economic justice.

Portia, an eighth grader with "Sisters on a Mission," an after-school program which promotes social activism, told me she came to the rally concerned about an array of issues, but was especially bothered by racial prejudice she had experienced. "It's like if I go to a shopping mall, people look at you to see if you're stealing things," she said. She was also disturbed by her school's lack of discussion of sexuality.

Several participants in another after-school program, some as young as 11, read poems they had written about being young Black women and proud of it.

A poet who writes under the name Esa, a Tagalog word meaning "foundation," read several poems after introducing herself as the founder of a gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgendered organization called the "Freedom Club" at Wright College. Later she told me Wright has had hate crimes, but after the Matthew Shepard killing in Colorado she is even more committed to "showing that we're going on with our lives."

Others also came out of the desire to fight for sexuality rights. A white DePaul University women's studies student became especially concerned with organizing for sexuality rights after she was held up at gunpoint when her attackers saw the gay/lesbian rainbow symbol on her keychain. The moving force for the Chicago Young Women's Day of Action clearly came from the youngest participants, who showed that they are part of a new generation ready to take up the challenge. In this, they found good company in the many other women at the rally who came with their own passions, their own anger, their own creativity.

—Laurie Cashdan

# Bitter defeat at Lewis Grocery—for now

Indianola, Miss.—We lost a heartbreaker on Oct. 21 at Super Value Lewis Grocery, a giant food warehouse right here in Indianola which ships food all over Mississippi. When all the votes were counted, 104 workers voted to be represented by UFCW Local 1529, and 129 voted for no union. It hurt my heart, and many other workers, to lose that vote, because so many people had fought long and hard to get a union in that place.

The campaign started back in April, when a group of Lewis Grocery workers called Local 1529, said that they were having a meeting to organize over in Itta Bena, and asked the union to send representatives. It wasn't the first time that Lewis Grocery workers tried to unionize. The Teamsters tried twice before, and UFCW tried in about 1984. But this time the in-plant workers' committee was strong and solid.

The main reason the workers wanted a union was forced overtime. At Lewis Grocery the hours were horrible, especially for the night shift. Workers said, "We have to work 14 or 15 hours a day, six days a week. We go in at 2 p.m., and come out at 4 or 5 o'clock in the morning. Day after day, week after week, they are killing us in there. We get no holidays except July 4th, Thanksgiving and Christmas. We can't go on like this."

The main strength of the union campaign was the night shift. This is where most of the young workers, the low seniority workers, are. They built a great in-plant committee. The workers did sign-ups, home calling, hand bills. When we had an NLRB hearing on who should be allowed to vote in the election, about 60 workers came to the hearing at 9 a.m., even though they had been at work until 4 a.m. the night before. They had the courage to sit there and face Bob Grau, the man the company brought back from Atlanta especially to lead the fight to keep the union out.

One of the original people who started the in-plant committee was a young man from Indianola who left and went to work in the Super Value warehouse in Atlanta. That warehouse is union, and when he moved back to Indianola and went to work at Lewis Grocery here, he could see how different it was to work in a union shop and a nonunion shop. So he was determined to change things.

The warehouse is mostly Black men. There are about 28 women and about 30 white workers out of 250 in all. All but five workers out of 90 on the night shift signed up in the union. But the company told lies to the workers about what would happen if they voted for the union. I don't believe it changed a lot of votes on the night shift, but on days it did.

## Workshop Talks

(Continued from page 1)

make sure that you get your breaks and lunch." She replied each time, "It's not me, it's the team." She also made sure that the arrangement was okay with the trainee who would be left alone at her position during the rotation.

The supervisor came out to the line to relieve for the first break, although that was not the agreement, reminding the person he relieved that she had only ten minutes. When she came back, he did not leave the line, but lingered until everyone had returned. The same thing happened at lunch. He did not come to the line for the last break, but summoned to the office the woman who had criticized the relief arrangements and suspended her for three days.

She allegedly had violated the plant rule against "failure to wear required/authorized protective equipment as determined by your job function" by removing her safety glasses as she left the work area for break and lunch, rather than wearing them until she reached...where? The company never had clarified at what point safety glasses were no longer required. She was wearing her glasses at all times while running her machine and relieving.

It was obvious that this suspension was retaliatory. The supervisor had no reason to be out on the line except to look for an excuse to discipline that woman. He could have spoken to her about her glasses and she would have changed her behavior, which is the point of a safety rule, isn't it? Instead he came down on her with the full force of the "law." The unit manager and the Human Resources department approved the suspension.

This incident was met with shock and indignation by the women on third shift, which, when I think about it, amazes me. Most of these women are over 40 years old, and have been working in factories for years and for this company for years. They have had problems before with supervisors in this unit and with this supervisor. Why surprise and outrage? Why not cynicism or resignation? This is nothing new.

The answer lies in the humanism of these women workers. Despite years of subjugation, insult and abuse, they believe they are human beings. They speak up. They are concerned primarily, not with productivity, but with the reasonableness of their conditions of labor—in this case that everyone should get their breaks and lunches at a reasonable time without unreasonable strain on others on the line. As Dunayevskaya wrote in the document quoted above, "Reducing a human to a cog in the machine, you begin to realize, is no small matter."

Quite a few older workers voted "no." They have this stereotype in their minds that they have no rights, no voice in the place they work. They say that "it's Mr. Lewis' plant, so we have to do what he says." No, it's the workers' plant too. We do the work; everything the owners get comes from us.

I know there is a route to change your life. The committee at Lewis Grocery knows it too. You have to fight the stereotype that the white man is superior and he has to be believed. Here in the South, we have to break the chain of "the Man." We have to break the weight of hundreds of years of training and oppression. The in-plant committee got together after the vote. They were disappointed and hurt and angry. But they said that they weren't going to give up. They will try again to break that stereotype.

—Sarah Hamer

## Overnite workers picket NLRB



Overnite workers in Memphis picket the National Labor Relations Board Sept. 28 to confront John Bowers, who denies all grievances by union workers. Their cobra-head shirts read: "Will Strike if Provoked."

## Detroit papers on ropes

Detroit—As we enter the 40th month of the Detroit newspaper strike, I would like to update our situation here in Detroit.

Early in September the full board of the NLRB unanimously upheld nine of the 11 unfair labor practice charges—almost three years after they were filed—levied against Detroit newspapers. Before this ruling came down the company was making noises suggesting that maybe it was time to settle this dreadful conflict. As of Sept. 1, their financial liability was pegged at around \$80 million. This was for back pay and benefits dating back to February 1997, when the unions made an unconditional offer to return to work.

There are still about a thousand strikers who have not been called back to work, and many of those that have been called back have been offered part-time positions, cuts in pay and, in some cases, jobs they did not do before the strike.

I think it was becoming clear to the company that they would eventually lose in the courts and that maybe they should cut their losses and try to salvage their once good newspapers. Also, The Newspaper Guild won a major victory on the merit pay issue involving Knight-Ridder papers in California, where management tried to unilaterally set the pay scale. This was one of many issues that caused the strike in Detroit.

Another reason for the thaw in the publishers' rigid positions is the declining newspaper circulation figures. The *Free Press*, the morning paper, reportedly sank \$2 million and 20 staff people into boosting circulation in Detroit's suburban Oakland County. Their goal was 15,000 new subscriptions, but not only did they not get any new subscriptions, they lost a thousand of their old subscribers, many of whom had believed the newspapers' misinformation that the strike was over. Circulation figures for both the morning *Free Press* and evening *Detroit News* are down from last year.

Negotiations are now taking place under the supervision of a federal mediator. There have been more talks in the last month and a half than in the preceding two and a half years of the strike. There is a blackout on the talks, so no news of progress or lack of it is known. There have been rumors that some progress has been made.

The rank and file feel that if contracts are forthcoming they must address the issues of back pay and benefits for all and provide amnesty for all fired, part-time and older workers. This is a must! Hopefully, this will be accomplished and this long, bitter labor war will be over.

The main lesson that I and many other strikers learned from this strike is that under our present anti-labor laws, strikes cannot be won in the courts. They have to be won the old fashioned way—stopping production and distribution of the product. All union members and workers who are concerned about the future of working people in our country have to come together in strike situations to make this happen. If we rely on the NLRB and the courts to settle problems with large greedy corporations that are bent on crushing working people and their unions, resolution of these strikes and lock outs could take years. As the strikers in Detroit could tell you, "Justice delayed is justice denied."

In solidarity,  
—Armand Nevers,  
Detroit Typographical Union #18/CWA

## Protest Kaiser ER cuts

Richmond, Cal.—On Sept. 29 several hundred from this predominantly Black working-class community joined hospital service workers, nurses and doctors from Kaiser's Richmond facility to testify at a hearing before the Richmond city council. Submitting over 6,000 signatures we gathered, we were protesting Kaiser's refusal to supply much needed emergency health care in the area. Those for whom providing quality health care is their daily activity see an unconscionable act of "redlining" health care in Kaiser management's money-saving decision to keep this new facility closed.

This came on the heels of a much larger protest of thousands on Aug. 31, triggered by Kaiser's plan to speed up closure of the Richmond "standby" ER. An emergency room doctor spoke on the many tragedies that occur when patients show up and cannot be properly cared for. He exposed Kaiser's argument that the facility supposedly wouldn't have a high enough usage rate by comparing it to Kaiser's San Rafael facility. It has a very low usage rate but Kaiser wouldn't dare close it because the average income of that area is \$70,000-\$100,000 per year.

I am struck with how totally opposite are two views of Kaiser recently aired. Dr. Simms, who worked at the Richmond facility for 23 years, wrote recently that "Kaiser Richmond has been systematically stripped of services over the last 40 years...When are KFH and PMG [Kaiser management organizations] going to take responsibility for the institutional neglect here and open the hospital?" On the other hand, in a "Financial Turnaround Update" of July 1998, our chairman and CEO says "second quarter results are moving in the right direction, reflecting the hard work of everyone in the organization." The "hard work" to which he referred was not providing quality care. It referred strictly to financial results. Where are the second quarter results in quality of care?

To be even more competitive, Kaiser announced that, beginning in March of 1999, they will begin to dismantle the historic landmark, Kaiser Foundation's first hospital in Oakland. It will disappear forever to dramatically reduce Kaiser's expenditures on inpatient care, critical care, and emergency care.

California now ranks among the lowest in terms of hospital beds and nurses per 1,000 citizens. Within California, the two counties with the worst nursing and hospital bed ratios are Alameda and Contra Costa—the counties where Kaiser is most determined to close facilities.

Nothing seems to stop the determination of Kaiser executives to raise revenue through withholding health care, not even the deaths of Kaiser members with heart conditions at Richmond and Walnut Creek. After a flurry of media exposure, official inquiries and inspections, inspectors went back to their offices in Sacramento and Washington, and Kaiser got back their Medicare payments. Kaiser even got a seal of approval from state health officials to close Richmond, Martinez and Oakland inpatient hospital services. Hopefully, a growing solidarity between health care workers and patients can turn around this attack on the quality of care provided to workers.

—Kaiser rank-and-filer

## Immigrant workers defy INS

New York—A large group of immigrant workers joined in a protest on Oct. 16 in front of the federal building in Manhattan. There were some 250 Mexicans, 220 Ecuadoreans, and some 50 others, mostly European such as Polish. The Ecuadoreans were people who had never participated in a protest before, but who have been meeting together in churches, resolved to confront the abuse they and their compatriots face as what they call "undocumented slaves."

They were humble and scared when they arrived but got very enthusiastic and rebellious by the end and did not want to leave but wanted to keep on protesting. They enthusiastically shouted slogans such as, "Clinton! Your mother was an immigrant too!" and "Here we are, here we stay!" When some started to spontaneously invent much stronger slogans, their leaders hushed them, saying they feared repression. You could feel a lot of rebellion; the bad part is that this rebellion was transformed into prayers by the leaders.

At the rally, facing that federal building, you felt as though that building wanted to crush us, and we were always down below, looking up at those above us. To me, the praying made us appear united down below, but looking up, waiting for a favor from God. It made us feel minuscule as human beings whereas human power transcends all this. To liberate ourselves we need a process in which the leaders can also liberate themselves, so that the struggle can transcend the religious boundaries.

We cannot as Marxist-Humanists speak of practice if we are not immersed in the protests and in the thinking of the people; if we do not take on the suffering of the people whose lives hang in the balance depending on their papers. To understand this, we need to be there.

—Angel

At the first meeting of Ecuadorean workers I went to, there were 180 workers and some 30 children under the age of five. They submitted to two hours of talking, the mothers sweating trying to keep the children quiet. It is not just that the meeting will be distracted by the children; or that it is unjust for the mothers; but it is unjust for the children. My suggestion to open up a space for the children was well received by the mothers, and this could be a good opportunity to start to talk about the suppression of children in this society, not just as a practical issue but as a political one.

—Greta

From the Writings of Raya Dunayevskaya  
**MARXIST-HUMANIST ARCHIVES**

**Editor's Note**

Raya Dunayevskaya, in the period 1949-51, wrote much on the relationship of philosophy and economics, specifically on the relationship of Hegel's *Science of Logic* and Marx's *Capital*. She was, she wrote later, "changing the form of my work" on the theory of state-capitalism and Marxism to what became her first book, *Marxism and Freedom* (published 1958). Because today's global economic crisis demands a return to Marx's categories, we print the first pages of a written draft for an oral presentation on "form and plan" dated Dec. 27, 1950, which takes up these categories. The full document can be found in *The Raya Dunayevskaya Collection*, 9250-9280.

Unity of labor and means of labor has gone through some violent transformations during various historic periods, none being more disastrous than when labor was separated from the means of labor. The separation of labor from its means signalled the birth of capitalism. It was followed by separation of town from country, of mental from manual labor. The unity of labor and means of labor was then achieved by the individual capitalist bringing many workers together in his workshop so that he could extract from them as much labor as possible. This plan of the capitalist gave the labor process its despotic form.

All the while the workers cooperated in the labor process to which they had been brought by the will of the capitalist. They revolted, first against the authority of the capitalist, then against the machine by which the capitalist sought to discipline the workers with its own oppressive compulsion. The plan of the capitalist assumed more despotic forms, for it compelled cooperation of the laborers in a manner which would produce surplus labor, and this aim of the capitalist was served well by the regularity, uniformity, order and economy introduced by machine production. At the same time the machines, which disciplined the laborers, also organized and united them, and now their revolt assumed [a] new form: that of an organized mass power.

We then have the plan of the capitalist to bring the workers together for purposes of extracting unpaid labor: it is despotic in form and individual in content. The revolt of the workers, which is at first anarchic in form, breaking up machines, is from the first, however, cooperative in content.

The plan of the capitalist to bring the workers together to labor in common for purposes of extracting unpaid labor from them transforms the simple labor process into a means of extracting surplus labor. The labor process becomes, thus, capitalistic in truth, and the form becomes the more despotic with the authority of the capitalist being supplemented by the vampire of [the] machine, into which all science has been incorporated, and which thrives on living labor. On the other hand, the worker is bereft of the virtuosity he possessed as a craftsman and transformed into a mere appendage to the machine. The division of labor between mental and manual thus further degrades the worker, whose quest for universality, or desire to be a whole man, becomes total. His revolt now assumes a new form; he revolts with his fellow man, and in revolting as a social individual the revolt becomes cooperative in both content and form.

At the same time the constant crises in production and the revolts engendered befuddle the minds of men who are outside of the labor process. They see this civil war between capitalist and worker not as it is in the labor process where, the capitalist's plan having become its motive force, it is no longer a natural unity of labor and means of labor to create products of labor, but a capitalist unity, which forces labor into one abstract mold and thus gives products of labor their value-form. They see it, rather, in the forms which it assumes on the surface, where surplus labor appears as surplus product and hence planlessness. They thereupon contrast the anarchy of the market to the order in the factory. And they present themselves as the conscious planners who can bring order also into "society," that is, the market.

Marx's answer to these first planners—to Sismondii, who "impersonated the doubts" of the [classical political economists'] analysis, which was dominated by its class concept of form as identical with content, by asking, couldn't large-scale production be controlled; to Malthus,

whose concept of order was that of the feudal order with its fixed relations; to Proudhon, whose petty-bourgeois conception of social order revealed itself in trying to build a halfway house between the old and the actually existing by synthesizing the two, instead of transcending—was very simple. It amounted to this: "If the order of the factory were also in the market, you'd have complete totalitarianism." In 1847 Marx expressed the anticipation of this in the phrase "one single master":

"If the division of labor in a modern factory were taken as a model to be applied to an entire society, the society the best organized for the production of wealth would be incontestably that which had but one single master distributing the work, according to a regulation arranged beforehand to the various members of the community" (*Poverty of Philosophy*, [Chicago: Charles H. Kerr, n.d.] p. 147).

Two decades later the mature Marx keeps emphasizing that what appears "ideally, in the shape of a preconceived plan of the capitalist" is "practically...the shape of the authority of the same capitalist, in the shape of the powerful will of another, who subjects their activity to his aims." And *Capital* then proceeds to demonstrate what forms the despotism evolves: first the capitalist is relieved of "actual labor" but does the supervision over labor; then he is relieved of "the labor of superintendence": "An industrial army of workmen, under the command of a capitalist, requires, like a real army, officers (managers), and sergeants (foremen, overlookers), who, while the work is being done, command in the name of the capitalist" (*Capital*, Volume I [Chicago: Charles H. Kerr, 1906], p. 364).

Then [Marx] shows that it is not control necessitated by the cooperative character of the labor process, but the different work of control "necessitated by the capitalist character of that process and the antagonism of interests between the capitalist and laborer." It is because it is rooted in this class antagonism that its form must always remain despotic, and this despotism, which shows itself in the market as "anarchy," cannot be

done away with by bringing "order" also into the market. The despotism will only become total then. It can be done away with only by its absolute opposite, that is, the cooperative form of labor of "freely associated men" consciously planning. So that the opposition is not between "anarchy" and "plan," but between the plan of the capitalist, which is always despotic in form, and the plan of freely associated men, which is always cooperative in form, and in content.

The [classical political economists'] thesis of *laissez-faire*, or free trade, while showing its concern with the distribution of total product between the classes, expressed nevertheless a complete faith in the economic laws as being in full consonance with the "natural order." They were thus having their cake and eating it too—saying that labor was the source of value, but feeling no compulsion, since they never enter the factory, to account for the surplus labor. They merely took it for granted as "inherent" in production.

The planners wished upon the market the stranglehold of the factory order, which had no reality for them since they, too, had never entered the factory. Order, to them, meant the abstract plan in their heads, not the real plan the workers had to contend with in production.

The thing that we must never forget is that plan arising from intellectual analysis and plan arising from the cooperative labor process, which evokes the creative mass movement, are such irreconcilable opposites that even Marx, before he had entered the factory, that is, in his [*Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*], floundered among the market forms, which are not really forms, general or concrete, but transformations of what they were once. The transformation makes the form either the direct opposite of the productive form or at least so different from it that full contradiction must of necessity result.

Let me state right here that we have greatly underestimated Volume III of *Capital*, which deals with these transformations. It is true that we caught its essence when from the start we put our finger on the spot and said the decline in the rate of profit is crucial; the aver-

# The despotic plan of capital vs. freely associated labor

age rate of profit is completely secondary. Look at the mess we would have been in if we had not seen that and suddenly found ourselves, as did the Fourth [International], tailending the Stalinists' sudden "discovery" (which had been precisely the perversion with which the Second International planners had long ago tried to corrupt Marxism) that it was the average rate of profit which was the "law of capitalism."

Good, we saw the essence, but that is insufficient, and because that is completely insufficient, we were incapable of being sharp enough even here. For it is insufficient merely to state that the decline [in the] rate of profit, not the average, is crucial for understanding Volume III. The full truth is: Just as Marx's theory of value is his theory of surplus value, so his theory of surplus value is in reality the theory of the declining rate of profit.

Why couldn't we state it this simply before? It is because we have been too busy showing that profit is only a disguise which surplus value wears and must be removed, again to see "the real essence": exploitation of labor. Because the opponents we were facing were Workers Party underconsumptionists, we had to overemphasize this evident truth. But to overemphasize the obvious means to stand on the ground the opponents have chosen. Freed from these opponents and faced with planners who are not underconsumptionists the greater truth of what Marx was saying suddenly hits us in the eyes with such force that now we can say: How could we have not seen what Marx was saying? It is all so clear: Since the realization of surplus value is the decline in the rate of profit, the poor capitalist must search for profits.

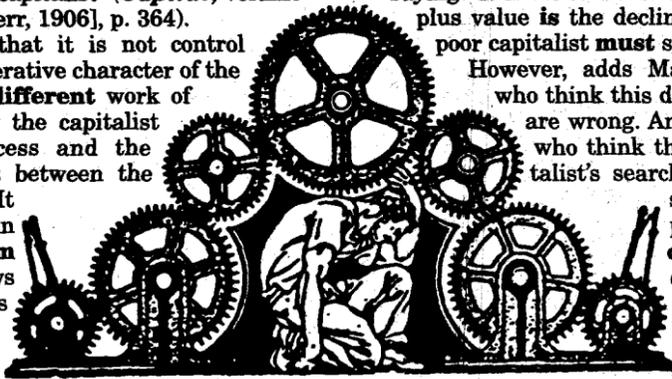
However, adds Marx, you market theorists who think this decline is due to competition are wrong. And as for you, the planners, who think that the reason for the capitalist's search for profits is "only" his subjective desire and your plan to do away with the disproportions of his production should knock some sense into his head, are way off the beam. First of all, his subjective desire reflects only the objective truth of his method of production, and you'd have to start there, where the disproportion rules, and not from any schema. Secondly, competition merely averages out the rate of profit, without either producing the decline or the anarchy. Finally and above all, competition itself arises from the immanent laws of capitalism.

So we are back to production, where the relationship of constant capital (machines) to variable [capital] (living labor) produces the whole mess. Look at the miserable soul of the capitalist, who is forced by the very method of production, and regardless of the degree of exploitation, to find himself in the perverse dilemma of getting a declining rate of profit even where there is a rising ratio of surplus value, that is to say, even where he intensifies the exploitation of the worker and thus gets greater masses of unpaid labor.

Now, it is this decline in the rate of profit which dominates over the transformation of value into price, profit into average profit, surplus profit into ground rent. It is the transformation of surplus value into rate of profit that is the reality of capitalism. This, in the main, is the subject of Volume III [of *Capital*]. We have been all too busy running back to essence and showing that, in their totality, all prices equal all values, and profit is but a portion of surplus value, etc. That is true, but it is not the whole truth.

In their totality prices are values, but that makes them neither identical in their unit nor one the same as the other in their totality. A transformation has occurred. Marx says values and prices are different and must be different and yet be related. He is, therefore, not merely returning to essence, but proceeding from essence to notion, that is to say, to that unity of essence and form which, on the one hand, holds us all in its grip, including even the miserable capitalist, and, on the other hand, can be transcended only in transcending the value-form and establishing its complete opposite: the cooperative-form. Without that, all these transformations of form only continue the perversion of subject and object in the process of production:

"The way in which surplus-value is transformed into profit...is but a continued development of the perversion of subject and object taking place in the process of production. We have already seen that all subjective forces of labor in that process appeared as productive forces of capital. On the one hand, the value of past labor, which dominates living labor, is incarnated in the capitalist. On the other hand the laborer appears as materialized labor-power, as a commodity. This perverted relationship necessarily produces even under simple conditions of production certain correspondingly perverted conceptions, which represent a transposition in consciousness, that is further developed by the transformations and modifications of the circulation process proper" (*Capital*, Volume III [Chicago: Charles H. Kerr, 1909], p. 58-9).



To understand the current economic crisis you need:  
**The Marxist-Humanist Theory of State-Capitalism**  
 selected writings by Raya Dunayevskaya

"Capital, said Marx, is not a thing, but a social relation of production established through the instrumentality of things. The instrumentality which establishes this exploitative relationship is...the means of production alienated from the direct producers, i.e., the proletariat, and oppressing them... In capitalist society...the use values produced are not for consumption by workers or capitalists, but by capital, i.e., for productive consumption or expanded production. The greater part of the surplus value extracted from the worker goes back into this expanded production." —The Nature of the Russian Economy, 1943

"The Grand Illusion...that all capitalist ideologues...have created about this nuclear world with its robotized production was achieved by them through forgetting that Alienated Labor is the irreplaceable foundation, essence and universal form—the creator of all values and surplus-values... They think they can still go merrily on with their computerized stock market, false superprofiteering through mergers, playing the margins... They act as if higher labor productivity can come from somewhere other than sweated, living labor, as if it can come out of computers."

—Capitalist Production/Alienated Labor: This Nuclear World and its Political Crises, 1986

To order, see literature ad on page 7.

## Khalida Messaoudi and the Algerian women's struggle

Khalida Messaoudi, teacher, human rights and feminist activist, exposes politics and backward socio-cultural traditions as factors contributing to the deplorable status of women's rights in contemporary Algeria. She has defied the violence currently sweeping the country to speak out in the name of women, children and minorities who have been the most victimized in Algeria's current civil war. *Unbowed: An Algerian Woman Confronts Islamic Fundamentalism* (1998), translated from the French *Une Algérienne debout*, is a remarkable series of interviews conducted in 1994 by Elisabeth Schemla with Khalida Messaoudi.

The book focuses primarily on Khalida's feminist struggle begun in the 1980s when the notorious Family Code (legislation passed in 1984 that significantly hinders women's rights) was implemented. At this time religious fundamentalism was also on the rise. Yet, although the English title of the book seemingly alludes only to Khalida's struggle against religious fundamentalism, her primary message is two-fold. On the one hand, women have directly suffered from fundamentalist violence, on the other the misguided objectives of Algeria's *Front de la Liberation Nationale* (FLN) government have caused the erosion of women's place in post-revolutionary Algeria.

In 1995 I talked to Khalida Messaoudi's brother, Alawa Toumi. I asked him how Khalida was and why, after numerous assassination attempts on her life, she refused to leave Algeria. He said that for Khalida leaving was out of the question. Women's struggle for equality and an end to the violence being waged against them must be fought on Algeria's soil if any changes are to come at all.

Messaoudi's Berber culture and heritage have contributed to her defiance of Arab law and unjust practices against women. Berbers, the first inhabitants of Algeria, have fought Arab domination for centuries. As Khalida attests, most revolutions have begun in the Berber community, including the war of independence against the French which ended in 1962. Her defiance as a Berber fighting for minority rights and as a woman reflect a struggle that must be fought on many different fronts. As Schemla's prologue aptly states, "everything Messaoudi represents defies the polarities that are ripping Algeria apart today. She is 'indigenous,' in that she is a Berber from Kabylia, yet she is also a highly educated intellectual; she is a lay Muslim in a society that is slowly reimposing religious constraints on every aspect of life, from the law to the smallest details of women's dress and behavior; she is Francophone, Arabophone...and Berberphone...she is militant but nonviolent."

### WOMEN STRUGGLE AGAINST FIS, FLN

The polarities of Khalida's activism and her struggle contribute to a feminist movement that is unique because it struggles against two forces. As mentioned above, women are targets of the ultra-religious fundamentalist movement, FIS (*Front Islamique du Salut*), and also relegated to the status of second class citizens by the FLN-led government which guarantees them little protection. Thus, as Messaoudi points out, fundamentalism is only partially to blame for the lack of assurance of women's rights and safety. Women were duped by the FLN for which they so arduously fought as *moudjahidat* (the feminine forces of the militant *moudjahidin* rebel fighters) during the 1954-62 war of liberation. In the wake of the war, instead of being counted as equal players in a new liberated country, women were sent back to their homes, denied the equality they had been promised.

Khalida attests, "Never would we [women] have imagined that those whose sides we fought next to would lead our country like that, would do to us what they have done....[women's] effacement did not begin in 1962 but before independence. Little by little after the war, the FLN eliminated us from the maquis, sending us to the borders or abroad. Our role was defined then and there. We would not have our place in the 'outside' [public] world."

As Khalida maintains, the FLN created a climate hospitable to the rise of fundamentalism through its autocratic policies, effacement of historical record and totalitarian principles. She explains that because of widespread disillusion with the policies of the FLN among the masses of Algeria's disenfranchised population (particularly young, unemployed men between the ages of 16-30), fundamentalism was viewed as "a way out"—an alternative to the FLN's decadence and abuse of power.

The FIS party promised jobs, education, housing and social welfare programs, all appealing to a people tired of poverty and failed government programs. The FIS succeeded in pulling the wool over the people's eyes. Women's diminished status in Algerian society, in a sense, was viewed as a small price to pay in exchange for the general welfare of all. Yet, Khalida states, the religious leaders of the FIS used "economic misery" to justify what she defines as their "obsession" with women. This obsession allows "fundamentalists to justify and legitimate a priori all their acts in the name of Islam." Women have become scapegoats of twisted interpretations of the Koran.

### ALGERIA TORN APART BY CIVIL WAR

In 1991, following the landslide victory of the FIS, the FLN declared martial law, outlawed the fundamentalists, nullified the election results and sent the country into civil war. Since then Algeria has been torn apart by warring factions of FLN and FIS followers. Those caught in the middle—women, children and those who have repeatedly spoken out against both fundamentalism and the corrupt political system (journalists, intellectuals, professors, lawyers, doctors)—have borne the brunt of the violence.

Schemla's interviews with Khalida Messaoudi open a window on a world about which we, in the U.S., hear little. It is a world where women live as victims of a decrepit and corrupt patriarchy, religious zealots, poverty and abjection. "I am a woman," Khalida states defiantly, "before I am an Algerian, a Berber, a Mediterranean, a Muslim or a combatant." She speaks for so many women who cannot. For this reason, *Unbowed: An Algerian Woman Confronts Islamic Fundamentalism*, should be read, and passed on to those who will listen.

—Valerie Orlando

## Black World

(Continued from page 1)

ominous is the deepening economic crisis, whose full effects are sure to be felt between now and the next election cycle, and how an even more entrenched Republican-controlled Congress is sure to respond to them.

While Congress and the President are already bailing out "too-big-to-fail" corporations and financial institutions, responding to the effects of the economic crisis on the conditions of life and labor of the working class could be left in the reactionary hands of an even more right-wing Congress after the November elections.

In its campaign to gain a veto-proof Senate, the Republican Right has especially targeted women Democrats elected in the 1992 election, liberal women like Carol Moseley-Braun in Illinois, Barbara Boxer in California, and Patti Murray in Washington state. Though Bill Clinton's sexual misadventures have emboldened the Right to intensify their reactionary onslaught, their aim being to complete the retrograde "Contract [on] America" they foisted upon the nation as a result of their 1994 mid-term election victory, Clinton is not the impetus.

Washington's politics of "sex, lies, and videotapes" only appears to be the Right's excuse for politics these days. Something more ominous lurks behind the bourgeoisie's tabloid politics. Rolling back the modest social agenda that "liberal" Clintonistas like Senator Moseley-Braun sponsored, sometimes with the support of Bill Clinton and often without it, is the over-riding aim of the Right. Just as Reagan and Bush's stacking of the federal courts with conservative judges was calculated to have far-reaching consequences into the next century, so the aim of the Republican Right is to lock up the Congress for the foreseeable future.

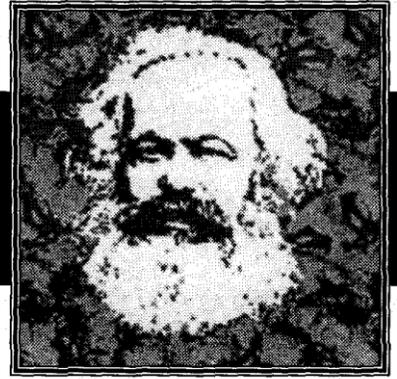
Earlier this year, in an unguarded moment of radical candor, Julian Bond, following his election as chairman of the board of the NAACP, described the aim of this political retrogression as "the demobilization of effective insurgent politics, the depoliticizing of discussions of our gross maldistribution of income, and the adoption of reactionary and punitive social policy" (*Poverty & Race*, July/August 1998).

In the Illinois U.S. Senate race, the Republican Right has, without spending one dime, gotten a multimillionaire banking heir, Peter Fitzgerald, to take out Carol Moseley-Braun, the only African American in that lily-white institution, the U.S. Senate. Fitzgerald is spending \$10 million of his own money to do just that, after having spent \$6 million in a primary race in which even Republican state leaders like Illinois Governor Jim Edgar labeled him an extremist they couldn't support.

What they have no trouble supporting, however, is Fitzgerald's reactionary anti-labor, anti-civil rights, anti-woman and anti-human needs agenda. It was not coincidental that the reactionary columnist George Will's weighing into the Illinois race with an attack column against Moseley-Braun in the *Chicago Sun-Times* coincided with Fitzgerald's attack ad campaign. Will sees Illinois as "the bellwether state," in which the defeat of Carol Moseley-Braun would represent a giant step toward the Right gaining a veto-proof Senate.

The growing economic crisis and authoritarian police state that targets Black and working class communities has more often than not been aided by Clinton and the Republican-controlled Congress. Which is why we cannot ignore the positions Senator Moseley-Braun has taken as a Democrat following the lead of her party's leader, Bill Clinton.

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## Fight Right's onslaught in '98 election

Her 1996 trip to visit the late Nigerian military dictator General Sani Abacha came at a time when a growing movement around the world was solidarizing with the Nigerian working class trying to throw off Abacha's despotic rule. Senator Moseley-Braun has supported Clinton's "law-and-order" crime policy of putting 100,000 more cops in Black neighborhoods already under siege by the police at the very moment when a grassroots anti-police brutality movement is gaining momentum in Black and Latino communities across the country. The same can be said for her support for lowering the age at which juveniles can be treated as adults in the criminal justice system.

The Black community has by no means ignored these and other instances in which Black politicians like Moseley-Braun act in ways that go against the interests of Black working people. Indeed, the latest travesty of Black political betrayal was the Sept. 15 House vote for a resolution calling for the extradition of the Black revolutionary Assata Shakur from Cuba, a reactionary resolution that members of the Congressional Black Caucus either intentionally or ineptly voted for. (Find details and the lively discussion and campaign in support of Assata Shakur on the Internet.) The Black community also painfully recognizes the seriousness of the present moment and what's at stake in the '98 election.

Come to Book Party for *Voices from within the Prison Walls* in New York, Sunday, Nov. 15, at 6:30 p.m. (for location see Directory below). **Chicago**, Saturday, Nov. 21, 4-6:30 p.m. (call 312/663-0839).

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## EXPOSING THE ROOTS OF TODAY'S GLOBAL TURMOIL

The analysis in Raya Dunayevskaya's books on *The Marxist-Humanist Theory of State-Capitalism* and on *Marx's Capital and Today's Global Crisis* is excellent. It unmasks all the falsifications about the so-called "Soviet" society and reveals the real social relations there. As for the situation in Russia today, capitalism is rotten everywhere in the world. Russia and other countries of the ex-USSR are where the decadence of capitalism is utmost. The world economic crisis that began in Southeast Asia only intensified the economic crisis in Russia. Capitalism in decadence cannot give anything except misery and degradation.

The rise of the workers' struggle this year in some regions of Russia, such as the Ukraine, is a symptom that the passivity caused by Stalinist terrors was beginning to end. But it is a difficult process. Only a few workers know that the enemy is not only Yeltsin and a Yeltsinist regime, but capitalism itself, the whole capitalist system. Nationalist feelings can be strong and all the bourgeois parties (including the post-CPSU parties) try to persuade the Russian workers that they must unify, not with the workers of other countries, but with the Russian capitalists. The task before Marxists in Russia today is the task of putting before the workers their own interests and goals, participating in their struggles and assisting in unifying all

actions for workers' self-emancipation.

**Marxist  
Saransk, Russia**

Your message to the 36th International Anti-War Assembly was read out to the assemblies held on Aug. 6 in six main cities in Japan and inspired all participants to fight against war with international solidarity. Since the Assembly we have been advancing our anti-war struggles and the struggles against the repression of working people by neo-fascist ruling structures. We have been developing solidarity action with Russian workers who are demanding unpaid wages and demanding the resignation of Yeltsin and Co.

**Revolutionary Marxist Faction  
JRCL  
Tokyo**

You can get lost in discussing today's economy and end up saying things like: "If only the IMF wouldn't put such terrible austerity measures on countries in trouble." I have heard leftists say this. They never get down to the deeper level and miss that what is happening is not a policy choice but flows from the nature of capitalism. Your October Lead on how "Russia's economic nose dive exposes roots of capitalism's global turmoil" makes you ask how you can change the policy without transforming the system. This is a problem I always have in the

## REACHING OVER THE PRISON WALLS

When I first began to read *Voices from within the Prison Walls* and saw big words like "proletariat," I thought people on the inside wouldn't "get it." Then I became completely enamored with this man's mind and saw that he does speak to those who are incarcerated. He really put in words the feeling I had about what is behind this system when he wrote, "the first and main purpose of prison is to...systematically dehumanize prisoners." They want not only to dehumanize but keep us separate from one another. D.A. Sheldon names things for what they are. One way we are alienated is through language. There's a thing called the SHU (Security Housing Unit). It is a misnomer. It means isolation, which we've known for 300 years is torture. Yet it is called by a neutral sounding name, "administrative segregation." If this book gets into the hands of many prisoners, it will have an impact.

**Dana  
California**

It is about time Amnesty International finally got around to stating the obvious. I think the upcoming elections will tell the tale about what is going to happen with any thoughts about prison reform. The problem is that the spin doctors are very good at their work and Americans seem pretty apolitical compared to others throughout the world, like in France where unionized workers have been going out on strike and last week the students hit the streets. Discussing problems is cool but "actions speak louder than words." Prisoners have to put more effort into gaining changes in our respective facilities.

**Prisoner  
Wisconsin**

Right after the Critical Resistance Conference, we went to another meeting on Palestinian prisoners, took copies of *Voices* with us, and sold every copy we took.

**N&L Committee members  
Bay Area**

I am an indigent convict serving a life

sentence and presently housed in the "special management unit." I am 43 years old, have been doing time since the age of 25, and am up for parole in 7 years. I'm not very good at writing about myself but love to read and your paper is very informative. I read the sample you sent me from cover to cover and especially enjoyed the article about the Flint, Mich. GM strike. Could you find a donor to make it possible for me to continue receiving your paper along with *Voices from within the Prison Walls*?

**Prisoner  
Arizona**

I'm writing about the three-strike law here, which benefits politicians more than the people of California. I'm 30 years old and doing 26 years to life for manufacturing a controlled substance. I understood the three-strike law was to keep rapists and child molesters off the streets, not to throw away people who have committed nonviolent felonies. I admit I've made some mistakes in life. I always thought the idea of prisons was to rehabilitate a person and get them ready to become a productive member of society. The way it is now prisons are overcrowded and have no form of rehabilitation so when you are released all you know is the same way of life that got you here. Prison is nothing except a human warehouse, where every day you are slowly dying, not just physically but mentally. If people would realize this can happen just for making a mistake, they would not let the politicians just throw away the key.

**Prisoner  
California**

*Voices* is important to help us understand that we're abolitionists. Prison is not a natural but an historically constructed inhumanity.

**N&L Supporter  
California**

new pamphlet off the press and into the hands of those who helped create it but cannot afford to pay for a copy.

To help make that possible, we have created a special offer: \$10 will pay for sending a copy of the pamphlet and a one-year subscription to *N&L* to those prisoners who have requested them but have no funds. Whether more than that or less, ANY AMOUNT YOU CAN SEND WILL HELP!

Please send what you can to:  
**News & Letters, 59 E. Van Buren,  
Room 707, Chicago, IL, 60605.**



## Readers' Views

environmental movement, because, while there are laws that can be passed to improve the quality of life, there is resistance to seeing the limitations of that as any real solution. What we have to ask is to what extent the poisoning of our planet is inherent in the very nature of capitalism.

**Environmental justice activist  
Tennessee**

## THE SCENE IN PUERTO RICO

Puerto Ricans are protesting a plan to place a gigantic statue of Christopher Columbus in a park overlooking the Bay of San Juan. The statue has sparked outrage from indigenous people, because the arrival of Columbus marked the beginning of the Europeans' slaughter and enslavement of native people. Protests have already prevented the installation of the statue in five other cities. In Florida, the Seminole People defeated the proposal.

A spokesperson for the United Confederation of Taino People (the indigenous Puerto Ricans), Roberto Mucaro Borrero, declared, "To erect a monument to Columbus is the same as glorifying Adolf Hitler. This is a disgraceful act and clearly shows how little in the last 500 years human beings have progressed as far as education and sensitivity."

In addition to being an insult, the statue, which is twice the size of the Statue of Liberty, would cost \$20 million to install and would be a hazard to airplanes.

**Correspondent  
New York**

## MURDER BY HOMOPHOBIA

Conservative talk radio host Mike Fleming has suggested that Matthew Shepard was partly responsible for being attacked. National right-wing talk show idiot Ken Hamlin has made the same argument. The Right always blames the victim—the poor are to blame for poverty, rape victims are to blame for being raped. The heterosexist Right wants to focus attention away from the central issue of homophobia in this case, first suggesting his killers only wanted to rob him, then insisting it was something irrational that drove them to beat Matthew to death. It was something irrational. It was homophobia.

**Jim Maynard  
Tennessee**

I have been talking to people at work who are straight, yet gay-friendly, and they are shocked that gay people are the victims of attacks, beatings, name calling, and murder even in "liberal" Iowa City. I think the only way to get people to realize that Matthew Shepard was not an isolated incident is to get anyone and everyone who has been the victim of a hate crime due to their sexuality to write about it, talk about it, get it published, and make sure people know that this is not the first time and it won't be the last. People don't want to believe it happens in their community, but it does. I can testify to one friend who got a black and blue face, another whose nose was broken.

**Jennifer  
Iowa**

The brutal murder of Matthew Shepard comes at just the time when the Christian Coalition's gaybashing ad campaign got onto TV, including prominently on Channel 13 here in Memphis. If there were any doubts about the depth of depravity in the fundamentalist Christian Right, the fanatics' demonstration at Matthew's funeral has to remove them. Is there no limit to the right-wing depravity, the violence at home and wars abroad, the pollution of thought, to which this society will be allowed to sink?

**Ready to fight it  
Memphis**

On National Coming Out Day, I sent an email greeting to all my comrades, friends and family addressed to all who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered or any kind of queer they choose to be,

and who believe in living their lives courageously and unapologetically. And then I added a greeting addressed to all those who are not gay but believe in us and celebrate in who we are and believe in our right to co-exist on this earth peacefully, because we couldn't do it without them.

**Tom Williamson  
Chicago**

## PINOCHET: CASE STUDY IN STATE TERROR

Thanks to the diligence of two Spanish judges, General Augusto Pinochet is under arrest here in England. This surprising event brings hope that he will face judgment for at least some of the inhuman acts committed during 17 years of his dictatorship in Chile. Pinochet sought to wipe out the very idea of a new society in blood and pain and fear. Torture and often murder of anyone associated with the Left were normal methods of political control.

Up until now, he had visited Britain with impunity, mixing business and pleasure—arms deals with British companies and tea with Baroness Thatcher. As Sheila Cassidy, a British doctor who survived torture in Santiago in 1975, put it: "There is a desperate need to see justice done. There are a lot of people who feel that to let Pinochet go would be monstrous."

**Richard Bunting  
Oxford**

The arrest finally of Augusto Pinochet is a cause for celebration. It is ironic that he was arrested for the murder of Spaniards during the bloody counter-revolution he led with U.S. help in 1973. While the arrest is too little and too late, it's still an occasion to raise a glass and make a vow to end fascism wherever it appears. Your October editorial was right to raise Pinochet's murderous coup as an example of U.S.-led state terrorism.

**Old enough to remember  
Bremerton, Wash.**

The theme running through the whole October issue of *N&L* seems to be the growing trend toward the police state. It is chilling to know that the "war of the future" Clinton and Albright called for not only reserves the absolute right to U.S. military attacks anywhere, anytime, but called for "rethinking our whole concept of civil liberties." It's a not-so-veiled threat to all those the rulers consider "enemies of the state." Those are exactly the kind of "enemies" who were routinely rounded up and made to disappear under the watchful eyes of big brothers like the current Russian Premier Primakov (a former KGB boss) and Chile's Augusto Pinochet (who unleashed his terror on the Chilean people with the help of Nixon, Kissinger and the CIA).

What is scary is that the U.S. government that sponsored state-terrorism then has now sent Ambassador Holbrooke to insist that Serbian strongman Milosevic abide by the International War Crimes Tribunal process and international law, while leaving it to Milosevic's discretion to restore human rights in Kosova.

**South Asian immigrant  
California**

## THE PRACTICALITY OF DIALECTICS

One of the great things about *N&L* is the way it combines workers' voices and reports of all kinds of demonstrations with theoretical articles. Kevin Anderson's essay on "Contemporary Challenges to Dialectical Thinking" in the October issue is very relevant to an activist trying to figure out how to proceed. Questions of subjectivity and agency—or, in plain language, who is going to change things and how, and what is the role of thought—are always staring you in the face. Not just the essay but the paper as a whole shows the practicality of dialectics.

**One of those activists  
San Diego**



## READERS—WE NEED YOUR HELP!

As the word about D.A. Sheldon's powerful pamphlet, *VOICES FROM WITHIN THE PRISON WALLS*, has been spreading, more and more requests for copies have been pouring into the office of *News & Letters* from prisoners throughout the land. So have requests for donor subscriptions to the paper.

Every request will be filled but we urgently need the help of those in the so-called "free" world to pay the postage and repay the loans we undertook to get this



**PUTTING THE SPOTLIGHT ON HUMAN RIGHTS**



I was excited to see that some organization outside of the U.S. was finally going to investigate the horrible conditions inside this country. It has been good that Amnesty International has previously targeted well-known human rights violations in places like China, Rwanda and Guatemala but for the first time in its 37-year history it will be focusing on the abuses in a major Western country. The abuses in the jails and prisons and the police brutality going on in the streets in cities across the land are all pinpointed in their report. It also shows the U.S. contribution to human rights abuses abroad through supplying arms, equipment and training to governments and armed groups "known to have carried out torture, political killings and other abuses."

We need to see that the U.S. has become a monster that needs to be uprooted before it destroys the world. I wish everyone, including Amnesty International, could read the Marxist-Humanist Perspectives printed in the July issue of *N&L*. There they would find a group working to uproot all these conditions everywhere through the creation, at last, of the human world Marx was aiming for.

**Felix Martin**  
California

*Editor's note: Copies of the Marxist-Humanist Perspectives for 1998-99 can be ordered by sending 55¢ for postage, to News & Letters, 59 East Van Buren, Room 707, Chicago, IL 60605.*

When the U.S. bombed Afghanistan and Sudan in August I had only been on campus two days and didn't have anyone to talk to about it. I remember an attitude of disbelief and nobody has brought it up since. But the Monica/Bill thing was talked about everywhere. When I saw that no one talked about the bombing I was half "joking" when I said it was because the terrorists only blew up an embassy in Africa and nobody cares about Africa. Now I see that is the truth.

**New college student**  
Florida

A delegation of Panamanian citizens visited Washington in October to gather support for people who are still suffering from

the U.S. invasion of their country in 1989. The invasion had a devastating effect on the Panamanian economy and on people's health and living conditions. The casualties include thousands of people who have physical and emotional conditions, including abnormalities due to the bombs dropped on their soil, and who suffer extreme poverty. After the invasion, scores of people were displaced from their homes to areas where military waste is present, and many children have developed skin, respiratory and emotional conditions.

The delegation is demanding economic and medical help from the U.S. and trying to move its nine-year-old claims of human rights violations to the Organization of American States.

**Activist for human rights**  
New York

The Chicago (in)justice system has proven again that, to them, the life of a Black child isn't worth a damn thing. Two of the three white thugs charged with the horrific beating of 13-year-old Lenard Clark — because they didn't like him biking through their white neighborhood — have gotten off virtually scot-free. They plea bargained their way to probation and community service, just days after the third thug was sentenced to eight years in prison. Even there, the jury decided that repeatedly banging Lenard's head against a brick wall causing permanent brain damage didn't constitute attempted murder. No Justice! No Peace!

**Outraged**  
Chicago

**SAMMY SOSA VS. THE ESTABLISHMENT**

First the baseball establishment and the media slighted Sammy Sosa, a Black Dominican, in favor of the white home run hitter whose accomplishments were similar. Then, when New Yorkers wanted to have a parade for Sosa in Washington Heights, the Dominican neighborhood, Mayor Giuliani refused. He was either worried or being punitive because there were riots in Washington Heights following the Los Angeles rebellion of 1992. The mayor instead made the parade in the City Hall area on a Saturday, i.e., a time and place where any unruliness could be easily policed.

This goes along with everything else Giuliani is doing to turn New York City into a police state.

**Anne Jaclard**  
New York

**THE POPE VS. HEGEL**

Pope John Paul II is smart enough to recognize today's hunger for philosophy or meaning (what he called "the need for a foundation for personal and communal life") in the face of "the immense expansion of humanity's technical capability." In his encyclical, "Faith and Reason," he warns of the danger of nihilism, while—in his attempt to return us to the scholastic philosophy of Aquinas—he takes care to attack Hegel: "Some representatives of idealism sought in various ways to transform faith and its contents...into dialectical structures which would be grasped by reason." He also attacks the humanism of Marx: "Various forms of...atheistic humanism, expressed in philosophical terms, which regarded faith as alienating." Of course he sees this as what "gave rise to totalitarian systems" but this is not an attack on Communism. It is specifically against the Humanism of Marx and the 1844 Essays, as I see it. This is what the Pope fears the hunger for philosophy could lead to.

**John Marcotte**  
New York

**WORKFARE = SLAVERY**

I'm 51 and before my stroke two years ago I cared for elderly people. A city doctor certified me as able to work but it's hard to do the work I've been assigned for the park department, handling the refuse bags and a tool for raking. I'm sort of numb on my left side and have to take water pills for my high blood pressure. I lost my legal appeal for SSI, and now I'm threatened with eviction from my city subsidized housing. It's discouraging. What we get are slave wages.

**Black woman on workfare**  
New York City

Some of the women I had been going to school with have been pulled out of school because they were on the rolls and didn't have a job. One woman had to drop the classes she was taking to try to

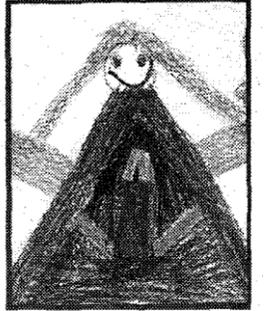
get a decent job some day, in order to work four hours a day at Hull House so she wouldn't lose the \$278 a month she was getting to help her care for her child. It seems ironic when you remember that Hull House was originally set up by Jane Addams to help women in distress.

**Another woman on workfare**  
Chicago

They can call it welfare or they can call it workfare but what they can't call it is "fair."

**Observer**  
Michigan

**WOMEN, CHILDREN, AND THE WRL**



Each year I buy the War Resisters League "Peace Calendar." It's an inexpensive holiday gift that has always had interesting themes touching on a diverse number of freedom dimensions, and helps a good "cause" besides. This year, the theme is "young people look at the world" and the brochure would have sold me on getting one, even if I had not already planned to do so, because of one of the excerpts it included. It's an excerpt from a piece titled "I Am a Girl" written by a fifth grader: "I am a girl with a mouth/ to speak out what is wrong/ to declare what I am/ who I am/ and how I am."

Whether *N&L* readers are interested in the youth dimension, women's liberation, or the way *N&L* has always put such great importance on all subjects "speaking for themselves," I think they'll thank you for telling them, as you generally do each year, where and how they can get the 1999 Peace Calendar.

**Longtime contributor**  
Philadelphia

*Editor's note: The 1999 Peace Calendar can be ordered from the War Resisters League, 339 Layayette St., New York, NY 10012. They cost \$12 each, four for \$44. It is a desk calendar of 128 pages, spiral bound, which includes peace resources and international contacts, and each day has room for notes.*

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By RAYA DUNAYEVSKAYA

- Marxism and Freedom: From 1776 until Today**  
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- Philosophy and Revolution: from Hegel to Sartre and from Marx to Mao**  
1989 edition. New author's introduction .....\$14.95
- Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution**  
1991 edition. New author's introduction. Foreword by Adrienne Rich .....\$12.95
- Women's Liberation and the Dialectics of Revolution: Reaching for the Future** (1996 edition) .....\$15.95
- The Marxist-Humanist Theory of State-Capitalism: Selected Writings by Raya Dunayevskaya** .....\$8.50
- The Philosophic Moment of Marxist-Humanism: Two Historic-Philosophic Writings by Raya Dunayevskaya**  
Contains "Presentation on Dialectics of Organization and Philosophy of June 1, 1987," and 1953 "Letters on Hegel's Absolutes." .....\$3 paperback, \$10 hardcover

By CHARLES DENBY

- Indignant Heart. A Black Worker's Journal**  
1989 edition includes Afterword by Raya Dunayevskaya .....\$14.95

By KEVIN ANDERSON

- Lenin, Hegel, and Western Marxism: A Critical Study**  
First full-length treatment of Lenin's studies of Hegel. \$15.95

**PAMPHLETS**

- American Civilization on Trial, Black Masses as Vanguard**  
Statement of the National Editorial Board. Includes "A 1980s View of the Two-Way Road Between the U.S. and Africa" by Raya Dunayevskaya, and "Black Caucuses in the Unions" by Charles Denby .....\$2

- NEW! Voices from within the Prison Walls**  
by D. A. Sheldon. Prisoners' views of (in)justice system and organizing from within .....\$8  
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## Black/Red View

by John Alan

A majority of African Americans are against impeaching President Clinton. Many believe it is another attempt by the Republican dominated Congress to erode the few remaining economic and civil rights won by Martin Luther King's generation and that the Monica Lewinsky affair was a setup to trap Clinton because Kenneth Starr, the independent counsel, had no evidence to show that Clinton was involved in the Whitewater rip-off.

A group of prominent Black intellectuals, influential Black ministers and, among them, the novelist Toni Morrison, have found it necessary to give a reason why Black Americans support Clinton. In various ways, they contend that the source of the Black support for Clinton is their common Southern culture and a similar history of persecution. As Toni Morrison put it, "white skin notwithstanding, this is our first Black President. Blacker than any Black person who could ever be elected... After all, Clinton displays almost every trope of Blackness: single-parent household, born poor, working class, saxophone-playing, McDonald's junk food-loving boy from Arkansas" (*The New Yorker*, Oct. 5, 1998).

Morrison thinks that the Blackness of Clinton's culture and the fact that he has appointed more African Americans to fill major positions in his government is why the conservatives were out to get him. This conception may come from a novelist's creative imagination, but it is not supported by reality. When Clinton was first elected, he presented himself as a "New Democrat," indicating that he was turning away from the goals of the civil rights movement and was breaking with the social liberalism of the John F. Kennedy and the Lyndon Johnson administrations.

Once elected president, Clinton went to Memphis to tell Black ministers that Black violence and Black youth having children outside of wedlock were endangering

## Defense Depot workers testify on toxic hazards

**Memphis, Tenn.**—In July at the Bethel AME Church, African Americans who used to work at the Defense Depot testified about the horrible conditions and health effects they had suffered. Their testimony was so powerful that it stunned those in attendance.

Dr. Jewel Crawford of ATSDR (Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry) was the chair and tried to set the tone by calling it an "interactive workshop" and claiming that "we want to hear from you." In fact, the meeting was held because the workers, led by Betty Mills, demanded it.

Crawford interrupted the workers constantly and had it not been for Doris Bradshaw, president of Defense Depot, Memphis, Tenn.-Concerned Citizens Committee (DDMT-CCC), she would have cut off individual speakers and ended the meeting before all the workers had a chance to speak.

The role of Memphis Health Center (MHC) was put forth by Allen Ball, who admitted that "We're not trained in environmental issues." It was apparent that the MHC sees the former Depot workers as a source of funding, as well as guinea pigs for research. When workers brought up real complaints, they were told that the MHC could do nothing for them but refer them someplace else that was never named. DDMT-CCC's demand has been for a clinic in the community (MHC is downtown), staffed by doctors and nurses trained in treating environmentally caused disease.

It has been over two months since the meeting and no one has heard from ATSDR or Dr. Crawford about this meeting.

Below we print excerpts from some of the workers' testimony.

**Betty Mills:** I've been fighting for 18 years and I'm weary. As workers, we came in contact with things no one should. I've had three incidents and no one would help. We went to a health center and it was incompetent.

In 1979 a lot of us were pregnant and having trouble. I found out there was DDT on the ground, so much that the birds were dying. My son was born with a defective heart. The doctor grilled me for days, asking what did I come in contact with. He finally asked where we worked. When we told them, they never asked us another thing. They asked for my son's heart when he died, to study. I said no. But they took it anyway. For 17 years I tried to figure out what we could have done to make him so sick. I had four miscarriages before I had my son. He was born with seizures and now has horrible headaches. He has big rashes on his head and back. I want to know how I am now. If my fetus could be so mutilated, why didn't anyone concern themselves with my health?

**Johnny B.:** I worked at the Depot in receiving for 18 years. We receive everything that comes through the Depot. My experience is that after 10 years you get cancer—Hodgkin's Disease. I went through chemo. My co-workers got cancer and some passed on. We received an abundance of chemicals. Some came off the trucks, leaking. We didn't know what it was. They only told us later that we shouldn't have been there, that we should have been evacuated from the building. We were there during Desert Storm. All the things that were used there—boats, clothes—everything they used was sent back to

## Toni Morrison's Clinton

the "fabric of our society." He went on to say: "We will turn this around. We will give these children a future. We will take away their guns and give them books. We will take away their despair and give them hope. We will rebuild the families and the neighborhoods and the communities." This, Clinton said, would not happen "until people who are willing to work have work." Clinton did little to create the jobs to mend this so-called "moral fabric" in the Black communities.

In 1994, when the Republican Party won control of Congress, Clinton accepted and signed without protest a Senate bill which cut several billions of dollars from child care, thus consigning millions of white and Black children to poverty and ending a federal commitment to child welfare dating back to the Franklin D. Roosevelt administration.

Clinton's record in office also shows that he urged and signed a \$22.3 billion crime bill with provisions for more death penalties, new prisons, "three strikes" and mandatory minimum sentences for minor drug offenders. Philip Heyman, Clinton's first deputy attorney, resigned because he could not accept the punitive nature of that bill.

Clinton's crime bill certainly had a punitive racist dimension. Its political purpose was to assuage the white middle-class fear of Black urban revolts by declaring a state of war against a whole generation of urban Black youth who are either permanently unemployed or partially employed. Obviously the alleged shared "culture" between them and Clinton didn't prevent Clinton from declaring this war.

Today, while many Black middle-class leaders and intellectuals see their own Other in Clinton's administration, the simple reason why the majority of African Americans are against his impeachment is that they're searching within themselves for a viable alternative, a new kind of mass movement for freedom that reaches beyond the limits of capitalist politics.

us. We had to put our hands on them.

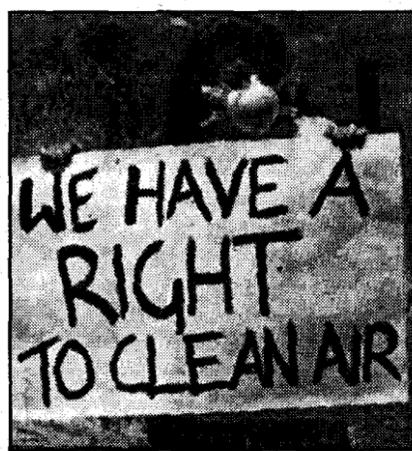
**Larry T.:** In 1983 there were what was called "cattle trucks." The supervisors picked out six guys. I took 30-gallon drums. They were bent. I got only cotton work gloves for protection. We stacked the drums and I noticed my hands getting wet. One day I was wearing a T-shirt, leaned over and someone noticed a bump on my back. I went to the dispensary and the nurse told me, "Oh, that's just sweat stuck under your skin!" Later on, these bumps broke out all over my body. I got worried; I didn't know where to turn. I had a vasectomy done on myself so I wouldn't pass it on to my children.

**Valerie:** I worked there in the middle of the 1980s as a processing clerk in a warehouse for five years. I had no problems until I worked there. Now I have bronchitis and asthma. My husband worked there and he had a heart attack at the age of 43. The doctor said he saw no reason for it. I now will have to have an ultrasound for my thyroid. My son is having terrible headaches. He will fall into my arms and cry. There is no reason why I have this lump in my neck, why my young healthy husband had a heart attack, why my son has such horrible headaches. What will happen? We also need emotional health. It's not just only physical.

My father worked at the Depot for 39 years. I worked there for 11. We could not embrace him when he came home. He had to take off his clothes and they got sent to a launderette. They couldn't be washed with our clothes or we all broke out. He is 76 now and lost half of his liver, his joints are gone, and he is very ill. I've had two miscarriages. I worked in medical. We had five people in two years who died of cancer, all from the same area: radioactive watches. They were tested every year for cancer but not allowed to get the test results. If I complained about itching on my face, I was told to put Vaseline on it. But we wanted good jobs, jobs we actually got paid for.

—Terry Moon

## Demand Environmental Justice...



and a subscription to *News & Letters* only \$5 per year to subscribe, see ad page 7

## October 22 protest

**Chicago**—Over 400 marched outside city hall as part of the third annual Oct. 22 national day of protest against police brutality. The first comments are from two Black students; the third is from a longtime activist.

At the police brutality march at the Daley Center there were a lot of young and grown people of different races.

Shirley Alejos, a woman who had been beaten by the police, spoke. A lot of people attended with photos of their loved ones who the police had brutally killed or hurt. Many of the cops who committed these crimes are still on the streets. Why hasn't the city put these people out of their jobs and throw them in jail?

I do think many more people could have attended. And why didn't they show this rally on the news? Why does the media act like this isn't an important issue? Is it that they are scared to let the people know what's really going on around us? —Sonya

\* \* \*

It is wrong what the police are doing to the people in America. You could just be walking down the street and they beat you up for nothing. Then when you get to the station they will change the report. They will probably say that you tried to attack them. Or they will put something on you.

They say the streets are unsafe because of gangs. The truth is that the streets are unsafe because of the police. They are supposed to protect and serve, but they are doing the opposite. People's lives are being shortened because of what the police are doing to them. Only if we get a new government will things change. —Dennis

\* \* \*

However successful the Oct. 22 demonstration was this year, it was marred by the homophobic ranting of one preacher who felt compelled to give us his view that "God does not approve of homosexuality." This was an incredible slap in the face of everyone at the demonstration, especially those queer people who came out to oppose the criminalization of a generation. Everyone needs to understand that struggle involves fighting for those like Matthew Shepard, who have already been criminalized for far too many generations. —Gerard Emmett

## Race, class, ecology

**Uproar at Dancing Rabbit Creek: Batling over Race, Class, and the Environment**, by Colin Crawford (Addison-Wesley, 1996).

For the first half of the 1990s, a battle raged over whether sparsely populated Noxubee County in east-central Mississippi would become the home of one of the country's largest hazardous waste dumps. Though blessed with fertile prairie soil, Noxubee, one of the poorest counties in the nation's poorest state, was ripe for the inflated promises of "economic development" that typically accompany waste dump proposals.

*Uproar at Dancing Rabbit Creek* is a gem, delving in depth into the twists and turns of Noxubee's waste war. In the process, it vividly sketches some of the principal people involved as well as the county's history and its race and class divisions. In Noxubee, a small minority of white descendants of plantation owners long lorded it over the poor Black majority as well as over the poor whites. One of the book's themes is that the county's racial divisions "mirror America's national experience."

With high poverty, unemployment and illiteracy, and near-total segregation between the public schools and all-white private academies, Noxubee did not have many prospects other than handling waste. Ed Netherland, founder of one of the companies seeking to locate a hazardous waste dump in Noxubee, cleverly wooed poor Blacks with promises of "high-paying" jobs.

The oddest twist is that the first voice loudly decrying environmental racism was that of Martha Blackwell, a white woman of the planter class, while the local chapter of the NAACP endorsed Netherland's proposal at a time when African-American organizations nationally were putting environmental justice on the agenda.

Colin Crawford paints a complex portrait of Ike Brown, a Black political activist who argued that the "lack of opportunity" was more deadly than toxic waste and that "It's not so much they were going to bring jobs, but we're talking about bringing independent Black businesses into the flow. That equalizes the structure." In the end, no waste dump was permitted, but Brown claimed victory because almost all the top political offices in the county were won by Blacks.

Crawford also depicts Martha Blackwell's political development and "environmental education." Blackwell began as apolitical and naive, but learned a great deal through her association with Black, white and Choctaw activists. It is still rare for Blacks and whites to work together politically.

While the dump opponents won, Crawford asserts that they left a primary question unaddressed: "If not a hazardous waste operation, then what? The county's majority needed jobs." What Noxubee County got was a chicken processing plant, which has typically low wages and terrible conditions, and a prison.

How is it that both sides can claim victory, yet the living conditions are little changed? Ike Brown wants to help the long-oppressed Blacks, but his concept is one of making the existing capitalist system fairer. Martha Blackwell and her allies fought an essentially defensive battle to preserve the environment. Separated from a vision of total social transformation, the battle was unable to develop into the drive for a new, human society where freedom and environmental justice would finally become reality.

—Franklin Dmitryev

# Prison warehousing and police abuse spotlight decaying U.S. society

(Continued from page 1)

ment agency, with 12,043 armed agents. INS border patrol units have increased by nearly 2,000 agents in the last three years, the majority being placed on the Mexico-U.S. border. One facility that I wrote about in *Voices from within the Prison Walls* is the Immigration and Naturalization Service detention facility in Elizabeth, N.J. It has a long history of abusing its prisoners which led to a rebellion there in June 1995.

Since then the facility reopened under new ownership, under the Corrections Corporation of America, a for-profit company known to abuse prisoners in its numerous prisons nationwide. Ninety-four immigrants detained at the facility went on a three-day hunger strike that ended Oct. 2 in a protest against restrictions that have kept them locked up for long periods without the chance for a hearing or appeal.

Each year the number of killings and physical and verbal abuse by local, state and federal police has dramatically increased as the number of "enforcement agents" has grown. According to a June report by the Bureau of Justice, the number of patrol officers grew by 68,000 between 1992 and 1996, now totaling 423,000. The report also found that during this period the number of full-time state and local officers with arrest powers increased by 59,000, to 663,335. The total increase—127,000—is more than the 100,000 new police that the Clinton administration pushed for earlier this decade.

Tens of thousands every year suffer from police abuse. This brutality mostly targets Blacks, Latinos and other people of color. Police brutality is also spilling over into white working-class neighborhoods. Here are some recent incidents:

- During the weekend of Sept. 26-27, U.S. border patrol agents killed two Mexican immigrants on the border between San Diego and Tijuana. The first shooting happened just north of Colonia Libertad, a neighborhood next to the border. INS agents tried to arrest three people who had crossed the 10-foot high border fence in the hills east of San Ysidro. One man escaped, but agents pulled another to the ground. The third immigrant, 23-year-old Oscar Abel Cordoba Velez from Guadalajara, was coming to the aid of his friend when he was shot in the chest by one of the agents. The next day a 35-year-old immigrant was shot and killed in almost identical circumstances.
- Marc Fitzsimmons, a Black 28-year-old man, was shot twice in the back by cops from the Los Angeles Police Department. Police officials told the press that Fitzsimmons was welding a butcher knife or some type of meat cleaver and so they were forced to shoot him in the chest. The autopsy showed that the cops lied in their reports.

- During the Million Youth March in New York City in September, cops in riot gear rushed the crowd using pepper spray, night sticks and other instruments of torture. Meanwhile, for those within prison and jail the use of electrical instruments of torture like stun belts has also become a constant feature. The "remote electronically activated technology" (REAct) stun belt is used by prison officials and police departments. When activated the belt shocks its wearer for eight seconds with three to four milliamps and 50,000 volts of continuous stun power. It causes a painful blast, knocking most of its victims to the floor where they shake uncontrollably for as long as 15 minutes. The belt can cause self-defecation, permanent twitching, nerve damage, memory loss, vomiting and even death! This device has been a favorite tool of criminal judges who force jail detainees to wear the belt during court proceedings. If they are "unruly," like speaking out loud, the judge can order the jailer to activate the belt.

There is also the growth of "chain gangs," which for the last couple of years have grown back into a fad of prison-crats. With the return of this long-discredited practice, our society has taken a step backwards that human rights groups like Amnesty International could no longer ignore.

## GROWTH OF PRISON SYSTEM

I have been personally involved in the criminal (in)justice system since I was 10 years old. I was shipped around through the Alabama Department of Youth Services like a piece of trash. My only "crime" was that my parents neglected me and I was not "under control," as state juvenile authorities put it. With all the conditions I had to put up with, the chance of me surviving once I was released into the streets in 1988 were slim. With the lack of opportunities for youth—especially those of color—and the "morals" of today's society and criminalization of the nation's youth, I can see why more and more people under the age of 18 are going to prison.

At the same time as there is growing juvenile incarceration, the number of women prisoners is mushrooming. Women are the fastest growing sector of the U.S. prison population. The number of women prisoners is already over 100,000. Reports of sexual abuse of women prisoners is growing dramatically.

The total number subjected to this repressive criminal injustice system today is 5.7 million—nearly one out of every 35 adults in the U.S. This includes a record 3.9 million men and women on probation or parole, another 600,000 in jail facilities and 1.2 million in prison.

More Blacks are now in prison than whites. Black people are incarcerated at a rate eight times higher than whites. This clearly proves that racist inequality is riding high in U.S. capitalist society. Along with keeping people

of color down, more and more Blacks, Latinos and other minorities are being arrested, prosecuted, and receiving longer sentences for the same convictions as whites. This is the residue of centuries of slavery and other forms of oppression which lie deep in this corrupt system.

At the same time, the private sector has jumped into the frying pan at an explosive rate, proposing to build more prison space at a discount to state and federal bureaucracies. In the last three months four states have either accepted proposals or are opening new privately run prison facilities. These include:

- Montana: Corrections Corporation of America won a \$25 million contract to build the state's first private prison.
- New Mexico: Wackenhut Corrections Corporation is opening a 1,200 bed prison in Lee county.
- Georgia: A private prison in Folkston has just transferred 50 prisoners to the state's first privately run prison which, when filled, will hold 1,600 men.
- South Carolina: Alabama-based Just Care plans to open the nation's first private prison hospital in Columbia. The 326-bed facility will treat prisoners from Georgia and the Carolinas.

These are a few of the new private prisons coming on line. With profits to be made comes greater mistreatment of prisoners. In the hunt to increase profits such places will offer even less rehab programming, food, and medical care. The use of slave labor in these warehouses will increase dramatically as the companies seek to squeeze more profit off the backs of its "rented" slaves. This goes along with greater physical and verbal abuse, since private-sector guards and personnel are trained and paid less than state employees.

## PRISONER STRUGGLES AND PHILOSOPHY

Support for the prisoners' struggle is an important factor in the fight against the capitalist system. We need a Marxist-Humanist philosophy to fully understand and oppose the imperialist forces which are using the criminal injustice system as a means to control this nation's populace.

As I said in *Voices from within the Prison Walls*, "The first and main objective of prison administrators is to maintain emotional, mental and physical suppression by systematically dehumanizing prisoners." These intimidating controls apply also to those on the outside, as working people find themselves in dire situations of day to day survival. With the world economic downturn sure to have an impact on the workers here in the U.S., the rise in disturbances against the system can be expected to grow. At the same time, so will the brutal control measures used by the ruling class to maintain its interests.

We therefore need a new class challenge from below as a development toward liberation and freedom from oppression and exploitation. *Voices from within the Prison Walls* is a tool for getting the working class, especially those of color, to become a part of the prisoners' struggle. It is one way we are helping ourselves and our fellow comrades in America's dungeons of oppression.

## Free Khalfani Khaldun!

*Pendleton, Ind.*—I have spent 13 years in Indiana's penal colony. Whereas at first I was not focused or concerned with change, I was compelled to abandon my criminal mentality and adopt a revolutionary outlook.

Today's prisons are nothing more than modern-day wage-slave plantations, operated on a system of arrogant, institutionalized racism. Prison labor is intensely exploitative. Struggles to overcome these conditions can't be effective without outside support. We must especially keep in mind the labor movement's struggles for higher wages, affordable health care, and thorough compensation for one's work.

My activism began nine and a half years ago, having been in prison since 17. Becoming a revolutionary placed me in the line of all sorts of attacks. Racist behavior patterns and harassment by administrators was constant. Now I am more focused, but the deception and trickery has never stopped. Guys are being slandered by prison guards, sentences extended, and trumped up charges filed just because we oppose the system.

I should have been released years ago, but I was run up on a charge of killing an officer at an Indiana state prison in 1994. I declare my innocence of this charge. I have been fighting tirelessly to vindicate myself of it. A trial is scheduled for Dec. 7 and supporters are mounting a caravan to attend it.

I experienced three casualties back to back last year. My baby brother Benjamin was found shot in Fort Wayne, Ind. on June 16; then my brother John was killed on Sept. 1. My mother was in the hospital shortly after my baby brother's death. When the news was given to her of son number two, she lapsed into a coma, and we lost her five days later. These casualties nearly killed me. My support base was crushed when my mother passed as she was very active in galvanizing support for my case.

I use this forum to ask anyone reading this to help me forge my freedom campaign. Write to: Cory J. Wade c/o Family and Friends to Free Khalfani, 510 E. Smith St., Apt. 3, Bloomington, IN 47401.

**Power to the oppressed nations all over this country. Free the mind, we free the world!**

—Khalfani X. Khaldun

## Sojourner Truth's feminist legacy

(Continued from page 2)

anyone—the "Exodusters" who left the South for Kansas in the 1870s and 1880s—she again misreads Truth's politics. Sojourner Truth had been trying to institute a plan to move freed Blacks from Washington, D.C. to Kansas immediately after the Civil War. Painter characterizes Truth's plan as paternalistic: "Freed people's initiative had no part in it" (236). But when "The Exodus to Kansas of 1879 upstaged Truth's plan," what happened? Sojourner Truth "supported it enthusiastically" (Painter 244). Painter misses the dialectic again, even if Truth caught it. Truth was trying to show her solidarity with the Black masses, at first creating—as intellectuals sometimes do—a false blueprint that couldn't work. But even though "the actual movement—an expression of independent Black action—had caught her completely by surprise" (Painter 246), Truth knows to follow the dialectic of masses in motion! It is remarkable that an 80-year-old illiterate woman can respond to history in the making, while her biographer prefers to focus on Truth's shortcomings.

All people, and all historic figures, are beset by contradictions, but it is your revolutionary philosophy that dictates how you will lean when a crisis comes. In the absence of such a philosophy, history becomes merely a chronicle of events. Painter's biography brings us a wealth of new details, but they are like puzzle pieces unarranged, with some even maliciously tossed around the room. To fail to see that the Exodusters movement demonstrated the movement of the Idea of freedom, which was present in Truth's mind, too, is to read history as merely one-damn-thing-after-another. Like many intellectuals, Painter has succumbed to "the temptation to bring the bigger-than-life" thinker "down to their size" (RLWLKM 178).

Dunayevskaya always stressed how Truth's importance was grounded in history and in philosophy. Painter's book is an example of how "the attitude towards women's struggles seems always to play down women's actions as not meriting the description 'revolutionary'" (WLDR 80). But it also shows how "hard of hearing" intellectuals can be when it comes to learning the "new language of thought, Black thought" as enunciated by Sojourner Truth (WLDR 49). As Black feminist and lesbian Gloria Joseph said, to understand Sojourner Truth as "a thinker challenges all feminists, especially Black feminists, to set about the critical, historical contextualization of...her revolutionary intellect" ("Sojourner Truth: Archetypal Black Feminist" in *Wild Women in the Whirlwind*, ed. Joanne M. Braxton and André Nicola McLaughlin).

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by D. A. Sheldon

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## Editorial

# Serb grip on Kosova continues with NATO accord

It all seems so predictable. Serbian neo-fascists wage a genocidal war against an entire people which the U.S. does nothing to stop. When the situation risks getting out of hand, the U.S. first threatens NATO air strikes and then imposes a "peace" settlement that basically rewards the Serbian aggressors. It occurred in Bosnia three years ago with the Dayton accords. It is occurring once again with the accord to halt for now the fighting between Serbia and ethnic Albanians in Kosova.

Hammered out between Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic and U.S. envoy Richard Holbrooke, the architect of the Dayton accords, the agreement calls on Serbia to halt its military offensive in Kosova which has killed thousands and produced 400,000 refugees. Yet it does not require Milosevic to completely withdraw his troops. It only stipulates that he bring the number of troops down to the number of those present prior to his recent offensive—19,000 soldiers! This maintains Milosevic's grip on the region and allows him to renew hostilities when it suits him.

The U.S. and NATO say they will try to prevent this by having 2,000 unarmed civilian observers on the ground while patrolling Kosova with jet fighters from the air. But the recent history of the West's actions in the region raise many doubts that this will have much effect. The presence of armed UN "peacekeepers" in Bosnia several years ago did nothing to prevent Serbian aggression. On the contrary, the "peacekeepers" opened the gates to Srebrenica, a city under siege in eastern Bosnia, and the Serbs then slaughtered 10,000 of its residents.

The accord also calls for a three-year timetable in which Serbia is supposed to complete "interim autonomy arrangements" for the Kosovars. This arrangement directly negates the central demand of the Kosovar people—*independence from Serbia*. As Adam Demachi of the Kosova Liberation Army (KLA) said in a statement attacking the accords, the Holbrooke-Milosevic deal provides Kosovars with fewer rights than the 1974 Yugoslav Constitution and leaves them with a lesser degree of self-governance than enjoyed up to 1989.

In fact, the people of Kosova were completely excluded from this agreement. Though "moderate" leaders who are more accommodating to the U.S., such as Ibrahim Rugova, were "consulted" about the discussions with

Milosevic, the KLA was excluded from them and its basic demands ignored. Moreover, the language of the accord was outright insulting in speaking of "the problems in the Province of Kosovo and Metohija." This is the language used by Serbia to refer to its occupation of Kosova.

### PARTITION FOR KOSOVA?

It all sounds like what happened in Bosnia, where a U.S.-imposed accord prevented the Serbian forces from suffering a military defeat. It led to the partition of Bosnia. A similar fate may await Kosova.

The most recent Serbian military offensive took place in northern Kosova. Entire villages in the Mitrovica, Vushtrria, and Podujeva regions were burned to the ground, and tens of thousands of its Albanian residents forced to flee. The entire Kosova economy—and much of Serbia's—is dependent upon northern Kosova. It contains the biggest lead and zinc mine in Europe at Trepca. Milosevic clearly wants to hold onto this region at all costs.

Milosevic has taken the U.S.'s opposition to Kosova's independence as a signal that it may allow a partitioning of the country. He is therefore doing everything he can to keep as many troops as possible in the north and prevent the return of refugees. The U.S. is letting him get away with this by insisting that Serbs have as much right to this region as ethnic Albanians—even though they make up only 4% of its population.

Milosevic is also trying to play upon divisions within the KLA. One of its wings, the Kosova Peoples Movement (KPM), favors partition. It is led by followers of the late Communist leader of Albania, Enver Hoxha. Despite its militant rhetoric, the KPM is willing to let Serbia keep northern Kosova in exchange for

the rest of the country being allowed to unite with Albania. This approach is strongly opposed by the rest of the KLA.

What makes all of this especially dangerous is that the Holbrooke-Milosevic accord calls on U.S. and NATO forces to intervene only after a massacre or major offense is committed by Serbian forces. No structures are in place that will enable refugees to return to their homes or war criminals to be arrested. The Kosovars are simply being asked to have faith that after Milosevic massacres them, NATO will come in with air strikes.

In fact, the U.S. and Western powers have long tried to avoid air strikes out of fear it would embolden the fighters of the KLA in their struggle for independence. The threat of air strikes is primarily used as a way to cover over the extent to which the U.S. is trying to cut a deal with Milosevic. It has the added effect of fooling many, including on the Left, into thinking that the U.S. stands on the side



Children walk through the ruins of a village in Kosova

of the Kosovars.

As Veton Surroi, editor of *Koha Ditore*, the leading independent paper in Kosova, put it, "If the greatest military force in the history of mankind was to be employed in order to 'squeeze' such concessions out of Milosevic, then the message sent out to mini-dictators around the globe, is that you can get away with the crimes you have committed."

The accord remains on shaky ground and showed signs of coming apart as soon as it was signed, in part because Milosevic is dragging his feet on reducing his troop levels. It may prove far more difficult to maintain this accord than the one in Bosnia. The U.S. was able to pressure the Bosnian government into signing the Dayton Accords and end its military advance against the Serbs. The KLA, however, is a diffuse and multitendency organization and lacks a central authority which the U.S. can easily bring into line. It is likely to resist pressure from above. Despite this rotten accord, the struggle of the Kosovar people for independence, freedom, and equality, has not yet run its course.

## Homage to Kosova: brigade of aid

(Continued from page 1)

usual tolls on the motorway in deutchmarks, and as we neared the turnoff for Kosova, we wondered what we would find.

At dusk we arrived in Pristina and were met by old friends from the Teachers Union. Later, while staying with our allocated families, we heard machine gun fire outside, and were hurriedly escorted in from the balcony of their apartment. This is a nightly routine, when Serb police shoot randomly at young Albanians on the streets while Serb civilians are publicly given arms by the police.

The next day at the office of the Union of Education, Science and Culture, we presented £1,000 in deutchmarks [about U.S. \$1,700] to Zenel Zeka, its general secretary for the schools.

The teachers described an aspect of their daily life that we had not been aware of. Children are frequently harassed by the Serb police on their way to school and hide their books to avoid confiscation. One boy, we were told, was forced to eat his book. Teachers, including our interpreter, have had their apartments broken into and searched for books.

### SCORCHED EARTH POLICY

They described the scorched earth policy adopted by the paramilitaries and the army who bomb villages and, as the inhabitants flee, burn the village to the ground. In Matisheva, only one old man was found hiding in the rubble after the town was totally destroyed.

The pretext of these attacks is that the villagers are terrorists, we were told, yet Albanians have never been involved historically as terrorists, but rather fought terrorism. This is part of Milosevic's propaganda machine.

From February till August, 516 civilians were killed, including 39 children, 47 women and 52 old men. Many hundreds have vanished, and 200 villages had been totally burned. Foreign journalists were taken to Matisheva, for example, to see the town and after they left, it was destroyed.

We visited the Faculty of Technology of the university in Pristina which has been reopened to Albanian students. Most of the windows are broken, all the resources have been removed, and the students we spoke to are struggling with a minimum of books. We heard horrendous accounts of the arrest and torture of many Albanian professors, some cases of which have been taken up by Amnesty International.

The next day we met with the miners and presented them also with £1,000 in deutchmarks [about U.S. \$1,700]. They said they would use it to buy bread for the miners who are starving. They wanted us to visit the mining community on the outskirts of Mitrovica to witness their terrible condition, but it would be unsafe for them to accompany us.

### BRINGING THE MESSAGE HOME

Our experience of attempting to reach the miners in

Mitrovica proved useful. This time the lorry avoided the city center, and after eventually getting through the checkpoints, arrived at its destination. Small as the amount of aid was, it was received with jubilation.

On our return we did a short press release, with as yet no response, and wrote to the foreign secretary, again with as yet no response.

One of the proposals which the Kosovan teachers were particularly interested in was the idea of pairing up with British teachers and exchanging letters. The breaking down of their isolation is very important to them. If you are interested in participating in this scheme and might also be willing to send a small amount of money regularly to a Kosovan teacher, please contact Workers' Aid for Kosova/ó at 0181-555-7045.

To further break down the isolation of Kosovans, the Kosova Crisis Center and Workers' Aid organized a demonstration in London on Oct. 4 at Hyde Park with a rally in Trafalgar Square.

—Solidarity activists

## E. Timor general strike

East Timor's independence movement is voting with its feet: there have been several days of mass demonstrations, culminating in a general strike on Oct. 19. The demonstrations began when the governor announced that all civil servants had to sign a pledge to support Indonesia's fake "autonomy" plan for the colony. First the civil servants demonstrated, and finally 20-40,000 people turned out in Dili on the 19th. More demonstrations were planned.

East Timor was forcibly annexed by Indonesia in 1975, and some 200,000 of its people were killed since then. With the fall of the Indonesian dictator Suharto, the East Timorese have hope of achieving independence, and have dared to demonstrate publicly, in spite of earlier massacres of peaceful demonstrators.

Under pressure from the United Nations, Indonesia recently announced it was withdrawing some troops and offering East Timor an "autonomous" status—in which Indonesia would continue to govern most matters. The independence movement has demanded a vote on East Timor's future status instead.

Now it turns out there was a troop buildup, not a withdrawal. The UN is upset because Indonesia has been lying when it was supposed to be negotiating. The U.S. is also putting some pressure on Indonesia. The East Timor Action Network has succeeded in getting Congress to prohibit some military training and weapons from going to Indonesia until it allows East Timor self-determination.

The East Timor Action Network is organizing demonstrations throughout the U.S. to commemorate the 1991 Santa Cruz massacre on Nov. 12. Call 914/428-7299 for more information.

—A. J.

## Human rights caravan

Corcoran, Cal.—"The human rights problem of the world today is right here in the USA!" On Oct. 18 hundreds of people from all over California participated in car caravans for prisoners' human rights converging at the infamous center of guards shooting prisoners and set-up human cock fights, Corcoran prison.

Participants included former prisoners and prisoner rights activists, Art and Revolution, a cultural youth group, and especially families of prisoners, many organized by F.A.C.T.S., Families to Amend California's Three Strikes.

Coming from the north, we also stopped to demonstrate at the two women's prisons in Chowchilla, the largest women's prisons in the world, notorious for abusing women held there.

The caravan coincided with the launching of a year-long campaign by Amnesty International to focus on human rights abuses in the U.S. Speakers at demonstrations at both places told stories of not just the abuse suffered and witnessed inside, but critiqued the whole dehumanizing criminal justice system. The injustice of the three strikes law is that it criminalizes the poor. Then as prison inmates they are demonized and deprived of any consideration as human beings.

Many different reforms were called for by different speakers, from making wardens accountable to the population to firing of sadistic, fascist guards and public oversight of all prisons' activities. One young Black man, a former prisoner, expressed the hope of everyone there that this demonstration be a beginning of a mass movement.

Yet he was concerned that the primary obstacle to a development of mass movement is the feeling instilled in many prisoners that they deserve their punishment. We had a vigorous discussion of D. A. Sheldon's ideas in *Voices from within the Prison Walls*, which he calls "the battle of the mind—the struggle over our own conflicts." Sheldon argues that the starting point for building solidarity between prisoners is overcoming the hatred prisoners feel for themselves. He presents a vision of an "I" that is not an isolated individual but consciously includes the human relations developed with others, an "I" that is a "we." In calling for a mass movement he quotes Abdul Olugbala Shakur: "Working isn't hard, it's unity and understanding and having respect for each other which is hard."

This building of firmest solidarity, which is also part of News and Letters Committees' Constitution and Who We Are as Marxist-Humanists, Sheldon calls a beginning of a real revolution.

—Participants

Youth

# Anti-gay murder exposes retrogressive times

by Kevin Michaels

The anti-gay atrocity which took place outside of Laramie, Wyo. in early October shocked many into a realization of the severity of the problem of violence targeted against gays and lesbians. College campuses were the sites of many of the protests against the vicious beating and torture of University of Wyoming student Matthew Shepard, who survived until Oct. 12 in a Colorado hospital after having been discovered a few days before, barely conscious and tied to a fence on the outskirts of town. In the Midwest alone, demonstrations and speak-outs took place at Northern Illinois University in DeKalb and the University of Kansas in Lawrence. In Chicago, many DePaul University students turned out for a well-attended march and vigil which took place on the evening of Oct. 14.

Chicago has been experiencing an acute upsurge of anti-gay violence in its most prominently gay neighborhood. A gay-bashing incident which took place on Sept. 19 left a man with severe neurological damage and was only the most grievous of a string of several attacks in which the assailants jumped out of cars and made it clear what motivated their actions. Last year saw a total of 37 reported anti-gay attacks in Chicago, a rise of over 50% from 1996. Nationally, the numbers of assaults against gays are increasing just as the level of violent crimes being committed is decreasing.

These horrendous events are taking place against a retrogressive political backdrop which makes one wonder if we are in store for even worse in the near future. On Oct. 13 the Supreme Court refused to overturn a court decision which permits the city of Cincinnati, Ohio to maintain a law preventing gays from being subjected to discrimination because of their sexual orientation. The governor of Wyoming, the state in which the murder of Matthew Shepard took place, continues to actively crusade against the passage of a hate crimes law even in the wake of this brutal example of anti-gay violence. While the existence of hate crimes legislation does not mean that the capitalist state, which defends and promotes the ideology of the nuclear family, is firmly committed to protecting the physical safety of gays

and lesbians (indeed reports of police officers as perpetrators of anti-gay violence are increasing), it does at least provide a formal commitment to which it can be held accountable.

The upcoming mid-term election provides a further arena for anti-gay right-wing forces to advance. The anti-abortion and anti-gay fanatic Randall Terry, founder of Operation Rescue, is running as a candidate for the seat in New York's 26th Congressional District. The Democratic candidate for governor in Illinois has proved to be so hostile to gay support that several gay political organizations have endorsed his Republican opponent. Reactionary religious political organizations like the Christian Coalition and the Colorado-based

Family Research Council are contributing to this atmosphere by actions like their recent sponsorship of full-page anti-gay advertisements in national newspapers.

The indignation expressed towards this horrible event is evidence of a realization of the need for new human relations. Marxist-Humanists express our sympathy to the friends and family of Matthew Shepard as well as our solidarity with all those who face discrimination and violence because of their sexual orientation in this retrogressive society. We need to work to challenge this outpouring of repugnance toward homophobic violence to develop into a critique of the nature of a society in which such violence continues to persist and which may prove to occur in increasing levels.

## Protests turn up heat on Nike

**New York**—Over 100 young people and supporters demonstrated in front of Nike Town in midtown Manhattan, Oct. 15, in a protest over the low pay and sweatshop conditions of Nike's overseas workers and its price-gouging of inner city children in the U.S. Members of the Settlement House Youth Nike Give-Back Campaign, who have been writing and marching about Nike for the past year, turned in their sneakers during the noisy protest. Some looked about eight years old; all were vociferous about the issues. They demanded Nike pay its workers a living wage, lower the price of sneakers, and give more than basketball courts to inner city communities. They reminded Nike, "we made you, we'll break you!"

One youth spoke to the crowd: "It's not about the \$120 sneakers, it's not about money, it's about morals and human rights. As a youth, I'm discriminated against every day. We are bigger together; we've made Nike's profits fall. I'm going to be at every rally and demonstration until I die." Others denounced Michael Jordan for being a Nike spokesman.

A moving talk was given by James Keating, a former soccer coach at St. John's University, who was forced out of his job after he refused to wear Nike insignia as required by the university's multi-million dollar deal with the company. A

theology student, he researched Nike's employment practices for a course, and then began to raise objections to being a billboard for an unethical company. He contrasted "the iron-bound law of capitalism that says profits must be increased at any cost to humanity," with "human dignity and morality."

—John Morcotte

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**Chicago**—Local anti-sweatshop activists participated in the Oct. 17 national mobilization against Nike's predatory labor practices by picketing the Nike Town store on Michigan Avenue. Jobs With Justice and the Nicaragua Solidarity Committee were among the organizers of the event, which featured the participation of many high school age youth as well. The demonstrators numbered about fifty and spent the afternoon chanting anti-Nike slogans and distributing informational flyers to passers-by.

—Participant

## Wyoming slaying galvanizes drive to be free

**San José, Cal.**—The news of Matthew Shepard's death came as a shock to me. As I learned of the events leading up to his death I was horrified. All I could think was that once again a life had been taken out of hatred. I learned of a candlelight vigil at the Billy DeFrank Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Community Center in San José.

As we were leaving, we could hear someone with a bullhorn yelling. To our horror we realized that there were four Christian Right members protesting. I decided to go see what they had to say (nothing I hadn't heard before). To show our support, I and my group of friends stood behind a woman who was engaging the four men.

At this point the four men were outnumbered by about ten people, and they seemed to get a little intimidated. A lot of yelling ensued with the words anal, fist, sin, hell, Jesus, God, and various Bible verses being "discussed". After about ten minutes this "incident" was halted by an official from the DeFrank Community Center. She told us that it was no use to talk to these men. Their hearts and ears were closed; she urged us to go home, be with our families, and be safe.

I have a different response. It is only when we are willing to take chances that we can truly be safe. On our way home, my friends and I talked about the incident, and came to a consensus: although we would never change the minds of those four Christian Right guys, at least we got them to put away their bullhorn. That was something objective and real we had achieved

—Whitney and April

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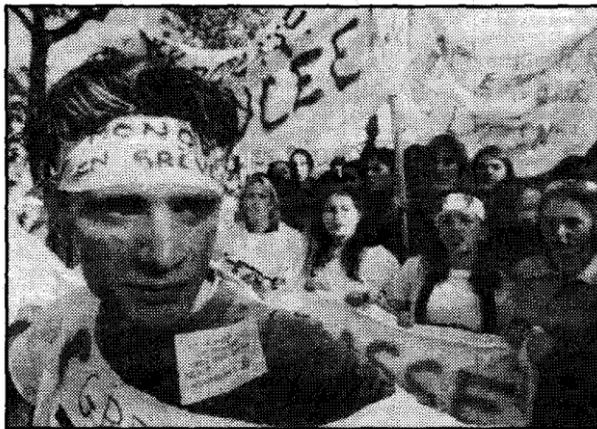
**Memphis, Tenn.**—The Memphis Lesbian & Gay Coalition for Justice, a newly organized grassroots political group, had its first organizational meeting Oct. 17. Fifty-five people attended and shared ideas and political strategies for fighting the radical right, getting lesbian, gay and bisexual voters involved in the political issues important to them, and forming coalitions with other groups working for social justice.

We assert that lesbians and gay men, bisexuals and transgendered people should live free from prejudice and discrimination, hatred and violence. We must become full participants in the political struggle for human rights at the local, state and national levels of government. We will oppose those who oppose democratic values and equality. We reach out to form a coalition for justice with all groups who are victims of oppression and discrimination, prejudice and hatred.

We came together following the tragic death of Matthew Shepard, a young victim of a hate-motivated act of murder. We would like to call attention to the fact that Matthew's killers were not born homophobic. They learned to hate gay men and homosexuality in a society where gay men and lesbians are the target of organized campaigns which promote prejudice, discrimination, and hatred against them; a society where we are the target of radical right religious groups which seek to impose their beliefs through the government; a society where we are the target of politicians who refuse to recognize that lesbians and gay men are an oppressed minority, unfairly singled out for unequal treatment. The root of violence and hatred towards gays and lesbians must be addressed: stereotypes breed prejudice and hate, and hate breeds violence. This cycle of prejudice, hatred and violence must be broken to liberate gays and lesbians from oppression.

—Jim Maynard

## French students strike



The halls of France's lycees, the equivalent of American high schools, have been empty throughout much of October. Instead of sitting at their desks, students have been crowding the streets of their cities in marches to protest their overcrowded classes and deteriorating school buildings. Rallies took place on Oct. 13 and 15 in Paris as well as in provincial cities. A national strike was called for Oct. 20. France's Education Minister claims to sympathize with the goals of the decentralized movement (which has the support of many teachers), but the students have declared that they will not be taken in by attempts to coopt them.

## Two tales of the city

**New York**—Mayor Giuliani's police state was out in full force Oct. 19 trying to destroy the Matthew Shepard Political Funeral March Against Hate Crimes, and again on Oct. 22 for the National Day of Protest to Stop Police Brutality, Repression and the Criminalization of a Generation. Police violence at the first event, and legal maneuvers to prevent the second, both failed to stop the marches of about 4,000 people each. And New Yorkers became increasingly angry at the racism, homophobia and hate that the mayor is promoting.

The Matthew Shepard March was called on a few day's notice by word of mouth, in response to the brutal murder of a gay student in Wyoming. The turn-out was larger than expected and spilled over the sidewalk onto the street. For that, the cops immediately arrested the lead marshals and organizers of this peaceful, legal demonstration. As the march continued, the police on horses shoved, beat and trampled people arresting over 100 for doing no more than walking down the street. One woman said, "I saw the wall of cops and it didn't seem possible to continue, but somehow, because everyone wanted to so much and we acted together, we were able to keep going." The march spontaneously changed course, then managed to get back to Fifth Avenue and continued on the sidewalk to Madison Square Park, where it was met by hundreds of cops in riot gear. After a rally and candlelight vigil the gathering dispersed, but the police blocked the way and closed the subway station.

Those arrested were held in jail for punitive lengths of time. They included a reporter who was held for 26 hours in spite of her press credentials, and people with HIV or AIDS who were unable to take their medications. Those who then pleaded guilty were sentenced to three-days of community service. Those who refused to plead guilty must return to court for trials.

Many people from that march returned to the streets three days later for the march against police brutality, where their outrage joined that of the city's youth, who are routinely harassed and brutalized by the police. The march was led by family members of people murdered by the police; many family members have become eloquent spokespeople for the anti-brutality movement. There were thousands of young people, Black and white, Latino and Asian, and older supporters and activists.

Giuliani had tried to stop this march by refusing it a permit, but the federal courts ordered him to allow us to march down one lane of Broadway. Earlier this year, the courts ordered the city to ease restrictions it placed on protests of AIDS activists, taxi drivers and the Million Youth March. This time, the police department defended its denial of a permit on the grounds that the march would tie up traffic—yet at the same time, the city is going to close down lower Manhattan on a work day to hold a parade for the Yankees.

Some say the Mayor is just showing off so the Republicans will nominate him for a higher office, but I say our civil liberties are in grave danger and we need to fight for them.

—Anne Jaclard

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# Our Life and Times **Brazil's elections and economic crisis**

by Kevin A. Barry and Mary Holmes

The re-election of President Fernando Cardoso of Brazil, Oct. 4, did not tally as a ringing endorsement of his "neo-liberal" economic policies. Nor did the defeat of Lula—Inacio Lula da Silva—of the Workers Party (PT) represent a crushing blow to the Brazilian Left and its opposition to the ruin brought to people's lives by Brazil's exposure to the globalization contagion.

Cardoso, with 53%, defeated Lula who won 31% of the votes. The PT won senatorial seats and several governorships. Voting is mandatory, but over 38 million Brazilians, 36% of those eligible to vote, abstained or cast invalid ballots.

Brazil is in an economic crisis very different than the one which boosted Cardoso to prominence in 1994 when he introduced currency controls and reigned in soaring

inflation. Now, after the August collapse of Russia's currency caused a flight of capital from Brazil, its economic growth rate is heading toward flat or negative figures.

Unemployment is over 15% in some sectors and rising nationwide. The currency is estimated to be overvalued by at least 20% and it seems unavoidable given present conditions that Brazilians will experience the same plunge in living conditions which workers and the poor are now going through in Asia.

Since July, some \$30 billion has fled Brazil! To stanch the outflow of capital, Cardoso raised medium-term interest rates in September to over 40%, a temporary band-aid measure. Now with less than an overwhelming popular mandate, Cardoso is approaching a proposed \$30 billion IMF bailout "package," in other words, austerity measures, with caution.

While the PT lost its bid for the presidency, the parliamentary-reformist route does not define the boundaries of the "Left" in Brazil. The Landless Rural Workers Movement (MST) supported Lula, but maintains an independent course which includes land occupations for redistribution, outreach to urban workers, organizing

against Cardoso's privatization of state industries, support of food reappropriations in the drought-stricken Sertao, and in some sectors, classes in economic theory which includes Marx and others.

The base of PT support is among the tens of thousands of workers in the industrial belt. Despite making concessions even before the current crisis hit, they are now facing widespread layoffs and plant shutdowns within the next two months, and are also threatening direct action. The majority of Brazilians live on the margins of the economy, and for them especially, the elections and juggling of billions of dollars barely touches their lives.

The IMF and its dollars are tied in most peoples' minds to the economic hardships of the 1980s when Brazil agreed to a number of IMF strictures in order to get funds. Cardoso cannot now easily inflict more chaos on people's lives by following through on the government cutbacks and austerity the IMF expects.

## Russia and IMF summit

Reports have varied widely as to how many people marched in cities across Russia on Oct. 7 to denounce Yeltsin and the economic crisis wracking the country. While it was likely over a million, it was smaller than Communist Party organizers predicted. This is more a measure that Russians understand the CP is no more a solution than free market capitalism. (See "Russia's economic nose dive exposes roots of capitalism's global turmoil," *News & Letters*, October 1998.)

The International Monetary Fund/World Bank has put the brakes on the latest scheduled installment of a combined \$17 billion aid package, agreed to before the ruble disintegrated and the CP retook key government positions. The suspension of funds came in the context of world economic officials becoming increasingly concerned that past practices are not effective in turning around the course of the globalized capitalist "contagion."

The IMF is projecting that world capitalist economic growth will drop to 2% for this year, less than half its projection a year ago. The October summit of the IMF/WB hosted in the U.S. by Clinton threw a harsh light on the inability of these institutions to control the deep recession which is heading inexorably towards Europe and the U.S. While looking for a "coordinated" plan to halt the economic disintegration, participants each presented a different solution based on their own ills, from establishing control on the international flow of capital, to more "transparency" in financial conditions, to slashing interest rates to the bone. None of these measures have proven effective, and the spectre haunting the summit had four numbers: 1929

## Mexico commemoration

Another fissure was driven into the cracking PRI-Mexican state monolith when the Oct. 2 anniversary of the Tlatelolco Plaza massacre was declared an official day of mourning by opposition politicians and openly commemorated in Mexico City. On that day in 1968, police and soldiers fired on thousands of demonstrators who had come to the plaza to denounce the military occupation of the National University. Over 2,000 people were beaten and jailed, and an estimated 200 more were killed. Then-president Diaz Ordaz used the events surrounding Oct. 2 in a widespread campaign to repress open opposition in Mexico. The widely known truth, covered up by successive PRI governments, is beginning to be documented, and this year, six books on Tlatelolco, 1968, are to be published.

## Mass strike in Colombia



Over 700,000 public sector workers, including teachers, doctors, airport, telephone and oil workers, went out on strike in Colombia, Oct. 8. Andres Pastrana, elected as president in August, has refused to rescind austerity measures, including slashing government jobs, and has sent in police to break up demonstrations. Strikers held marches and rallies in Bogota and other cities, demanding more spending by the government on social programs and an increase in their own wages.

## Mid-East agreement

The October Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, convened under Clinton's sponsorship, were held to kick-start the nearly moribund 1993/1995 Oslo "land for peace" accords, which expire in May 1999. The right-wing nationalist Likud-Netanyahu government agreed on paper to return some 13% more of the West Bank to Arafat-Palestinian Authority control within the next three months, under condition that Arafat suppress Palestinian resistance, not limited to Hamas or Islamic Jihad. To ensure the "security" agreements, the U.S. CIA was designated as referee!

Small wonder that there is little support among Palestinians for what Arafat has brought home. The day to day hardships and insults that Palestinians have suffered with Netanyahu since 1996, especially border closings and loss of work, and the open Israeli government support of rabid religious settlers in the heart of traditional Palestinian areas, are not addressed in the "Wye Memorandum" (named after the South USA former plantation where the parties met). Instead, they are laid open to more restrictions and repression from their own "representatives".

Netanyahu was predictably opposed from the extreme religious-settler right wing of his coalition which disowned him for conceding even one inch of "Eretz Israel," despite his appointment of Ariel Sharon as Foreign Minister only days before talks opened. Sharon, most notorious for allowing Palestinian refugees in Sabra and Shatila to be slaughtered by Lebanese fascist troops in 1982, is most identifiable within Israel as the hard-line backer of settlements in occupied lands. However, his point of view is now shared by others, that land concessions do not automatically mean loss of Israeli control, as long as they are strategically handled. This control includes not only military "security" in the parceling of land, but control of the infrastructure, especially water and other basic resources for development.

Arafat is holding out his own supposed trump card, the unilateral declaration of a Palestinian state when the Oslo accords expire in May. This strategy relates primarily to Arafat's goal of maintaining control over the Palestinian Authority, which has come under increasing criticism for authoritarianism and widespread corruption under his administration.

While the vast majority of Palestinians and Israelis support reaching a peaceful agreement of mutually-agreed upon self-determination, there was a resounding lack of enthusiasm for the recently-concluded talks, compared to the original Oslo agreements. *News & Letters* will analyze the situation in more detail in upcoming issues.

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## NEWS AND LETTERS COMMITTEES

### Who We Are And What We Stand For

News and Letters Committees is an organization of Marxist-Humanists that since its birth has stood for the abolition of capitalism, both in its private property form as in the U.S., and its state property form, as it has historically appeared in state-capitalist regimes calling themselves Communist as in Russia and China. We stand for the development of new human relations, what Marx first 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 from below 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, became Chairwoman of the

National Editorial Board and National Chairwoman of the Committees from its founding to 1987. Charles Denby (1907-83), a Black production worker, author of *Indignant Heart: A Black Worker's Journal*, became editor of the paper from 1955 to 1983. Dunayevskaya's works, *Marxism and Freedom, from 1776 until Today* (1958), *Philosophy and Revolution: From Hegel to Sartre and from Marx to Mao* (1973), and *Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution* (1982) spell out the philosophic ground of Marx's Humanism internationally, as *American Civilization on Trial* concretizes it on the American scene and shows the two-way road between the U.S. and Africa.

This body of ideas challenges all those desiring freedom to transcend the limitations of post-Marx Marxism, beginning with Engels. In light of the crises of our nuclear armed world, it becomes imperative not only to reject

what is, but to reveal and further develop the revolutionary Humanist future inherent in the present. The new visions of the future which Dunayevskaya left us in her work from the 1940s to the 1980s are rooted in her discovery of Marx's Marxism in its original form as a new Humanism and in her re-creation of that philosophy for our age as Marxist-Humanism. This is recorded in the documents on microfilm and open to all under the title *The Raya Dunayevskaya Collection—Marxist-Humanism: A Half-Century of Its World Development*.

Dunayevskaya's philosophic comprehension of her creation and development of Marxist-Humanism, especially as expressed in her 1980s writings, presents the vantage point for re-creating her ideas anew. Seeking to grasp that vantage point for ourselves and make it available to all who struggle for freedom, we have published Dunayevskaya's original 1953 philosophic breakthrough and her final 1987

Presentation on the Dialectics of Organization and Philosophy in *The Philosophic Moment of Marxist-Humanism* (1989), and donated new supplementary volumes to the *Raya Dunayevskaya Collection*. News and Letters Committees aims at developing and concretizing this body of ideas for our time.

In opposing this capitalistic, racist, sexist, heterosexist, class-ridden society, we have organized ourselves into 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 copy of the *Constitution of News and Letters Committees*.