

NEWS & LETTERS

THEORY / PRACTICE

"Human power is its own end" —Karl Marx

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WORKSHOPTALKS

When unions think like capitalists

by Htun Lin

Worker actions in France have exploded since the economic meltdown. One of the latest was a protest of health workers against President Sarkozy's health "reform" law that will let managers put a cap on the level of care given to patients. Nurses demonstrating in Montparnasse on May 14 were livid.

A Black nurse, Rachida Ahloulay, told Andrew Hussey of *New Statesman*: "We are sick of being told we have no control over our own lives. It's not just that the government is giving managers the power over medical staff, but it means that we are degraded as citizens. And that is why France is on the edge of a serious rebellion. Anger is everywhere!"

This outrage is taking place in a country known for having affordable, universal health care that far surpasses the quality of care in the U.S. Yet workers' struggles to control their own work are the same everywhere. For capital, "reform" always means interfering with health care delivery by diminishing resources to accommodate capital's need to accumulate.

Ahloulay's lament reminds me of our own ongoing struggle to provide quality care. Many look to labor unions for answers, but often unions too become sucked into capitalist thinking and become nothing more than the first barrier to workers' emancipation. There is no resolution to this crisis outside of workers overcoming alienation from their own labor.

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BLACK/REVIEW

by John Alan

Racism and politics

Editor's note: As John Alan is ill, we are reprinting his column on "Racism in politics" from October 2000, which speaks to today's new reality of an African-American president.

During this presidential election year, both the Republican and the Democratic parties have claimed that they are "ethnically inclusive and diverse." The Republican Party had on the stage of its convention hall an unusual number of African Americans, and Colin Powell, a retired African-American general, opened its convention with an inspiring speech. The Democratic Party, with its large number of African-American delegates, gave Jesse Jackson prime time to extol the liberalism of the Democratic Party and denounce the conservatism of the Republican Party.

Now, what does all the apparent racial integration of those two capitalist parties actually mean for the masses of African Americans and other people of color, like Latinos? Very little. To imply that the racial and ethnic composition of a capitalist political party will resolve today's dire economic and social problems and the practices of racism is deceptive and false.

POLITICS PROTECTS CAPITALISM

It is false, because the essential reason for the existence of today's political parties is to preserve and to protect the interests of capitalism, that is, the accumulation of capital, which creates at the same time wealth and its opposite, poverty, classism and racism. U.S. capitalism has cultivated racism since its very beginnings, when the early settlers claimed lifelong slavery for those indentured servants who were Black.

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ONLINE: www.newsandletters.org

Specter of revolution stalks Iran

by Gerry Emmett

A woman is clubbed to the ground by riot police, then stands up again to berate them as they walk away. A group of young women link arms to block a street against Basij militia thugs. A lone woman raises her fist against the approaching police—a moment reminiscent of Tiananmen Square's "Tank Man." These are scenes which have been repeated countless thousands of times in the mass demonstrations following Iran's disputed June 12 election.

Tehran has seen massive outpourings, perhaps as many as three million June 15. Other cities, Isfahan, the Azeri city of Tabriz, Shiraz, and villages across Iran have also seen demonstrations and street fighting. In the wake of these demonstrations, the regime has blocked web and mobile phone services, and placed opposition political figures and journalists under arrest. Dozens

have been killed, including students pulled from their dormitories after midnight. These youth are attacked because they are in the forefront of the mass movement. In spite of all, mass unrest has reached levels not seen since the Revolution of 1979.

The claim that current president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad won re-election with 62.6% of the vote to challenger Mir Hossein Mousavi's 33.7% was thoroughly rejected. It is just as likely that the real numbers could be the reverse, considering the massive level of discontent with the regime, the unprecedented mass demonstrations that broke out in the week before the election, and the massive voter turnout, on an order that was last seen when the "reformer" Khatami was elected.

WORKERS, WOMEN, YOUTH DISPUTE VOTE

Significantly, an Iranian Labor Union association poll taken in the week before the election showed Mousavi with 52% support among workers to Ahmadinejad's 36%, with 57.3% agreeing that labor's conditions have worsened under the current administration. One Iranian worker said after the results were announced, "Almost everybody I know voted for Mousavi but Ahmadinejad is being declared the winner. The government announcement is nothing but widespread fraud."

Mousavi was hardly an ideal figure. He was a prime minister during the 1980s, an era of harsh repression of all opposition to Ayatollah Khomeini's regime. Mousavi made the decision to serve that mas-

ter, and it haunted him during the election campaign. Asked by a student at Babol University about his role during the massacre of thousands of political prisoners in 1988, he was unable to answer the question. Finally he said, "I was the head of the executive branch and not the judiciary."

Nevertheless, as one voter put it, "The fact is, there are vote counters out there who know very well exactly how we and millions of other Iranians voted. They know, and it terrifies them. If we had not participated, we would not have been able to send that message at all."

Mousavi's campaign was conceived as a way to deal with divisions among the ruling circles. It wasn't planned to go farther than that. The situation has gone much farther now.

Divisions among the rulers were exposed when Ahmadinejad attacked senior regime figures and clerics during the televised presidential debate. They were as apparent with the maneuvers by former president Ayatollah Hashemi Rafsanjani and others to support Mousavi. (It is also significant that some members of the Revolutionary Guards have refused to attack demonstrators, and there have even been reports of police arresting violent members of the Basij.)

Divisions among the rulers were exposed when Ahmadinejad attacked senior regime figures and clerics during the televised presidential debate. They were as apparent with the maneuvers by former president Ayatollah Hashemi Rafsanjani and others to support Mousavi. (It is also significant that some members of the Revolutionary Guards have refused to attack demonstrators, and there have even been reports of police arresting violent members of the Basij.)

DIVISIONS AMONG RULERS

However, there was also enough content in Mousavi's criticisms of the Ahmadinejad administration that his campaign could be said to represent an "opening," not so much to "the West" as to the Iranian people themselves. While he rightly criticized Ahmadinejad's Holocaust denial and military threats, Mousavi also said at the televised debate, "Wherever I go there is protest; wherever I go they say we have been humiliated, we have been arrested, we have been expelled from university and so on." The regime searched for itself in the people's eyes, but was horrified to see in them a vision of its ending.

Of course, the elections aren't the ultimate ground being contested. Women's determination to tear up their oppression by its root has been continuous. The Iranian Revolution of 1979 held promise of becoming the most profound social revolution since 1917. Women's liberation was a vital part of that revolutionary ferment, and a primary target of the clerical counter-revolution that came from the very innards of the revolution.

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WOMAN AS REASON Tragedy of Dr. Tiller's murder

by Terry Moon

The murder of Dr. George Tiller by an anti-abortion fanatic is a tragedy. Tiller was a courageous freedom fighter and by all accounts a kind, generous, dedicated doctor who said, "I am a woman-educated physician in every aspect of my understanding about abortion and about responsibility of women in the family, both socially and financially." His death is also a tragedy for the women he has helped who had life-threatening pregnancies, or pregnancies with fetuses so deformed that if born their lives would have been short, wracked with pain, and devastating to their parents emotionally and financially. And it is especially a tragedy for those women who will need his help in the future and have nowhere to turn, who will die because they cannot get to the two doctors left in the entire U.S. who will perform late-term abortions; or who will suffer unnecessary health consequences; or will be forced to have those deformed babies, born without brains or complete nervous systems or whatever horrendous abnormality caused the woman carrying them to resort to such a soul-wrenching and medically serious decision.

These women have been lost in the noise generated

by an anti-abortion movement so riddled with misogyny and so successful in their lies and omissions that it drowns out women's voices. Those voices have been trumped by a clump of cells, smaller than a thumbnail, which fanatics conflate with a child. That the anti-abortion movement is riddled with fanatics is seen in how none of them can hide their glee at Tiller's death, can help themselves from using Tiller's murder by one of their own to trumpet to the skies their demented belief that fetus=child, fetus trumps woman/mother, that terminating a pregnancy is the same as gunning down an unarmed George Tiller in his church.

CONTEMPTIBLE HYPOCRISY

Their mantra, as expressed by The Most Rev. Carlos A. Sevilla and scores of others, is that they have "respect for all human life, from conception to natural death." While pretending to oppose Tiller's murder, they can't help but broadcast their claim that killing him is exactly the same as an abortion. And these are the ones with whom we're supposed to find "common ground"! R. Albert Mohler, Jr., president of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, was most disgusting: Tiller's

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Part of the crowd at a silent demonstration June 17 in Tehran, Iran, for protesters and university students killed by security forces

Women's 'right to become'

Below is a talk given by a participant at the vigil for Dr. Tiller held June 5 in Chicago.

Dr. Tiller was murdered—a man who lived, breathed, loved and worked with women, so that we could have some measure of freedom. He recognized our humanity, and in that recognition demonstrated his own. He was a freedom fighter.

His murder makes it more clear to me what "life" is and how different life could be if we universalized the meaning of the work he did and the concept of humanity he practiced. The murder of Dr. Tiller is horrifying in and of itself. It is all the more so when you think about why he was murdered: to stop women from controlling our own bodies and lives. It could only happen in a society that does not see women as fully human and believes that humanity must be stopped from determining, with purpose, its own future.

The religious fanatics who killed Dr. Tiller believe that a biologically developing fetus is a human being. They love that a fetus merely exists—never mind that it is within a woman's body—because a fetus can remain god's perfect, mute creation. Women, on the other hand, live beyond mere existence, creating our lives and relationships. To the fanatics, this makes us less than the fetus and a threat to god, men and even country. Their 1991 chant, "Support our unborn troops," shows their total contempt for all of humanity.

A video shown by a Chicago feminist organization had interviews with different generations of women

who had abortions—from pre-Roe to the present. What was so disturbing is how many of the young women internalized the anti-choice rhetoric that abortion is murder and that they are selfish for having one and stupid for "getting pregnant" in the first place.

It screamed out to me that we feminists need to clarify our philosophy. If we women recognized our own humanity, our own importance and our own validity to make decisions about who we are and who we want to become and in relation to whom, then it would be impossible to think of ourselves as selfish murderers for having an abortion.

After the video showing, several women in the audience talked about the need for post-abortion counseling. My reaction is the same as when I hear pro-choicers trying to "find common ground" with the anti-choicers by focusing on "prevention" and the need to "make abortion rare." Underlying these arguments is an assumption that abortion is murder, dirty and ugly.

While some women may need post-abortion counseling, particularly the kind of women Dr. Tiller treated—those who wanted babies, and child rape and incest victims—I think our time as a movement would be better spent talking about how to conceive of ourselves as human, human beings who are in the process of becoming whole and free, individually and collectively. If we did this we wouldn't internalize the hatred the anti-choicers have for us.

Let's focus on "making rare" the idea that women are not fully human and that we should not, cannot create our own futures. Let's "reduce the number of" women who need counseling because they believe they are murderers and selfish. Let's stop talking about "prevention" in terms of "reducing abortions." Let's talk about women's liberation and the power to determine our sexuality, lives, and world. Let's talk about making the world better for ourselves and children. The murder of Dr. Tiller can help us rethink how we talk about abortion and bring back its liberatory content and broader implications: self-determination for every woman, child and man.

Speaking out about our own abortion experiences is an important way to combat women's shame and to take back the ground of the abortion debate. I had an abortion when I was 24 and I'm not sorry. I don't feel and never have felt guilty. It was not "the hardest decision" I ever made and I don't feel it should be a "deeply personal" secret. My body conceived what my mind could not. My heart is so grateful that I made the decision I did and that there was a doctor, another human being, who recognized my right to life, my right to become. Dr. Tiller was a man, a human being with a life. He had a right to life and so do we. —Sonia Bergonzi

Boston vigil for hero

Boston—The vigil here on June 1 for Dr. Tiller drew several hundred downtown. Speakers who knew Tiller told personal stories about his persistence, optimism and unwavering bravery. One NARAL organizer spoke of meeting him at a conference, where he was giving out pieces of carved glass. Some were etched with the word "courage," some said "justice." The organizer stood there trying to decide which to take, when Dr. Tiller looked at her and told her to take both, that she needed both of them. They were in her pocket now, she said.

Others told personal abortion stories. One woman spoke of her back-alley abortion in the early 1970s, of being driven blindfolded by four men to a secret location, of having to self-abort with a wire coat hanger coated in rubber, of being sick with a 105 degree fever for a week and being cared for by her roommate who was a nurse, and of being shamed by a doctor who examined her later and demanded to know what she had done to herself. Another woman related her story of having to travel all over the South for her procedure, being shuttled from one clinic to another due to lack of appropriate services in her community. She'd never told her story before to anyone except her closest friends, and received applause from the entire room.

The most common feeling that resonated throughout the vigil, though, was one of purpose. The microphone began as a place for mourning, and eventually became a place where speakers took turns making promises to the room and to the movement at large. A former anti-choice activist expressed remorse, saying that she felt guilt that anything she said or did could have contributed to Dr. Tiller's murder. She then vowed to become a clinic escort so that she could put her body between the terrorists and the doctors and patients.

Abortion providers expressed a renewed sense of purpose, and promised to continue with their work. Men vowed to listen to women, and women who had never been activists before promised to take up the banner and do their part.

We walked out of the vigil singing songs and carrying candles for Dr. Tiller, and for the pro-choice movement at large. The mood was appropriately somber, but we were left with a sense of purpose, of history, and of determination. —Robin J.

Stop the killing of abortion providers!



Her sign reads: "Keep abortion legal," and her T-Shirt says: "I had an abortion."

Chicago—We rallied in several ways after the murder of Dr. George Tiller by an anti-abortion fanatic. Close to 30 rallied and held an open discussion at a candlelight vigil for Dr. Tiller called by the local chapter of NARAL on June 5. A few days earlier, on June 1, about 80 people joined with thousands who demonstrated from California to New

York. We gathered downtown behind a banner reading, "Abortion on demand and without apology." On June 10 about 20 people counter-demonstrated against "Pro-Life Action League," who assaulted Chicago with huge blow-ups of supposedly aborted fetuses and pamphlets full of lies about abortion in general. Their glee over Dr. Tiller's murder was unambiguous.

—Reproductive justice activist

WOMENWORLDWIDE

by Mary Jo Grey

Hewad High School, a co-ed school for Afghan refugees in Rawalpindi, Pakistan, operated by the Revolutionary Association of Women of Afghanistan (RAWA), is under threat of being bombed by the Pakistani Taliban because they are co-ed. The people who live around the school asked that the school close or separate benches be made for boys and girls, because they feared such an attack. The Afghan Embassy refused to protect the school, and the Pakistani police ordered the school closed and moved within two days. The new location they found has much higher rent, and no security for refugees and poor Pakistanis. Donations to help them continue can be made online at www.sawaustralia.org

—Information from RAWA

A march of 5,000 people in May protested Joe Arpaio's reign of terror over prisoners in the Durango Jail in Phoenix, Ariz. More than 500 women prisoners there then organized and declared a hunger strike. Five days later, 400 male prisoners joined those women and together they are demanding an end to the human rights abuses, racist intimidation, wretched living conditions and mistreatment, rotten and poisonous food, and sexual misconduct by the guards. Joint action within prisons is not easy, so it is very significant that the women's hunger strike sparked solidarity from the men.

—Information from Urszula Wislanka

Rapes in the Democratic Republic of Congo have been soaring in recent months, as part of a growing tactic to use rape as a weapon of war. In Sud-Kivu, during just the last three months, there have been more rapes reported than half of the total reported in all of last year. Thousands of Congolese women marched in Kinshasa in late 2008 to protest these atrocities. Also, a survey of women in a Chad refugee camp who had fled violence in Darfur revealed at least a third had been raped by either militiamen in the Sudan, or villagers around their refugee camp.

Hundreds of students, women and men, protested sexual assault and rape at Dickinson College in Carlisle, Pa., in April. Feminists from all walks of life stormed the campus to say that sexual violence is a problem on all campuses and students are fighting back.

The Dominican Republic's National Assembly has voted to amend its constitution to say "the right to life is inviolable from conception until death." Apparently, women's lives are not included since there are no exceptions for abortions in case of rape, incest, or the endangerment of a woman's life or health. Both the doctors and women face prison sentences.

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WOMAN AS REASON

Tiller murder tragedy

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murder requires "us," Mohler said, "to make clear that violence in the womb will never be overcome by means of violence outside the womb." But the "womb" is not a disembodied battleground. The womb is part of a live human being who is still allowed—barely—to actually make a decision about her own body.

Their contemptible hypocrisy is seen in how none of these good Christians has ever done anything to protest the hate speech, the websites spewed by fanatics like Operation Rescue's "chargetiller.com," the *Prayer and Action News* that promotes murdering abortion providers as "justifiable homicide," or the hundreds of sites that give out information on abortion providers' children, doctors' home addresses and the streets they take to work and back. None of them uttered a peep of protest against Operation Rescue's head Randall Terry who, after Tiller's murder, shrilled that "George Tiller was a mass murderer, and, horrifically, he reaped what he sowed"; not a whisper against Bill O'Reilly's rants against Tiller as "executing fetuses," as "a baby killer," or that Tiller "is performing late-term abortions without defining the specific medical reasons why." This is an outright lie since the only legal reason for late-term abortions is to protect a woman's life or health.

OBAMA NOT BLAMELESS

And where is President Obama? His two-sentence utterance of "shock and outrage"—followed by not another word or action—rings hollow. Why didn't his administration send someone to Tiller's funeral? That might have meant something. The criminal non-enforcement of the Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances (FACE) Act by Obama's and every other president's Justice Department, an act forbidding the use of "force, threats of force or physical obstruction" to prevent someone from providing or receiving reproductive health services including abortion, certainly contributed to Tiller's death. His murderer vandalized another Kansas women's health clinic only a day before he gunned down Dr. Tiller. And while the clinic's manager called the FBI twice as well as the Kansas City Police Department and included the murderer's picture and license number, they did nothing.

Obama's call for "common ground" between those opposing abortion rights and those for a woman's right to control her own body, contributes to a climate where anti-abortion extremism is viewed as normal, as OK. He is wrong to put those who view a fetus's existence as being the same as, or above, a woman's life, on the same level as those who are working for women's freedom, as if both are extreme positions. There can be no common ground with fanatics, and Obama's attempt to frame the question in that manner only helps the foes of women's freedom and endangers all those who fight for or work in the area of reproductive rights.

Out of this profound tragedy has emerged a renewed commitment of those in the movement for reproductive justice to make women's freedom a reality. In the depth and breadth of the demonstrations against Tiller's murder that have swept this country from end to end, we see that beginning. In Dr. George Tiller's name and to honor his life, the struggle continues.

Capitalism restructures GM at workers' expense

Detroit—The most massive attack against the working class in the U.S. moved full speed ahead with the bankruptcy filings by General Motors and Chrysler. Under the threat of bankruptcy, the United Auto Workers, under President Ron Gettelfinger, made many concessions including reductions in pension and healthcare benefits, cutting payments to the Voluntary Employee Beneficiary Association (VEBA) that pays healthcare benefits, and a variety of workplace changes that will increase speedup and reduce relief time and days off.

This was in addition to previous concessions that included a two-tier wage scale that slashed the pay for new employees from \$27 to \$14 an hour. The most stunning concessions were a wage freeze and a no-strike provision until 2015! Not only did the union bureaucracy betray the workers by taking away their strongest negotiating weapon, it also assured a decline in the standard of living of the remaining auto workers.

At GM, at least 17,000 more workers are to be laid off under the plan with the closing of 14 plants and while 2,100 auto dealerships. What the final decisions will be will not be known until GM emerges from bankruptcy, which is expected to be in July or August.

Whatever comes out of these hearings, the damage has been done to U.S. workers. The UAW was one of the largest and strongest unions in the country. While its history of concessions has been decades in the making, nothing has been as crushing as the raft of concessions made since the meltdown of the economy. This has totally altered the world of U.S. workers, creating ominous implications for both unemployed and employed.

For the unemployed, the crisis is total. No job now, and no job in sight, often means loss of home and can extend to the dissolution of families and physical and mental illness. Newspapers, magazines, TV and the internet are increasingly full of such reports. For the employed, there is more speedup, little prospect of future improvement and mounting despair also leading to mental and physical distress.

WORKSHOPTALKS

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Recently, we heard that the California Nurses' Association (CNA) has entered into an agreement to divvy up territory with Andy Stern, the notorious SEIU head whose idea of growth is raiding other unions' membership while being a champion for capital. Andy Stern has long been a blatant sellout bureaucrat who has signed up new members in HMOs and nursing homes by making back-room sweetheart deals with management, undercutting workers' as well as patients' interests.

UNION TURF BATTLES

CNA, on the other hand, has a clear and strong track record representing healthcare workers' fundamental interests, as well as advocacy for patients' interest in quality care. The Faustian bargain with labor's enemy reveals how much a top-down attitude has also infected CNA leadership. This bureaucratic mentality sees membership as something to be managed from above. Often it's all about dues. Membership drives become nothing more than turf battles with competing unions fighting over revenue from dues check-off administered by management.

Meanwhile, Sal Rosselli of United Healthcare West (UHW) initiated a drive to "decertify" SEIU from his local, which was recently put under trusteeship, in a hostile takeover engineered by Andy Stern. They act as if we have no ability to think for ourselves, as if they own our members.

Instead of decertifying SEIU from our local, we should not even allow Stern to have any locals under his control. The question is not just what is to become of UHW, but what is to become of all our brothers and sisters under the domination of that international. That is why it is so disturbing that CNA would voluntarily cede territory and thereby condemn a whole segment of healthcare workers to Stern's dictatorial control.

Labor bureaucrats bargain over membership drives as if they were capitalists competing for market share. They buy into that role because the struggle against alienation in our workplace is not even on their map.

TEAM PLAYERS?

Where I work, local union leaders meet with members, only to admonish us to be team players in management's plan. They even lecture us to be glad just to have a job and to help the company thrive in the global market. They act as if there is no alternative, and that workers' welfare is secondary to corporate welfare.

We need to return to nurse Ahloulay's concern about having "no control over our lives." We should not focus on what happens to a particular faction among the labor bureaucracy when the real issue is ceding the power to limit healthcare.

Ahloulay's lament is a stark reminder to us all that in spite of all the highfalutin' rhetoric over universal healthcare, nothing will change the current hegemony of capital over our work lives unless we deal directly with the problem of alienation in the workplace.

At the same time, there is growing resentment and revolt. This is an historic opportunity to make truly transformative changes in society. Instead of pointing to the obvious inability of this economic system to provide even the bare necessities of life and calling for a societal reorganization to meet human needs, labor leaders capitulate to maintain existing conditions that cry out for abolition.

Those who look to the Obama administration for answers are doomed to failure. Some reforms may indeed be made, along with pronouncements of "progress," but Obama has assembled an administration to save this failed capitalist system.

Their way of thinking is totally conditioned by capitalist principles guided by the bottom line—profitability. That is the objective of the trillions of dollars being devoted to try to rescue the failed banks, financial institutions, industries and crumbling societal infrastructure. This is the kind of thinking these experts must

Steelworker protest



Workers and labor supporters demonstrate April 17 in front of Commercial Forged Products protesting racism, disrespect, arbitrary suspensions, and refusal to recognize the union president.

Chicago—In an ongoing struggle against racism and injustice at Commercial Forged Products (see "Fighting Racism at Commercial Forged," April-May 2009 *N&L*), the company promised to meet with the union to discuss racial and anti-worker issues at the plant but has not followed through on two occasions, even though we kept our promise not to have any further protest marches until we met.

We have lived up to our end, but, again, the company has not. This is the problem. The company is not taking these racial issues seriously. In fact, the company has accused the union of being racist against management.

As a result, we began planning another march to take place in July. We had a huge response from community activists, faith leaders, unions and politicians after the April 17 protest march. They were interested in our struggle for civil rights and workers' rights at Commercial Forged Products.

Unfortunately this is a minority-owned company that's attacking the rights of minority workers. How hypocritical can they be!

—Charles Gilyard

Fired but no union help

San Francisco—I have been employed at Grand Hyatt Hotel in Union Square for 33 years, mostly as a housekeeper. Last year, 23 employees were denied their seniority benefits and asked me to represent them. We won their benefits, but I lost my job.

The management didn't like me fighting for others. They took away my days off, created traps for me, like leaving \$2,000 in a room with a hidden camera. I didn't take it, so they could not use that to fire me. There was no reason for my termination, but they fired me anyway. Unite HERE Local 2 has not been there for me.

Our shop steward was not elected by us. She was appointed by union management, although she is assistant manager in the hotel. She accused me of hurting her standing as a steward when I asked that she grieve the wrongful termination. The union does not take up my case: there is no picket line, no representation.

My unemployment benefit was denied. The hotel is retaliating against my sister, too. Other workers are scared to show support for me, because they know they will be next. Is the steward union or is she management? How can she be both?

At a San Francisco Labor Council meeting on May 11, Mike Casey, Unite HERE Local 2 representative to the Council, told me not to speak about the problem with the steward. He said if I do, he will have to take action against me. He never mentioned my case, he announced another picket line for about the same time as I asked people to come in front of this hotel to support me. Recognizing a union is more important to him, as it represents more dues.

—Esther Dominguez

To see an interview with Esther Dominguez: <http://www.indybay.org/newsitems/2009/04/16/18589605.php>

practice because it is all they know, and is why they cannot solve the problems of simple human needs. That requires a totally different way of both thinking and doing.

—Andy Phillips

Roots of GM decline

Flint, Mich.—General Motors officially sought bankruptcy protection on June 1 by filing what is known as a "Chapter 11" bankruptcy petition. That means that it will emerge from bankruptcy by selling its "viable" assets to a new corporation. GM has declared that it had \$82.3 billion in assets and \$172.8 billion in liabilities. The bankruptcy court schedule requires the sale of the viable assets to the new corporation by July 10.

The new corporation will be owned 60.8% by the U.S. government, 11.7% by the Canadian government, and 17.5% by the VEBA (Voluntary Employee Beneficiary Association) trust fund set up to cover healthcare expenses of GM hourly retirees (not by the UAW as is erroneously reported), with the balance of the common stock going mostly to existing bondholders.

A VEBA establishes a trust fund to provide for life, sickness, accident and other benefits. GM will have no obligation to provide healthcare benefits for retirees beginning Jan. 1, 2010.

The VEBA trust fund is also getting \$6.5 billion in preferred stock and an IOU for \$2.5 billion. The VEBA trust fund has the right to designate a member of the GM board of directors with the consent of the UAW. However, the VEBA-designated member must vote as directed by the "Independent Directors" on the board.

Although the VEBA has no real control, this arrangement pits current workers against retirees because continued payments to the VEBA trust fund only come from the surplus value extracted from the current workers. Pension benefits are not in danger, but retiree healthcare benefits will, beginning next year, depend entirely on the health of the VEBA healthcare fund.

The presence of the government is far more of a burden than a benefit to GM workers. To get the first bailout money, GM signed a "Loan and Security Agreement" with the Bush administration last Dec. 31 that required "labor modifications" in the form of "compensation reductions" and "work rule modifications" by March 31, 2009. The agreement also provided that the loan would be canceled if there was a strike.

The Obama administration did not change those conditions. On March 30 it issued a report claiming that GM had not done enough to meet the terms of the loan agreement. Among other things, GM "legacy liabilities" (pension and retiree healthcare costs) would become a serious burden in 2013. It was under this pressure that GM forced the UAW to reopen the 2007 four-year collective bargaining agreement for further concessions.

As recently as June of 2008, the *Auto Spectator* reported that GM had improved productivity consistently over 15 years, based on "The Harbour Report North America 2008." At that time total labor hours per vehicle had been reduced to 32.29, including assembly, stamping, engine and transmission manufacturing.

The perspective governing the UAW has been that of restoring GM to viability. That may not be possible, and there is no reason to believe that the relentless attack on labor will abate when GM emerges from bankruptcy. The rate of profit for all manufacturing in the U.S. has declined for many years, despite productivity gains. More accurately, it has declined **because** of productivity gains, since an ever smaller work force has to produce more and more surplus value.

—Dan

Stella D'Oro strike

Bronx, N.Y.—The Stella D'Oro bakery workers' march on May 30, from Target on W. 225th Street up Broadway to the Stella D'Oro plant on 237th Street, was the largest to date. The Stella D'Oro strike has dragged on for nine months. The Stella D'Oro Strike Support Committee has been organizing rallies. It meets every Wednesday at 7:00 PM at the Church of the Mediator, 260 West 231st St. Although union leaders have published statements and given money in support of the strikers, they have yet to mobilize their members to show up in large numbers at these marches and rallies.

The plant owners, Brynwood Partners, and the power elite in this city know that this strike has taken on great symbolic importance. The power elite is trying to convince the unions and their members that they have no choice but to bear the brunt of the economic meltdown. This is what is happening to the auto workers, but there are examples that workers will fight back, such as at Republic Windows and Doors in Chicago.

New York City UFCW Local 1500 continues the effort to unionize the Agata & Valentina food store on the East Side. Factory takeovers by workers in Argentina, when that economy collapsed, show how powerful workers can be. If the Stella D'Oro workers win, it will be a clarion call to other workers to fight for their rights.

—Tom Siracuse

FROM THE WRITINGS OF RAYADUNAYEVSKAYA

Editor's note: This is one of a series of Political-Philosophic Letters written by Raya Dunayevskaya during and after the 1979 Iranian Revolution. They were translated into Farsi and distributed by Iranian revolutionaries. Part II appears here. Part I appeared in the April-May News & Letters. The entire essay is at www.newsandletters.org. The whole series was published in a pamphlet, *Iran: Revolution and Counter-Revolution*, and is available in the *Raya Dunayevskaya Collection*, #7219, along with the Farsi edition, #7266.

What has happened to the Iranian revolution? Has it already run its course into its opposite, counter-revolution? Or can it be saved and deepened?

June 25, 1981

II. A look back into history and forward from the present global reality

Let's begin at the beginning, at the installation of a new power that has been so characteristic in Iran from the very first time they threw out the first Shah, at the turn of the century. It is the coalition of the clergy with genuine revolutionaries in throwing out a Shah who was tied to a foreign power—Russia, in the case of the 1906-1911 Revolution. This certainly distinguishes the Iranian clergy from priests who generally align with the reigning power. But, once a democratic Constitution was created, the clergy began burdening it with the type of amendments that restored most powers to the Shah once the foreign enemy was thrown out. That didn't keep the counter-revolution in Russia, which just crushed its own revolution, from returning to Iran and crushing that one.

THE SECOND CHAPTER of that first revolution, as the second chapter of this era's 1979 Revolution, was begun by women liberationists. Indeed, in 1906 the Iranian women were the first in the world to establish a women's *anjumen* (soviet), and their main demand was for continuing with the democracy of the Majlis. Did Bani-Sadr's call for democracy mean as much? Not quite. Though he said he was for Women's Liberation, he not only kept quiet as Khomeini moved against the movement, but set up an alternative paper, *The Muslim Woman*, edited mainly by men!

With Iraq's invasion of Iran, the war naturally became his main preoccupation. But did this mean, as the Islamic Republican Party (IRP) is insinuating, that Bani-Sadr was bringing back the hated military machine, which Khomeini and the IRP had never fully dismantled? Actions speak louder than words, and the fact is that the Army didn't follow Bani-Sadr and is now speaking out against him; in a word, they showed they know how to stick to the rulers that win.

How fantastic, then, that the abysmally opportunistic Trotskyists are so anxious to be "in" that they actually fabricated a "proletarian" ground for Bani-Sadr's ouster from his Army post:

"Those workers who have returned from the war front have tended to blame Bani-Sadr for the situation in the army and for the lack of any decisive victories in the war. They are aware of Bani-Sadr's strong base of support among the hated army command." (*Intercontinental Press*, June 22, 1981)

So strong that not a single army commander came to Bani-Sadr's defense. The Trotskyists must know the truth, but just like the Tudeh, they are so busy trying to work out a way to remain "legal" that all else takes a subordinate position. All this appears in an article, "The Drive to Oust Bani-Sadr," which opposes the ouster, at least insofar as it means "repression," especially since they know very well the repression will be directed also against them, and that their paper was among the six that were immediately shut down. That isn't the only thing repression means to the clergy. Along with the thrust against the Left will no doubt come an attempt to work out a compromise with Iraq. Let us not forget that, just as soon as the mullahs saw that Bani-Sadr was not involved in the release of the hostages, they moved to do exactly that in quite capitulatory terms. And now that Bani-Sadr is not involved with the Army, they will try to work out a deal with Iraq.

As for the Fedayeen, some factions accepted "anti-imperialism" as much at face value as did the Tudeh, as if it means only anti-U.S. and not anti-Russia—which is equally imperialistic. Indeed, Russia is still hoping that the ideological void—opened up by the fact that revolutionaries have not been armed with Marx's own Humanist, **anti-vulgar-communist**, philosophy of liberation—will create room for Russia to enter the Iranian scene.

The Mujahadeen showed themselves to be most courageous and became deeply involved in the demonstrations against Bani-Sadr's ouster, but defending Bani-Sadr against Khomeini and the IRP **must not mean uncritical support**. Which is why I showed

On the 30th anniversary of the Iranian Revolution

Iran: Revolution and counter-revolution

not only how ambivalent was Bani-Sadr's conception of democracy, of workers' control of production, of women's liberation, but that it couldn't have been otherwise once Islam came first and "socialism" came "later."

THIS IS NOT THE FIRST TIME, historically speaking, that some theoreticians tried to dilute Marxism by a strange admixture with religion, be it U Nu's Buddhism or Ben-Gurion's Zionism;¹ whether it is Senghor's admixture of Christianity with Marxism which he calls African Socialism, or Polish Catholicism with a "new" socialism, or Islam's "Marxism." The truth is that the theocratic rush is for total power, single-party rule, single ideology, or rather single religion which is on an even deeper false consciousness than is bourgeois ideology. This whole concept of a single Leader with veto power and a direct line to "God" is not even in the mainstream of Sunni Muslims, but the theocracy established by Mohammed's son-in-law, Ali, 14 centuries ago.² The strange admixture of religion and Marxism has not worked before and will certainly not work now. For that matter, it didn't work when Sartre tried to dilute that new continent of thought and revolution—Marx's Humanism—with Existentialism.

We must under no circumstances leave out of sight the global conflict, for this is not a mere Iranian or even Middle East problem. Nor is it just a question of U.S. imperialism. There is another nuclear titan, Russia. And both of these fighting for a single world hegemony mean to have the last word. That is exactly what must not be permitted them. Thus, while Russia did not, with its invasion of Afghanistan, aim for the Gulf as the U.S. implied, Russia is certainly preparing itself to be at the ready for an opening into the region. The opening they would prefer is to gain power from within, and the Tudeh Party is not without successes as was shown when the commander of the so-called "Revolutionary Guards" showed his preference for that party by believing—or saying he believed—that Tudeh is a "follower of the line of the Imam."³

AS FOR U.S. IMPERIALISM, it has never given up its hunger for the oil of that region.⁴ How do you suppose it got so solid an enemy as Iraq (and at a time when Iraq certainly had not only the whole Arab world with it, but literally the whole world in its total opposition to Israel's pre-emptive, unilateral strike against its nuclear reactor) to work out with the UN-U.S. representative Kirkpatrick so mild a Resolution of condemnation of Israel that it didn't even ask for any concrete acts against Israel? I can't help but feel that the many double-crossing deals circulated in the UN now by the U.S. representative include one to arm Iraq in its war against Iran. After all, that's where U.S. imperialist sympathies lay in the first place when it couldn't help Iraq because Iran held the U.S. hostages. More important still, and of this there is no doubt, the Iranian Revolution so shook up the U.S. empire and its perspectives for the Gulf that even now, when the mullahs have turned away from revolution, the **irreversible fact** established by the Revolution, far from giving the U.S. any outpost there, is **non-alignment**. A hawk's eye is needed to follow the global conflict and not sign off the Iranian Revolution.

**By way of conclusion:
The Iranian Revolution is not yet dead**

The Iranian Revolution is the **one world factor** that not only U.S. and Western imperialism would like to bury. So would the Arab world with Saudi Arabia in the forefront; and China, which can see only Russia as Enemy Number One and is in the process of helping U.S. imperialism. Marxist revolutionaries must never forget their absolute opposition to capitalism, imperialism, the powers-that-be; and therefore must not in any way fall into the trap of burying the Iranian Revolution prematurely. The truth is that there are plenty of forces in Iran who made the revolution. There is the Kurdish insurgency, which has by no means been put down and will not go away with the ouster of Bani-Sadr. On the contrary, the truth is that the objective crisis has never been deeper and the masses have never suf-

1. See my Weekly Political Letter of Nov. 13, 1969, "Israel, Burma, Outer Mongolia and the Cold War."
2. See *Christian Science Monitor*, June 18, 1981, "Iran Races Toward Total Mullah Rule."
3. See *Merip Reports*, March-April, 1980.
4. See Marxist-Humanist Draft Perspectives for 1981-1982, *News & Letters*, August-September, 1981.

fered more than now. Let's not underestimate the great experience that the Iranian masses have had in overthrowing the Shah. That will not sink into the void that is being created by the mullahs. On the contrary, as the capitalists in Iran, especially the oil monopolies, will proceed with their drive for more production and lower wages, the class struggles will become stronger. Let us not underestimate the dissatisfaction of the peasantry that, after all the promises of agricultural reform, has yet to witness any redistribution of the land. Moreover, the economic conservatism of the mullahs is as deep as their political repression, as witness the Khomeini declaration: "I must tell you that during the previous dictatorial regimes, strikes and sit-ins pleased God. But now..." Khomeini then proceeded to say that the same phenomenon of strikes is now a manifestation that "the enemy is plotting against us."⁵ Furthermore, let us not forget that Khomeini's early opposition to the Shah was so feudalistic as even to oppose the mild so-called

"White Revolution" because he wanted no disturbance of the feudal relations on the land.

IRANIAN REVOLUTIONARIES ARE EXPERIENCED in underground activities. Iranian revolutionaries knew how not to give up their arms when the IRP first demanded it. The Women's Liberation Movement, like labor, like the national minorities, like the youth, have begun a chapter of the revolution they still mean to finish.

Put succinctly, the Iranian Revolution is not yet dead, not by a long shot. New revolutionary forces—from the proletariat to the peasantry; from the minorities, especially the Kurds, hungry for self-determination, to the Women's Liberation Movement; from revolutionary intellectuals fighting for freedom of the press to the youth who have always been the vanguard in the revolution—are bound to unfold new powers against their own ruling class and not allow it to remain only opposition to the foreign enemy. All these forces can merge into full civil war, this time armed with a philosophy of revolution that would initiate the road to a classless society on truly new humanist beginnings. The Iranian Revolution has not yet run its course. The Iranian masses have not had their last word.

Let us keep our eyes open and have our international solidarity at the ready. —Raya Dunayevskaya

Detroit, Michigan

P.S. June 28, 1981. In the three days between writing the letter above and its mimeography, the news comes that the IRP headquarters has been blown up, and included in the carnage is the death of Beheshti. No doubt the IRP will now blame Bani-Sadr, who has never indulged in any terrorist act, but whom they dared characterize as "an agent of American imperialism." In truth, however, the terror that will be unleashed will not be against American imperialism but against the Iranian Left. At the same time, the terrorist acts perpetrated by the extreme right, who consider themselves the "purest" because they insist the mullahs should not engage in politics, have been covered over. Whatever chaos results now, it will not in any way change the analysis made above, and above all the need for international solidarity with the true Iranian revolution.

5. See V.S. Naipaul's "Among Believers: An Islamic Journey," *Atlantic Monthly*, July, 1981.

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Women take the streets of Tehran, Iran, on International Women's Day, 1979, against Khomeini and for revolution's continuation.



ESSAY

Gaza drowned in silence, despair and anguish

by Raha

Gaza appears to have drowned in silence for now. It has all but vanished from the headlines. Not even Obama's speech in Cairo made mention of it. Amid the devastation and mass graves, with orphans roaming the streets for food, the Palestinians, in shock and disbelief, continue to ask: "Why?" and "How can we explain this to children?" This, they cry, was "a war of extermination."¹

The gruesome scenes and the heinous crimes of Israeli Defense Force (IDF) soldiers have begun to generate outrage within Israel. Testimonies, partially revealed and printed in *Haaretz*, confirm the accounts given by Palestinians. Not only the bulldozing of homes with live civilians inside waving white flags, but certain unspeakable and obscene acts committed by IDF troops, point to an ominous development. Here is how a *Guardian* reporter described it:

"But most disturbing of all was the graffiti they daubed on the walls... 'Arabs need 2 die,' 'Die you all,'... '1 is down, 999,999 to go,' and scrawled on an image of a gravestone the words: 'Arabs 1948-2009.'"² *Haaretz* also reports an IDF commander confessing, "The lives of Palestinians, let's say, is something very, very less important than the lives of our soldiers."³

'AT THE MIND'S LIMIT'

In Gaza the drive toward the total domination of Palestinians reached its apogee. That the "Operation Cast Lead" was militarily planned for months in advance is not a secret. What is not as well known, however, is that conceptually this was no mere military adventure but an attempt at a whole new experiment. In fact, as far back as March 2008, the Deputy Defense Minister, Matan Vilani, had warned that "The more Qassam fire intensifies and the rockets reach a longer range, they will bring upon themselves a bigger holocaust [Shoah]..."⁴

Even Shimon Peres of the Labor Party, who, in 2002, opposed the ultra-right Avigdor Lieberman for advocating collective punishment, came out in support of the assault in order "to provide a strong blow to the people of Gaza so that they would lose their appetite for shooting at Israel."⁵ It appears that a new consensus has been reached among all the ruling factions in Israel that, in the words of IDF chief of staff, Moshe Ya'alom, "The Palestinians must be made to understand in the deepest recesses of their consciousness that they are a defeated people."

Will Jews, inside and outside of Israel, permit their leaders to imitate their former tormentors? Do these rulers wish to drive down the Palestinians to the state of bare existential survival and submerged endurance? Did the "1000-year Reich" succeed at "de-subjectifying" the Jewish masses by destroying their capacity for resistance, their will to freedom? Despair and anguish appear simultaneously as different forms of the same consciousness under domination and captivity. No people know this better than the historical Jews, whether under the Romans or the Nazis.

No one has illuminated this state of despair better than Hegel. Referring to the Jews under the Roman and the Syrian Kings, he points to "despair at reality" as what brings one in touch with "a universal dimension of human existence, which they could not deny, but which nonetheless is a completely spiritless universality."⁶ Despair, therefore, signifies the active presence of a cleavage within the subject. When the subject becomes aware of this contradiction, she undergoes anguish. Anguish is present where "there is opposition to what ought to be. Anguish is precisely the element of negativity in the affirmative, meaning that within itself the affirmative is self-contradictory and wounded." (pp. 305-306) "Mind and its world are thus both alike lost and plunged in the infinite grief of that fate for which a people, the Jewish people, was held in readiness. Mind is here pressed back upon itself in the extreme of its absolute negativity."⁷ This is a demand for reconciliation, which can be "only reconciliation

with the truth."⁸ Truth here means that what is taken as objective is not something alien. "Reconciliation consequently is freedom and it is not something quiescent, rather it is activity, the movement that makes the estrangement disappear." (p. 172)

In this regard, Palestinians too have proven that they are resilient people. Their intense yearning for self-determination, even under decades of occupation, has not diminished. In this, they resemble their Jewish "brethren." However, if there was one thing that they should learn from the Jews, even if negatively, it would be: What happens after you gain a mind of your own and become independent? This is a turning point in the movement of freedom. Because getting a mind of your own is not yet the mastery over the estranged world, you will either go further, suffering new negations, or regress. Herein lies the greater tragedy of what has happened to Israel of "Exodus" from the death camps of Auschwitz, the Israel of ferocious and successful anti-



A girl in Gaza surveys the aftermath of bombardment by Israeli forces

British struggles to the Israel of today as an imperialist Goliath!

"After Gaza," there is a whole new sense of reality among the growing opposition in Israel—from all the outpouring of massive demonstrations against the war to all the Jewish human rights groups, from the Rabbis who prayed for the Palestinian children to the joint Jewish-Palestinian groups, especially the women.⁹

They dared express solidarity with Palestinians and refused to regard them as "the enemy." And they did so under the most suffocating conditions.

CONTRADICTIONS AT ISRAEL'S BIRTH

We begin directly from the period 1945-47, from the liberation of the concentration camps and the creation of masses of Jewish refugees when no country, including the U.S. and Britain, would take them in. No sooner did the refugees reach Palestine, than they had to plunge into a new struggle, this time primarily against the British imperial power, now, however, with the consciousness of self as independent. No one could deprive them of this newfound sense of liberation. The Concentration Camp, after all, was the birthplace of the idea of freedom. It was through the Ghetto uprisings, the gas chambers, a veritable life and death struggle, that the Jew as Subject was born.

This is a critical period when we see a great diversity of tendencies, both international and indigenous, whose ideas had grown roots among the masses, rise to prominence—from Socialists to agrarian Narodniki, to "proletarian" Zionists, all aspiring for a new society. Without a doubt, the idea of a non-capitalist road to socialism, whether through urban cooperatives or the village communes, *kibbutzim*, was the most prevalent.

Martin Buber, the great Jewish philosopher and proponent of "Hebrew Humanism," records in his *Paths to Utopia* a most serious dialogue among the advocates of agrarian communes. Buber makes reference to the fact that they were debating Marx's response to Russian revolutionary Vera Zasulich, to whom Marx wrote that the archaic Russian village communes could serve as ground for a socialist development. They had then traced Marx's view of the cooperatives from the 1840s to the Paris Commune of 1871. When dealing with Marx's *Critique of the Gotha Program*, they took "sides" with Marx against Ferdinand Lassalle's appeal for government aid in setting up and sustaining the cooperatives.

But they wanted to set up these communes, apparently without a revolutionary transformation of the society at large. The core of their effort was devoted to preserving the communes, creating a federation of the communes, and minimizing external influences. Marx, however, held that the Russian communes' development could not be separated from the world context or from Russian society as a whole.¹⁰ While the agrarian Israeli communalists were hard at work trying to realize their ideas, the larger context, the urban development, the political revolution taking place all around them, very nearly escaped them.

What prevailed in Palestine as a whole was not Marx but Lassalle's "practical" idea of setting up urban cooperatives and preserving them with the help of the state. It was Lassalle's views that were being serialized

and published in Socialist papers. This was the beginning of the end of *kibbutzim* as a socialist experiment. The diaspora's elite interjected themselves directly into the internal dynamics of Palestine. Congregated in Europe, under the umbrella of the Jewish Agency, composed, mainly, of religious, nationalist and Labor Socialists, they overtook the indigenous movement, even as they were recognized as the legitimate authority for bargaining by the big powers.

Here is how Raya Dunayevskaya, the founder of Marxist-Humanism, summed up the situation: "Methodologically as well as practically, the point here is that we could—and did—express the contradictions at its birth. We refused to be silent even when we most enthusiastically supported the establishment of 'a homeland for the Jews,' by pointing sharply to the fact that the land contained the presence—as a minority, it is true, but a presence, nevertheless—of the reactionary Irgun, whose leader was the terrorist, [Menachem] Begin."¹¹

Raya Dunayevskaya recalls that back in 1947, when she was in Paris and London, she met "quite a few German Jews who had escaped the Holocaust, were happy to reach Palestine, only to find conditions there—both the hostility of Arabs and of religious Zionists—unbearable. The stories they told were not only about the bombing of the King David Hotel, but Irgun terrorist acts against individual Jews who were struggling to found a socialist republic, as well as pressures exerted also against moderate Zionists—and the young left Polazionists—for attempting to work also with Arabs."¹²

THE 1948 DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

UN Resolution 181 called for the partition of Palestine, with provisions to link the two entities economically and politically. This created a tremendous backlash among all Arab states and set the stage for a civil war. No Palestinian declaration of independence ever came about. Instead Arab leaders called for the disastrous mass exodus of Arabs from the mixed areas.

The text of Israel's Declaration drafted by Ben-Gurion was a grand bargain with religious Zionists that laid the foundation for a theocratic state. The duality in the document was between full citizenship for all the inhabitants of the new state and the creation of a Hebrew Nation. More importantly, the Declaration called for the formation of a "constituent assembly" to draft a constitution. Neither the assembly nor the constitution ever came to be. It was left to the political elites whether or not to follow through on all other provisions of Resolution 181.

Nevertheless, the Labor Party remained in power for nearly three decades, until the rise of the Irgun leader, Begin, in 1977. This was a turning point in the transformation of Israel. Now Begin could rewrite the history, calling his terrorist beginnings "anti-colonial." What was a fanatical and marginal tendency was now in power, transforming their reactionary ideology into official state policy. They have pushed Israel further and further toward religious fundamentalism.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

What began as a political revolution against imperialism and contained a multifaceted social content, changed the face of the Middle East. Even Egypt's Nasser, when he was concerned with revolution against colonialism and feudal monarchy, was inspired by it. The founding of Israel ushered in the birth of a new consciousness, that of Palestinians for self-determination. What ensued was the ever deepening tension between two contending national identities.

The near total rejection by the Arab states of Jews' rights for self-determination, and the subsequent wars unleashed against Israel, not only undermined the character of the Palestinian national liberation movement, but constantly reminded the Jews that their very survival as a people was at stake. Having nearly perished under the Nazi Holocaust, they were not about to take this existential threat lightly. The preservation of the state of Israel became the unifying force that truncated the self-development of society, including the powerful trade unions and the communal settlements. On the other hand, once terrorism emerged within the Palestinian movement as an acceptable form of "resistance," it helped pave the way for the most degenerate elements within both societies to come to dominance.

For the Palestinian movement to regain its status as a truly liberatory movement, it must renounce terrorism unequivocally, and focus on what it is for, especially the day after it achieves independence. For Israel to begin regenerating itself on the path of social renewal, it must completely renounce occupation and military domination of the Palestinians. The burden on Israel is much greater, for they did come oh so close to social revolution and yet allowed themselves to degenerate into a state-capitalist country whose mode of operation is the exploitation of alienated labor, whether Jewish or Arab. They must regain their footing by recollecting the high points of their revolutionary movement for a new social revolution.

1. "The Palestinians say: 'This is a war of extermination,'" *Guardian*, 1/17/2009.

2. "Amid dust and death, a family's story speaks for the terror of war," *Guardian*, 1/19/2009.

3. "Shooting and crying," *Haaretz*, 4/28/09.

4. "Israel threatens to unleash 'holocaust' in Gaza," *Times Online*, 3/1/08.

5. "Israel wanted a humanitarian crisis," *Times Online*, 1/20/09.

6. Hegel, *Lectures on Philosophy of Religion*, Vol. III, p. 117.

7. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, p. 222.

8. Hegel, *Lectures on Philosophy of Religion*, Vol. III, p. 296.

9. See "Leading drive for peace in Middle East," *News & Letters*, Feb.-March, 2009.

10. For an extensive and in-depth discussion of this topic, see Raya Dunayevskaya, *Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution*, Chapter XII, pp. 180-188.

11. *Marxist-Humanist Writings on the Middle East*, "Down with the perpetrators of the Palestinian slaughter," 9/19/1982, p. 26.

12. *The Political-Philosophic Letters of Raya Dunayevskaya*, 1/5/82.

MARXIST-HUMANIST PERSPECTIVES FOR 2009-2010: CRISES COMPEL RETURN TO MARXISM OF MARX

When the U.S. sneezes, we here take out the Kleenex. Canada is very aware of U.S. activities/presidents. These are interesting times, the U.S. is no longer the center of the universe. I lived through the depression in the 1930s, your Hoover and then New Deal Roosevelt. We didn't come out of it until the war. I think we are very close to those times again, but with the means to organize and get the word out—not just street demonstrations, but email, facebook, and the like—I do not think the massive disaster of then will be repeated. The powers that be will see to that. For instance, here, where we have employment insurance, the number of entitlement weeks are being extended. We also have universal healthcare and I can see the U.S. is going to do something, if not similar, at least an improvement on what has been.

I disagree with your Perspectives thesis (*N&L* April-May 2009) that the crisis compels a return to Marx. Would that it were so. The war pulled us out of the 1930s, and don't ever kid yourself, a lot of lessons were learned, i.e., don't go back to soup kitchens and relief camps.

As a stop-gap measure, I sometimes think there should be a demand for a "Ten Times Society" where the top earner is paid no more than 10 times the bottom layer. That would be seen as equitable and fair, and not as scary as something totally different. In short, I am much more pessimistic than your headline "Crisis compels return to Marx."

**Canadian Correspondent
Vancouver**

Your Lead article, "Crisis compels return to Marx," (*N&L*, April-May 2009) was well and bravely put. This is a country where Marx is a four-letter

word, albeit everywhere else it is recognized that his critique of capitalism is the best there has ever been. Capitalism simply does not work, and visibly does not work. It is a corpse even Jesus could not revive. By wearing the straitjacket of capitalism, President Obama has seriously self-limited his options and has concluded in advance never to think outside the box.

Americans who want to see our future need only take a week off, go to Haiti and look around. Scary? It's a searing indictment as to where raw capitalism leads, a preview of Coming Attractions/Distractions. The people of Haiti have heard that "capitalism will save us" song and dance for 200 years. You have only to go and see for yourself.

This country is in desperate need of a strong dose of Marxist analysis. For those *N&L* readers who have trouble getting a handle on U.S. capitalism, it is well to note that when George Bush was sworn in as President, he took an oath to uphold and defend legalized slavery: the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution which prohibits "involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for a crime." Barack Obama took that same oath. So what is the difference between a capitalist and a capitalist?

One of the fascinating things so far is that the Obama administration has adopted, in part, a state capitalism (Stalinism) that Raya Dunayevskaya described and denounced for much of her life. She and her works could not be more relevant than today.

**R. Zani
Texas**

I noted with interest that you had listed, in the Perspectives for 2009-2010, a plan to "mark the 2010 centenary of the birth of Raya Dunayevskaya with

LEON DESPRES — A LIFETIME OF BATTLES FOR HUMANITY

Leon Despres was a remarkable human being—a lawyer who tried to keep those he represented "out of the courts" whenever possible to allow reasonable human relations to work out the solution needed; a legendary figure in Chicago politics, who brought wisdom along with extraordinary legal knowledge to the battles with the city's rulers for which he was famous.

The outpouring of admiration in the press for this renowned figure, when his death was reported in May, soon after he had celebrated his 101st birthday, was not only for his exceptional energy and sharpness of mind and wit right up to that day, but for the lasting impact he had on

the city of Chicago and far beyond. The countless tributes that filled pages in the papers recounted in detail the wars he waged with Mayor Richard J. Daley that were woven into the historic fabric of Chicago, describing the way Daley was driven more than once to end the battle by simply cutting off Despres' microphone. They recount the way—in the 20 years from 1955 through 1975, when he fought those wars as the 5th Ward alderman from Hyde Park, most often completely alone—that he lost more battles than he won but still succeeded in opening the door to the mayor's office to African Americans. They will note that he kept up the fight against discrimination so adamantly, even when Black aldermen tied to the Daley machine declined to stand with him, that he was called "the only Negro on the City Council."

Many an "In Memoriam" noted his marching with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and chartering a plane to take 184 others with him to participate in the 1965 Selma to Montgomery, Alabama march. Some even noted that he and his wife, Marian, were the ones asked



Leon Despres speaks at Haymarket Square.

by Leon Trotsky's supporters to take a suitcase of clothes to Trotsky because he and Natalia had literally nothing when they had been given a haven in Mexico after their exile by Stalin. What the reports do not note is that throughout his life Despres called that meeting with Trotsky his proudest moment.

Although he was far from being a "Trotskyite," like many others he vigorously supported the investigation of the infamous "Moscow Trials" by the Dewey Commission into the false charges against Trotsky.

Although all these are among the many reasons News and Letters Committees holds Leon Despres in high esteem, there was a very special relationship between them

that demands being acknowledged. It began when *N&LC* moved from Detroit to Chicago in 1984 and Raya Dunayevskaya sought his advice on how to "set up shop" in a new state. Leon Despres chose her as much as she chose him to be her legal counsel, for a relationship that continued between him and *N&LC* to the end of his long and vibrant life. It can be summed up in the way he declared, as he re-studied the *N&LC* Constitution anew over 20 years later, that it was an "amazing document in its uniqueness and continuing richness." He was there to share his advice and help, whether any legal case was involved or not, throughout all those years.

There have been many beneficiaries of the wisdom Leon Despres had achieved through a lifetime of struggles for dignity and respect. It is why Chicago headlines noted his passing by calling him the "conscience of the City." More directly, it is why *N&LC* so deeply mourns his passing and so highly honors the special relationship it was our great good fortune to have had.

Olga Domanski

READERS' VIEWS

forums and publications drawing attention to her Marxist-Humanist body of ideas as indispensable for forging the missing link between philosophy and revolution." There will certainly be an enormous number of discoveries she made about Marx, to be celebrated in that centenary. They will make clear why *N&L* has been so determined to specify the difference between the Marxism of Marx and what "post-Marx Marxism" has passed off as "Marxism"—beginning, as Dunayevskaya insisted, with Engels himself. I look forward to the forums I trust you will make sure to let your readers know about throughout the year ahead.

**Marxist-Humanist
Philadelphia**

GREEN COLLAR ECONOMY

In his review of Van Jones' *The Green Collar Economy* in the April-May issue of *N&L*, D. Cheneville really captures the tragic silliness of thinking capitalism is the solution to the problems it creates. Jones seems to advocate the tactic of using capitalism before it uses you as expressed by Oakland hip hop artist DNok at a Silence the Violence forum earlier this year. The missed point is that someone will get used.

These brothers are serious about taking matters into their own hands and immersing themselves in the project of street-smart self-determination.

But when capitalism is the methodology there is a dangerously thin line between "Be the change you want to see" and "Stop me before I kill again."

**Reader
Oakland**

SNOWBALLING LABOR MOVEMENTS

In order to get California Senator Dianne Feinstein's attention so that she will act to support the Employee Free Choice Act (card check-off and other rights), a group of workers, some from the San Francisco Labor Council, and some religious groups, held a two-day hunger strike at a high profile corner in San Francisco starting June 3. We heard stories of harassment, firings, free speech violations, and intimidation. Hotel and restaurant workers had especially harsh experiences to tell of. The hunger strike ended early, as people from Feinstein's office finally agreed to talk to the union supporters, though whether Senator Feinstein will move on the measure is not yet certain.

No more than 30 yards away, there was another action at the same time by Wells Fargo contract workers, who leafleted and talked to people in front of the bank's Main Branch. The movement for unions is snowballing in the San Francisco area and elsewhere in California. Spirits are high. Workers have been pushed down for years and it is time to turn that around.

**Union Supporter
San Francisco**

In downtown Los Angeles members of Carpenters Local 1506 are holding a large banner daily, reading "Labor Dispute! Shame on Hagens Berman." Their flyer explains that Hagens Berman Sobol Shapiro LLP, through general contractor Hansji Urban, Inc., hired nonunion subcontractor N U Enterprise to work on a Hagens Berman office project in Phoenix. By hiring N U the area's labor standards (wages and benefits) were not met. The flyer cited a Sept. 3, 2008, Judgment and Order, where the California Attorney General forced the owner of N U Enterprise to pay over \$1.6 million for cheating workers out of wages and benefits.

The union asks supporters to call

Steve Berman, at (206) 623-7292, to see that area labor standards are met on any projects they are involved in.

**Labor activist
Los Angeles**

ADDING UP THE UNEMPLOYED

We read that we need to create at least 24 million new jobs in the U.S. At present, 12.5 million workers are "officially" unemployed, 10.5 million are underemployed with sub-livable wages, and at least 4 million have given up looking and are not even counted in the statistics. That adds up to 27 million workers (16.7%) and the numbers are rising daily. President Obama's solution to stimulate the economy by creating or saving 3 million jobs is a non-solution.

As Raya Dunayevskaya stated in her 1986 article on "Capitalist Production/Alienated Labor" (printed in the Oct.-Nov. 2008 *N&L*), under capitalism more and more capital is invested in dead labor (machines) and less and less in alienated human labor. The capitalists try to raise the resulting lower rate of profit by lowering wages but they are creating no jobs or products. This cycle is what has now reached meltdown.

**Reader
Los Angeles**

LEBANON'S ELECTIONS

Parliamentary elections in Lebanon ended with the governing March 14 coalition returning with a slightly increased majority of 71 seats, as compared to 57 for the rival March 8 coalition made up of Hezbollah and its allies. The results are a repudiation of Hezbollah's attacks of May 7, 2008, upon opposing political factions, which raised the specter of renewed civil war. The group's weapons, which it claims are purely for defense against Israel, were seen to be directed closer to home.

While significant as a rejection of violence, the results leave many questions open. The mandate of the Doha Conference, which gave a one-third veto power to Hezbollah and its allies, has expired and it remains to be seen whether there will be pressure to reinstate that one fruit of the May 7 attacks. The people of Lebanon have no desire to fight another war with Israel, and even less another civil war.

**Observer
Chicago**

One analyst said, "Lebanon's voters gave the White House the victory it wanted—with a lot of help from Hezbollah." I wonder, was it Obama's Cairo speech beseeching "moderation" and "pragmatism"? Or was it the millions in campaign funds bankrolled by Saudi Arabia for a fellow Sunni candidate in Lebanon? Whatever the case, it seems the Arab extremists are put in their place. If only something similar were also to happen in Israel to put Netanyahu in his place.

**Another analyst
California**

TEACHERS FOR STRIKERS

A welcome sight at the rally for the striking Stella D'Oro workers were numerous supporters from teachers' unions, both urban and suburban. Everywhere school systems are holding teachers "accountable" for student performance on standardized tests. At the same time, teachers are laid off, which increases class size and means that more and more teachers have to teach outside their subject areas. And almost unrecognized is the effect of cuts in other school staff—the unsung heroes of education. When a district cuts counselors, aides

to special education teachers, custodians and "lunch ladies," students are deprived of that many more caring adults, with those left to do the job stressed to the max. Those who came out to support the Stella D'Oro workers recognized that workplace abuses hurt the entire community, whether it is a school or a factory that previously provided decent jobs for their students' parents.

Susan Van Gelder
New York

**THE IRANIAN REVOLUTION
30 YEARS LATER**

The article by Raya Dunayevskaya in her "From the Archives" column (April-May 2009 *N&L*) was written almost 30 years ago on the process in which Bani-Sadr was driven out of power despite having won 75% of the people's vote. Now, people are using Mir Hossein Mousavi's campaign to wage their struggle and voice their aspiration for full-fledged freedom. What is important to remember is that Freedom is not just a philosophic concept but a real human need that people are fighting for. Are Marxists listening to this voice for freedom, or are they caught in the election analysis and shy to act because Ahmadinejad is spewing "anti-imperialist" rhetoric?

Mansour
Los Angeles

**REMEMBERING RICHARD PEGUE :
MOVEMENT DJ AND SONGWRITER**

Chicago disc jockey and songwriter Richard Pegue died March 3 after suffering a fatal heart attack at the age of 65.

Pegue began his music career at Hirsch High School on the South Side of Chicago, where he graduated in 1961. At the time, he was a member of a doo-wop group and they recorded a single on the legendary Chess records. Pegue later earned his degree in broadcasting at Columbia College and went on to write a tune called "I'm Not Ready To Settle Down" for Little Ben and the Cheers.

Pegue started his career as a guest dj on WVON in 1968 and became pro-

gram director at various stations including WVON, WGCI FM and AM, WOPA, WJPC. In 1969 he began his regular dusty (oldies) program featuring mostly rhythm and blues, jazz, blues and a little taste of gospel.

In 1969 Pegue wrote a political Black power movement song, "Nobody Gonna Turn Us Round," released when Chicago Black Panther activists Fred Hampton and Mark Clark were assassinated. At the time the tune was heavily exposed on WVON and WGRT.

At the time of his passing, Pegue wrote columns for the local *StreetWise* newspaper and a Chicago South Side publication *The Crusader*.

Darrell G.
Chicago

ELECTIONS IN INDIA

We have just finished the general elections in India. Everything was absolutely paralyzed for nearly one month. There is a very strong Maoist group who were against the elections and spread that "whoever goes to vote, his/her height will be diminished" (= they will cut their heads off). Therefore, many people, especially indigenous, did not vote. The Maoists are very violent and we have continuous strikes, during which offices and schools, transport and shops are closed out of fear. And they are increasing their power. Actually, there is a "corridor" from Nepal to Sri Lanka. You can never know who are the members of these groups. The party of Sonia Gandhi that won the elections is much better than BJP, which won the elections in our area and wants to make all India Hindu.

Pilar
Jharkhand, India

CORRECTION

Our thanks to readers who pointed out that the article on the "Death of John Karnei" misspelled his name in the headline. We also put the wrong date for the day of his death. It was Jan. 5. We regret the errors which we corrected immediately on www.newsandletters.org.

VOICES FROM THE INSIDE OUT

In reading through the perspectives theses over the past 11 years, I often thought there was a bit of overkill with regard to what was shared. All the theory was discussed in relation to world events, but it often seemed unwieldy to read, and as a result, to really understand unless you were an insider to N&LC.

One of the things that I really appreciated in this year's perspectives was a simple definition that "The most urgent of our tasks this year is the culmination of all our work...in projection and development of new relationships as membership growth to help in carrying out our tasks on the pathway to revolution and the establishment of a new, truly human world." That goal creates a compelling and poignant argument for the changes that N&LC have gone through over the past several years, so that the organization could be a truly inclusive entity.

This year's perspectives thesis is perhaps more universally informative about capitalist world affairs than any in the past. What I appreciate is that there is no boilerplate "okay we need to blindly return to Marxist thought to solve all the world's ills," but rather, a question of "what kind of return would best serve the changing dynamics of today's world."

One of the ironies of trying to discuss Marxist-Humanism with people was educating them first that Marxism was not Communism, a theory that even well-educated persons tended to hold onto. It was confounding and stodgy for one who was not well versed in Hegel, Marx, or others.

This year N&LC got it right, and the responses that I got back from several who have read the perspectives has been one of complete understanding. What most—me included—like is that Obama is not getting a free pass. Despite his significance as a history-making individual, there is a sense that the convoluted policies of this nation, and capitalism in

general, may transcend the power of one man to change, even with the resources of the West behind him, simply because, despite his heritage, he still represents the largest capitalist enterprise in the world.

Another aspect of the perspectives that I particularly appreciated was the concept of needing to build upon Raya's ideas rather than trying to egotistically rewrite the doctrine. I like the direction of applying her thoughts to the concept of living today, instead of trying to reinvent the wheel; of attaching our cart to the wheels of change already put into motion by Raya. It allows people to climb aboard and ride to true change through a viable and conducive revolutionary dialogue that takes their opinions, ideas, and differences into account.

The need for *N&L*, as not only a news source but as a vehicle to publish the perspectives, is witnessed by its ability to share Marxist-Humanist dialogue with persons who do not have access to the internet or to the treatises discussed within the publication.

One thing I would like to see sometime in the future is to have new ideas come online to further Raya's goals for a new generation of thinkers to build upon her thoughts and storm the barricades of fundamentalist capitalism, racism, gender and class struggles. How would the rank and file—the average person on the streets—evaluate Raya's thoughts as they understand them?

There is always room for change and improvement and it will be interesting to watch how the new stewardship of N&LC moves forward to ensure that the perspectives, ideas, and goals are met and exceeded. For the first time since the late 1990s, reading *News & Letters* and thinking about the goals of N&LC is exciting again...and that is what change (real change) should be about.

Robert Taliaferro
Wisconsin



SELECTED PUBLICATIONS FROM NEWS & LETTERS

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by RAYA DUNAYEVSKAYA

- Philosophy and Revolution: from Hegel to Sartre and from Marx to Mao** 30th Anniversary edition, 2003.....\$24.95
- Marxism and Freedom: from 1776 until Today** 2000 edition. Foreword by Joel Kovel.....\$24.95
- Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution** 1991 edition. Author's new introduction. Foreword by Adrienne Rich.....\$24.95
- Women's Liberation and the Dialectics of Revolution: Reaching for the Future**\$14.95
- The Power of Negativity: Selected Writings on the Dialectic in Hegel and Marx**\$24.95
- 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** Includes Afterword by Raya Dunayevskaya.....\$14.95

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

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- American Civilization on Trial: Black Masses as Vanguard.** by Raya Dunayevskaya, 40th anniversary edition
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- News and Letters Committees Constitution**.....44 ¢ postage
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- Guides to Collection and Supplement to the Raya Dunayevskaya Collection: Marxist-Humanism: A Half Century of Its World Development** Full description of 15,000-page microfilm collection.....\$4.50
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Slow success story at At-Tuwani, Palestine

Editor's note: Human rights worker Ceylon Mooney spent this past winter with Christian Peacemaker Teams in the village of At-Tuwani in the South Hebron Hills. It was his fourth trip to Palestine to support Palestinian nonviolent resistance to the Israeli occupation.

At-Tuwani—Typically I wake up at 6:30 am to watch the Israeli army escort Palestinian children on their way to school. After breakfast, I accompany local Palestinian shepherds as they take their sheep and goats out to graze, just as their fathers, grandfathers and ancestors have done for generations. If it weren't for the constant roar of the F-16's overhead, I might forget why I'm here and soak up the austere beauty of this dry area's thorny brush, rolling hills and seemingly endless blue sky.

RESISTING SETTLEMENT EXPANSION

Many At-Tuwani families have been here for hundreds, if not thousands, of years; others arrived during the creation of Israel in 1947-1949, a time known to the native Palestinians as "al Nakba," the catastrophe. Israel's colonization of this land continues to this day. There are more than 200 Jewish-only colonies (called "settlements") throughout the West Bank, most of them built well after the 1949 armistice. Everywhere I see new construction and settlement expansion. In 1981 Israel created the Ma'on settlement on land belonging to At-Tuwani families. In 1997, the Israeli army forcibly removed many residents of two nearby villages to build the Havat Ma'on colony. Many have returned and now refuse to leave.

The steadfastness of Palestinians to maintain what lands they still possess is part of an ongoing campaign of nonviolent resistance. Israeli and international peace activists assist this struggle. In 2004 villagers in the area I am working in invited the Christian Peacemaker Teams and Operation Dove to witness and support their nonviolent struggle.

The internationals' job is to accompany farmers and shepherds accessing their lands. Because of frequent settler attacks on schoolchildren, we were also invited to accompany the kids on their way to school. Settlers attacked the international peace activists, hospitalizing two groups in September and October 2004. Because internationals were injured, the everyday violence used against Palestinians was suddenly visible, and the Israeli government ordered the army and the police to escort the children to school. Now we monitor the army escort.

I see that the native Palestinians in this area are winning. In 1997, when the villages here were cleared out, many families moved to nearby Yatta. Now families are moving back and fields that have not been plowed in years are being plowed; shepherds are grazing their

Free Efrén Paredes!

Efrén Paredes, age 15, was wrongfully convicted of murder and sentenced to three life terms without parole. As a youth, who needed time to mourn the murder of a good friend and mentor, he scrambled to defend himself in a system completely foreign to him.

Efrén was convicted 20 years ago by testimony from five youths, four of whom admitted complicity and are presently free, while Efrén, who refused to confess and maintains his innocence, remains locked up.

The Michigan Parole Board granted Efrén a hearing in December 2008. More than 100 people came to support him. They gave compelling testimony that he is a thoroughly competent person who would contribute more to society if free. He assists other prisoners with their cases and helps ease their depression; he transcribes books into Braille and is writing a book of his own. He organizes too, for example, a cancer walk among the prisoners raising more than \$1200. He is active in the End Latino Youth Violence Initiative.

But Efrén's major organizing work is to educate regarding the extraordinary U.S. practice of condemning children to die in prison. The U.S. is the only nation that admits to sentencing 12- to 17-year-olds to life without parole. There are 2,570 such people in the U.S. and only seven known cases outside it.

One can predict the statistics that accompany juvenile life without parole (JLWOP): in two states, Michigan and Pennsylvania, where the youth population is 8% African-American, the ratio is 20 minority to one white. One child was only 12 years old when sentenced.

About half of those serving JLWOP did not kill, but were accessories to murder with adult co-defendants. For 59% this was their first offense. Sixteen percent were 15 or younger when sentenced.

False confession, inept investigation and official misconduct resulted in a segment of the JLWOP population completely innocent of the crimes they were sentenced for. Efrén Paredes is a prime example. To learn about his case go to www.4efren.com.

The Illinois Coalition for the Fair Sentencing of Children has produced a factual pamphlet at <http://www.law.northwestern.edu/cfjc/jlwop/>. Also, the Pendulum Foundation is a good source of information. A map at <http://www.endjlwop.org/stats-by-state> shows that whether children receive JLWOP depends on which state they live in. And <http://www.ricohomasrico.blogspot.com/> is a blog that has several entries both on JLWOP and Efrén Paredes' case.

—January

sheep on lands that, until recently, they hadn't been able to access. Slowly, there is a success story in the works.

Israel, the U.S. and too many other countries expect the Palestinians to accept whatever violence is imposed upon them without a reaction, much less a violent reaction. This is absurd. In the face of such loss of land, livelihood, life and lifestyle, how could one not expect a reaction? If we expect Israel to react to the killing of 28 Israelis since 2001 by Palestinian rockets and mortars, how can we not expect Palestinians to react to the killing of 1,300 mostly civilian Gazans—over 300 of them children? Didn't these people have families, too? Don't Palestinian mothers and fathers love their children like Israeli parents do?

NONVIOLENT RESISTANCE FLOURISHES

The international community cannot continue to ignore common sense, and people in the U.S. cannot afford to bankroll a conflict that is destroying both societies. We cannot ignore a legitimate struggle for sovereignty and self-determination of a native people who insist on living their own lives on their own homelands. Our eyes are open to gun-wielding militiamen, but not to the bigger picture, not to the rest of the story. I have been all over Palestine, and I see this struggle every day. With the coming of much-needed rain, I look around and see that nonviolent resistance, like the land here, is fertile.

Third World warriors

Berkeley, Cal.—Recently the freedom movement lost two champions of ethnic diversity and social justice. On March 15 Richard Aoki succumbed to numerous ailments. On May 26 Ronald Takaki took his own life after a 15-year struggle with multiple sclerosis. Both were 70 years old and both were Sansei (third generation Japanese American). Takaki was born and raised in Hawaii, Aoki in the East Bay. Aoki and his family spent World War II in an internment camp at Topaz, Utah.

Takaki, after teaching Black History at UCLA, came to University of California at Berkeley (UCB), where he developed the first ethnic studies doctoral program in the U.S. The UCB Ethnic Studies Department grew out of the 1969 Third World Liberation Front (TWLF) strike of which Richard Aoki was a key organizer.

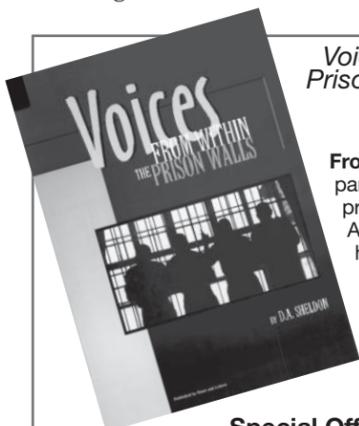
In 1966 Aoki arrived at UCB fresh from Merritt Community College, where he had helped found the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense with Huey Newton and Bobby Seale. He didn't run with them in his childhood but he grew up in the same West and North Oakland neighborhoods. He balked at joining the Panthers until Newton told him, "As far as I'm concerned, you Black."

Aoki became a founding member of the Asian American Political Alliance, which worked with Black, Latino and Native American groups to organize a massive student strike demanding an autonomous Third World College at UCB. A veteran of the strike recalled it was Aoki who came up with the idea of solidarizing with unionized workers on campus. Many had kids in college. When they refused to cross picket lines, the campus was shut down for the first time in history. It took another first to open it back up: then-Governor Ronald Reagan calling out the National Guard.

After a record 90 days of bloody confrontation with authorities and millions of dollars in damage, the strikers settled for an ethnic studies department. While that was regarded as something of a compromise in 1969, today the diversity in both the student body and curricula attests to the historic import of the TWLF strike.

Perhaps that's why years ago Richard Aoki said to me, "I got one word for you: program." If by program he meant concretized ideas that enrich the meaning of being human, I take his word as wise counsel. I'm reminded of a televised debate in which Ron Takaki defended UCB's policy of requiring undergraduates to pass a course on the contributions of ethnic minorities. When his opponent expressed concern that academic standards were being lowered, Takaki replied, "Who's lowering standards? I'm talking about raising them."

—David M'Otto



Voices From Within the Prison Walls

by D.A. Sheldon

From the Introduction: "This pamphlet is written by a prisoner who experienced America's hell-holes first hand. Out of a three-year process of discussion with other prisoners came the wealth of factual and human material found in this pamphlet."

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Fighting her family's eviction



Berkeley, Cal.—Tosha Alberta (right) fights to prevent the police from evicting her and her children. She said, "We are going to stop the violence. We had the first action last Thursday, which was successful in keeping the police from evicting me. We are fighting to stay here. This home is all we know. We made a proposal to the bank and we are waiting to hear from them. The federal government is giving money to the banks, but the banks are not changing their behavior."

BLACK/REVIEW

continued from p. 1

Thus, racism has long played a role in U.S. politics, and at times that role has been crucial in determining the direction of U.S. history. We need not go very far back in history to find the connection between U.S. politics and racism. Many contentious social issues, such as welfare "reform," building larger and tougher prisons, mandatory minimum prison sentences, "three strikes" laws, prosecuting youth as adults and putting them in adult prisons (see "Efrén Paredes update," this page), and the extension of the death penalty to more offenses are all motivated by an ideology of racism.

Beginning with President Ronald Reagan, every administration, including the administration of William Jefferson Clinton, has acted politically to roll back the gains of the Civil Rights Movement and to destroy the very idea of such a movement. Clinton, the "New Democrat," attempted only morally to separate himself from reactionaries like Reagan and Bush.

Clinton went to an African-American church in Memphis, Tenn., to tell African-American religious leaders that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., would not like the way African-American youth were killing each other and having babies out of wedlock. 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 neighborhoods and the communities."

We know this kind of political evangelism is a sham. What African-American youth got during the eight years of Clinton's administration was welfare "reform," new prisons and longer prison terms. According to recent reports there are over two million Americans in federal and state prisons and local jails in this country. More than half are African-American men and women. Thus, one out of every 35 African Americans is behind bars, representing the racial segregation of capitalism's permanently unemployed Black so-called underclass.

AN UNFINISHED REVOLUTION

The post-Civil Rights Movement era is an ongoing era of an unfinished revolution. The social conditions created by racism and poverty are still deep in this American civilization. In 1963 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., stood at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., and addressed one quarter of a million people. He told them that, 100 years after Lincoln had signed the Emancipation Proclamation, African Americans were still not free. He said, "The Negro is still badly crippled by the manacles of segregation and chains of discrimination, [he still lives] on a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity."

Martin Luther King III recently stood on the same spot and said, "The day my father had dreamed about has not yet been realized." Clearly, African-American freedom cannot be gained through bourgeois politics. A new wave of struggle will have to break through this barrier, not by avoiding politics, but by transcending political alienation through full confidence in the masses' own social power. New leaders cannot be mere politicians, but have to enhance this social power and help it coalesce with others in the fight against globalized capital. Only through this social power can we reach a humanism that transcends capitalism and the racism it continually re-creates.

EDITORIAL Questions on Sotomayor

The Republican and right-wing hysterical attacks on President Obama's nomination of Sonia Sotomayor reveal not only how much is at stake with a seat on the U.S. Supreme Court, but how afraid they are of a judge who identifies as a woman of color. They have latched onto and condemned Sotomayor's comments given in a talk to college students: "I would hope a wise Latina woman with the richness of her experience would more often than not reach a better conclusion than a white male who hasn't lived that life." In that talk, she did nothing more than express a very simple truth: "Whether born from experience or inherent physiological or cultural differences...our gender and national origins may and will make a difference in our judging."

While there is precious little in Sotomayor's judgment history for Republicans and the Right to grab onto in their attempt to paint her as a "racist," as both Newt Gingrich and Rush Limbaugh charged, that has not stopped the rabid attacks, like Colorado former Rep. Tom Tancredo comparing her service with the civil rights organization, the National Council of La Raza, to working with a "Latino KKK without the hoods and nooses." That they ignore her 16 years of documented decisions and zero in on one speech to attack reveals the truth of her statement.

What is also painfully true—especially to those who want a better world—is that the Republicans took every opportunity to ram through the most ideologically tainted anti-labor, anti-environment, anti-abortion ideologues they could find: John Roberts, Antonin Scalia, Anthony Kennedy, Clarence Thomas, and Samuel Alito. Their destructive rulings have wallowed in "personal feelings and political preferences." So outrageously ideological were they in their ruling outlawing DX abortions, that Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg read her dissent from the bench, revealing just how completely their "inherent physiological or cultural differences" prejudiced their decision.

REPUBLICANS REVEAL CULTURAL BIAS

Despite both Alito's and Roberts's claims that they respect judicial precedent, Ginsburg said their decision overrode the clear precedent that anti-abortion laws must contain exceptions for pregnancies which endanger women's lives or health. The decision, she pointed out, wallows in anti-abortion ideology as it "invokes an anti-abortion shibboleth": they lied that women who

LGBT fight against discrimination

Memphis—On June 1, the struggle of Memphis and Shelby County LGBT activists and their allies to protect LGBT citizens from discrimination came to a head. The Shelby County Commission took up an ordinance which banned discrimination against people on the basis of their sexual orientation and gender identity in employment and access to services for employees of Shelby County, their contractors, and private business owners in the unincorporated areas of Shelby County.

This measure was incomplete, as most private businesses in Shelby County would have remained free to discriminate against LGBT people. However, even this incomplete measure was met with extreme opposition by some local Christian groups. Fortunately, more than four times as many supporters of the ordinance attended the June 1 meeting of the County Commission. But the County Commission refused to hear the majority's call for justice and fairness in Shelby County.

Rather than passing the ordinance, which would have had the force of law in Shelby County, the Commission passed an extremely watered down resolution, which did not specifically mention sexual orientation or gender identity as protected categories, but suggests that employment decisions should not be made on the basis of "non-merit factors." The resolution cannot be legally enforced and is only applicable to Shelby County Government.

In spite of the pathetic state of the final resolution, four of the 13 County Commissioners voted against it, citing religious conflicts. Local LGBT activists view the passage of the resolution as a partial and initial victory, but it is clear to all parties that the road to protecting Shelby County's LGBT citizens from discrimination is long and progress on it will be hard-fought. Some LGBT activists are calling for the resignation of Commissioners who cited religious opposition to the resolution and ordinance, since Shelby County is not supposed to be a theocracy. —Amy

have abortions "regret their choices," and suffer from "severe depression and loss of esteem." She excoriated the justices who throughout "the opinion refer to obstetrician-gynecologists and surgeons who perform abortions not by the titles of their medical specialties, but by the pejorative label, 'abortion doctor.' A fetus is described as an 'unborn child,' and as a 'baby'...and the reasoned medical judgments of highly trained doctors dismissed as 'preferences' motivated by 'mere convenience.'"

Republican Senate leader Mitch McConnell revealed clearly their sickening hypocrisy: "We will thoroughly examine her record to ensure she understands that the role of a jurist in our democracy is to apply the law evenhandedly, despite their own feelings or personal or political preferences."

Considering the stacking of the Supreme Court by George W. Bush with two right-wing ideologues who are anti-abortion to the extreme when he had no real mandate from the electorate, why did Obama, who has an overwhelming mandate for change—which most certainly includes changing the anti-abortion leaning of the Supreme Court—nominate someone whose

views on abortion rights are said to be unknown?

ABORTION VIEWS UNKNOWN?

Reportedly before making a decision on whom to nominate, Obama had a 60- to 70-page memorandum on each candidate. According to an aide, "There were five things that were on his mind: age, experience, independence, confidence and diversity." It is indefensible that his list did not include keeping abortion legal. Just as outrageous is the report that he has not asked Sotomayor her views on abortion or even the right to privacy upon which *Roe v. Wade* is based. Are we to believe nothing in those 60-plus pages gave a hint of Sotomayor's views on women's right to control their own bodies?

Well, there are a few hints: in 2002 she wrote an opinion on a case upholding the Bush administration's Global Gag Rule, the policy of withholding aid from international groups that provide, or even discuss, abortion—a rule directly responsible for the deaths of thousands of women. Another danger sign, from 2007, is not in the actual opinion she expressed but the language she used. In criticizing the position that women's husbands could not seek asylum because of China's abortion policy, she compared "the termination of a wanted pregnancy...as akin, no doubt, to the killing of a child." With this background, as scanty as it is, it is inexcusable for the National Organization for Women to be cheering her nomination simply because she's a woman. Have they learned nothing from the ill-considered support for Clarence Thomas because he is Black?

The nomination of Sotomayor is an opportunistic appeal from Obama to the growing Latino/a demographic. It also appears that Obama is so anxious to find "common ground" with anti-abortionists (see "Tragedy of Dr. Tiller's murder," page 1) and to damp down the debate, that he was anxious to find a candidate whose views on abortion were unknown. Both facts may make it easier for Judge Sotomayor to be the one to replace Justice David Souter, but Obama's pragmatism comes at the cost of playing with the future and lives of women.



2007 demonstration after a Supreme Court decision

SEIU shafts home healthcare workers

Seattle, Wash.—Those of us who work at home in Washington state caring for a relative with special needs are being forced to change who we work for or lose our jobs.

We are paid for a certain amount of hours per month to keep our special needs family member in our home and care for them. This is paid through the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS). We also get health insurance. Most of us are employed by a Home Care agency.

Substitute House Bill (SHB) 2361, which recently passed, is forcing us to become Individual Providers, contracted with the Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD). This means we can no longer be employed by a Home Care agency and are required to join the Service Employees International Union (SEIU).

DDD pays \$2.50 less an hour than what we currently make. For most of us with over 250 caregiving hours, that is a loss of over \$500 per month. We are also required to give up our current health insurance plan and use the one the union offers. This plan is inferior to our current one. We will have to put out extra money for what the new policy does not cover. Add to that the union dues we have to pay, and most families are losing well over \$500 per month.

The other option is to give up our jobs and hire a stranger to take care of our family member. No one should have to make that choice. I resent being forced to join the union when it means lower pay and bad health insurance. The agencies are fighting to change SHB 2361, as they stand to lose over half their employees.

The state is trying to save money on the backs of people who need it to take care of themselves and be able to care for their family member with special needs. Many people with a disabled family member in the house can't work full time because of constant clinic appointments and the in-home care their relatives need. This is going to really hurt us. Some will have to put their family member in a nursing home or some other facility because of the loss of pay to take care of them. This program was originally designed to keep that from happening.

What kind of a union requires its incoming members to take a pay cut? The union is just a smoke screen for these cuts. Why doesn't DDD pay at least the same as the Home Care agencies?

—Suzanne Rose

QUEERNOTES

by Elise

International human rights groups call on Honduras to actively protect LGBT people by repealing its law that is supposed to protect "public morality." They want Honduras to enact laws prohibiting all forms of discrimination, including discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender expression. Violence against Transgender people is particularly rampant, with many incidents often perpetrated by police and never investigated nor prosecuted. While similar "public morality" laws exist in Guatemala, some Mexican states and Argentinian provinces, they have been struck down in Colombia and some other Latin American nations.

* * *

As the 40th anniversary of the Stonewall Uprising, which sparked the U.S. LGBT rights movement, approaches, the U.S. House of Representatives passed the Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act. Under this act, sexual orientation, gender identity, as well as disability, would be protected categories along with race, ethnicity and religion. Hopefully, the Senate will vote on the legislation before their summer session ends.

* * *

Even though U.S. President Barack Obama declared June Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Pride Month, it remains to be seen how much the President will actually do for the LGBT community. Obama's chief military adviser, Admiral Michael Mullen, said that if Congress repeals the Don't Ask Don't Tell policy (DADT)—which keeps Gays and Lesbians from serving openly in the military—the Pentagon will conform. The President, however, has taken no steps toward its repeal. In fact, Obama's administration successfully asked the Supreme Court to not hear challenges to DADT and the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA). Repeal of DADT and DOMA was one of his campaign promises.

* * *

From California to New York, there have been protests against the California Supreme Court's upholding of Proposition 8, the ballot measure defining marriage as only between a man and a woman. The 18,000 same-sex couples married prior to Proposition Hate's passage, however, remain legally married. In New Hampshire, same-sex marriage was legalized. Nevada's domestic partnership bill was passed by its Assembly, overriding Governor Gibbons' veto.

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Specter of revolution stalks Iran's theocratic rulers

continued from p. 1

Women protesting today, asserting their drive to freedom in the most practical ways, are giving their answer to 30 years of escalating attacks upon them, and millions of incidents of brutality and degrading assault that often occurred in obscurity. They are writing their reply into history, on the world's stage.

TWO WORLDS IN EVERY COUNTRY

It is a revolt that was prefigured by the Million Signature Campaign and other protests against the worsening conditions for women under Ahmadinejad. The struggle to establish independent labor unions, as well as the massive defiance of the regime's religious decrees and policing, also were signs of things now arrived. That the regime itself had some awareness of this was shown in the last year, when the Revolutionary Guard began focusing on what tactics it would use to crush a popular internal rebellion, as opposed to any foreign threat.

Iran's workers have also made their voices heard in this crisis. The Tehran and Suburbs Vahed Bus Company Workers released this statement: "We condemn the suppression of civic institutions. In recent days we have been witness to the presence and passionate activity of millions of women, men, old and young, national and religious minorities in Iran who are demanding that the government recognize their basic rights...the fact that the demands of [the] overwhelming majority of Iranian society go far beyond trade union demands is clear to all. And we have always stressed that unless the principles of the freedom of organization and free elections have been made real, realization of social freedoms and union rights is not possible. Therefore, the Vahed Workers trade union is an integral part of the overall struggles for [the] establishment of free and independent social institutions...That's why we ask that June 26, which has been declared to be the day of support for jailed workers and union organizing in Iran, be elevated to the day of human rights in Iran. We ask our coworkers all around the world to actively support the extinguished rights of the Iranian people."

Workers at Khodro automobile company, Iran's largest, said this: "We declare our solidarity with the movement of the people of Iran. Autoworkers, Fellow Laborers: What we witness today is an insult to the intelligence of the people and disregard for their votes,

The irrepressible spirit of revolutionary Iran

Reminiscent of the 1979 Iranian Revolution, this mass movement has unleashed the fury of people who have endured 30 years of ruthless oppression. Many dissidents, who did not have the chance to show an independent voice, have gone far beyond reform. This feels like the same irrepressible spirit of the revolution 30 years ago—the same uncompromising will with full knowledge and acceptance of the bloody sacrifices that must be made in pursuit of freedom and justice.

Even the slogans, and actions—like the prank newspaper headline "Ahmadinejad is gone" held up by demonstrators—are an echo of the famous *Keyhan* newspaper headline when the revolution forced the Shah out of Iran: "The Shah is gone." The demonstrators know the thugs want to kill a few of them to scare them off, but they are ready, dressed all in green (like in the revolution days when they would dress all in white, and say they are ready to die in the name of freedom).

WOMEN IN THE LEADERSHIP

For the past few years the Islamic Republic has been steeped with widespread corruption, shameful foreign policy, inflation and a bleak job market for the youth. There have been sporadic protests by the women's and student movements, and workers' strikes in the last years met with bloody clampdowns. The movement was practicing for today's outpouring and has become wise, full of analysis, calls for unity, and advice on how to stay non-violent, as well as calls outside of Iran to make the world aware of what is going on.

The grassroots One Million Signature campaign (see April-May 2008 *N&L* "Million Signature Campaign in Iran"), and most other women's rights groups, have made it clear that their struggles for civil rights are inseparable from the rights of workers, students and others. Women campaigned vehemently for three election demands: for Iran to ratify the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women; to eliminate discriminatory laws against women; and to grant women equality under the law, lifting repression against women, students, and workers. Women used the pre-election atmosphere to inject their agenda into the dialog with the public and candidates. The student movement and the women's rights movement reinforced each other.

the trampling of the principles of the Constitution by the government. It is our duty to join this people's movement. We the workers of Iran Khodro, Thursday [June 18], in each working shift will stop working for half an hour to protest the suppression of students, workers, women, and the Constitution and declare our solidarity with the movement of the people of Iran. The morning and afternoon shifts from 10 to 10:30. The night shift from 3 to 3:30."

With scenes reminiscent of the 1979 Revolution—and with many in the opposition trying to follow the forms of that era, as in the nightly rooftop chants of "Allahu Akbar!" and commemorations of martyrs—it is time to address the contradictory meaning of the 1979 Revolution as well. It has direct bearing for today.

As Raya Dunayevskaya pointed out at the time, the question of the ambivalent role of Shi'a clerics in the Iranian revolution goes back to Iran's Constitutional Revolution of 1906-11. They did support the first stage of that Revolution, but "...once a democratic Constitution was created, the clergy began burdening it with the type of amendments that restored most powers to the Shah once the foreign enemy was thrown out..."

The second chapter of that first revolution, as the second chapter of this era's 1979 Revolution, was begun by women liberationists"

("What Has Happened to the Iranian Revolution...?" p. 4, this issue).

The 1979 Revolution was the first great social revolution to take place after Women's Liberation had moved from an idea whose time has come to a mass movement. For Marxist-Humanism it became an indispensable category of revolution, as seen in Dunayevskaya's *Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution*. There for the first time Marx's Marxism stood clear, including the gulf between Marx and Engels on the "Woman Question." It was a question of total liberation for all.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR PHILOSOPHY

The great need of revolutionaries in Iran and elsewhere was to take responsibility for a philosophy of liberation that would brook no compromises with the clerics, or with any others who would limit the striving for full freedom. What was needed was that philosophy of revolution that would initiate the road to a classless society on truly new humanist beginnings. This is not

The regime's responses to women's demands became the measure of how repressive it is in all spheres of life. Women are deeply involved in the struggle for change and their resistance has become emblematic. This is huge progress from the days of the revolution, a beacon of hope that we will not allow women's rights to be sacrificed. The One Million Signature campaign's style of grassroots activism and broad and horizontal movement, is a pioneering force. It's heartwarming to see women at the forefront of protests and sit-ins.

On June 17, Nobel Prize winner, civil rights attorney and feminist Shirin Ebadi was among those who called for a new election with the presence of international observers. She also called for immediate release of Zahra Rahnava, Mousavi's wife, whose public presence as a spokesperson for Mousavi's campaign has been a source of inspiration for the more conservative of the reform. Rahnava has been challenged for her limited vision and presumption of leadership by some of the more radical of the student movement. For example, when she tried to get students to peacefully leave one of their protests, they told her that her husband was "one" candidate, that their demands go far beyond the fraudulent election results, and that they will decide when and how they will leave their protest.

VIOLENCE WILL NOT STOP THE MOVEMENT

This government does not shy away from using instruments of extreme violence: Ansar Hezbollah, guardians of the revolution; and Basij, chock full of thugs with experience of savage war with Iraq and military attacks in Kurdistan. The emails, pictures, films streaming on the net are full of bloodied faces and bodies being dragged by the hair. Students are being attacked in their sleep in the dorms, some shot to death. It is horrific that the body of a young woman student movement leader was found on June 17, stabbed 25 times, her neck ripped open. And Neda Agha-Soltan, a young woman shot to death in the streets by a sniper, has galvanized women and youth the world over who vow that she will never be forgotten. Masses keep pouring into the streets, full of determination, hope, steadfastness and awesome force that only a people committed to their liberation can show.

—Nazanin Afarin

merely an abstract question.

Today's mass movement is raising demands, from the end of the religious police and of "forced veiling," to even ending the position of Supreme Guide which Ayatollah Khamenei inherited from Ayatollah Khomeini. The kind of constitutional questions being raised by this new movement directly address central historic problems of the Iranian revolution. Just as the tendency of the masses has been to go beyond the issue of a stolen election among regime insiders, so it would be wrong to fetter our thought to the maneuvers of these insiders.

As much as any crisis of our time, today's events in Iran show the need for a return to the fullness of Marx's Marxism. History has brought Marx's philosophy of revolution together with Women's Liberation here. It is necessary to take responsibility for articulating this. To take any other ground would be to fall into the trap pointed to by the great Irish revolutionary James Connolly: "Don't be 'practical' in politics. To be practical in that sense means that you have schooled yourself to think along the lines, and in the grooves those who rob you would desire you to think."

LIBERATORY VISION OF THE FUTURE NEEDED

As of this moment, Iran's rulers will be likely to prefer Ahmadinejad. He represents all that they have left: the whip arm of the institutionalized counter-revolution. Ayatollah Khamenei affirmed this at Friday prayers June 19, threatening anti-Ahmadinejad demonstrators with more "blood and chaos" to come. The regime that can't deliver jobs, dignity, or peace can deliver oppression and murder well enough. Some demonstrators are now chanting "Death to Khamenei" in response.

Ahmadinejad was also favored, in the early hours after his "re-election," by some hawkish elements in the U.S. and Israel who were using him as an excuse to prepare for possible military intervention in Iran.

At least some of that talk has been silenced, shamed by the heroism and creativity of the Iranian people. More than ever it will be necessary for revolutionaries to present a vision that is the absolute opposite of all this reaction which feeds upon reaction.

—June 21, 2009

As we go to press, many calls for a general strike have gone out on Twitter and Facebook, and Iran Focus reports that 80% of shops were closed in a bazaar strike in Iranian Kurdistan. The struggle continues and has our greatest solidarity.

Immigrants march for human rights



Los Angeles—The May 1 multiple demonstrations here for immigrants' and workers' rights were a continuation of the massive national protests since March 25. They erupted against federal legislation proposed by Rep. Sensenbrenner that would criminalize all undocumented immigrants and those who support them as felons. The issue, then as now, is human rights for all undocumented immigrants.

In the suburb of Cerritos, the South Asian Network organized a march for Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Bengali immigrants. They protested against police harassment, detention, border militarization, and for human rights. Afterward, many joined the march in downtown Los Angeles.

The downtown march, organized by the Southern California Immigration Coalition, demanded full rights for all immigrants, especially the right to family unity.

Another march started from Echo Park and continued to the historic Olvera Street downtown. It was sponsored by the Multi-ethnic Immigrant Worker Organizing Network and the Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights-L.A. and included a large contingent from Teamster Solid Waste Workers.

Signs read: "We are human, stop the raids, humane immigration reform now," "Stop detention and deportation," "Amnesty for all," "Support the Employee Free Choice Act," and "Legalization now," referring to the 12 million undocumented workers in the U.S.

As the march ended we all participated in a giant card stunt meant for President Obama that from the air read: "WORKERS FIRST."

—Basho

Revolutionary Indigenous Peru

Indigenous people from the Amazonian region of Peru are the heart of a movement battling with President Alan García over the country's direction. In early April, 30,000 Indigenous people began a blockade of roads, waterways, airports, and a state oil pipeline, shutting down the oil flow and stranding 41 oil and gas company ships. The protests started last year against laws decreed by García to implement Peru's free trade pact with the U.S., which would make it easier for foreign companies to take over Indigenous land. Communal lands and water are under threat of privatization for oil drilling, logging, mining, and plantations.

In May García declared a state of emergency, prompting a declaration of insurgency from the AID-ESEP (Interethnic Peruvian Forest Development Association). This was followed May 27 by a national day of protest called by unions and social movement groups.

On June 5, the government pulled out all the stops in an effort to destroy the movement. Riot police and helicopters started shooting at 2,500 protesters non-violently blocking a highway near Bagua.

AT LEAST 40 INDIANS, including three children, were killed and

many bodies were thrown into the Utcubamba River to cover up the killings, according to movement leaders.

Security forces then rampaged through nearby towns, including Bagua, where police snipers on rooftops shot into street crowds. In reprisal, buildings of the government and the ruling APRA party were destroyed. The government also imposed curfews in Amazonian towns and raided AID-ESEP's office in Lima, 400 miles away. A few days later, the state shut down Radio Voz de la Selva (Voice of the Forest), a voice of Amazonian peoples.

In the aftermath of the state-sponsored violence, more than 250 people were missing, possibly dead. Children as young as four were shot. Hospital workers and other witnesses reported that police took many civilian wounded and dead from the hospitals, burning bodies to cover up the extent of the killings. Meanwhile, the President ran a campaign including paid television

Franklin Rosemont, publisher-poet

Poet Franklin Rosemont passed away on April 12 in Chicago. He was a significant thinker and publisher.

Rosemont was raised with an appreciation of the labor movement. As a teenager he was greatly influenced by Black scholar St. Clair Drake. He encountered the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) through Jack Kerouac's *The Dharma Bums*, "a book about freedom," and a few years later he became a major factor in revitalizing the IWW. He and his young colleagues, including lifelong partner Penelope Rosemont, began publishing the important journal *The Rebel Worker* and established Solidarity Bookshop. In 1966 the Rosemonts founded the Chicago Surrealist Group, which has continued its activities to the present day.

IN THE 1970S FRANKLIN and Penelope Rosemont were part of the group who helped revitalize the Charles H. Kerr Publishing Company, which reissued out-of-print revolutionary classics, as well as new works and rediscovered works by revolutionary working-class writers like T-Bone Slim and Covington Hall.

As Marxist-Humanists we appreciate the dialogue with Rosemont which began in the early 1960s when the IWW's Fred Thompson "...handed me a copy of Raya Dunayevskaya's *Marxism and Freedom* and said, 'Here's a book that shows that old Hegel made some sense after all'" (*Dancin' in the Streets!* [2005]). Rosemont's important essay on "Karl Marx and the Iroquois" (1989) remains perhaps the most original and creative response to Dunayevskaya's *Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution* (1982).

Rosemont also knew that Joe Hill was worthy of the near-600 pages which he devoted to him in *Joe Hill: The IWW & the Making of a Revolutionary Working-class Counterculture* (2003). Franklin Rosemont will be missed. But through his visionary contributions as poet, publisher and incendiary he will remain present at the crucial moments. He did as much as anyone of his generation to bring life to the words, "Don't waste any time mourning, Organize!"

—Tim Finnigan

ads using anti-Indian racist code words like "ferocity and savagery" and accusing the Indigenous of starting the violence. Warning of "terrorist acts" and an "international Communist conspiracy," he compared the Indians to the Shining Path, Maoist guerrillas who committed many atrocities in the 1980s and 1990s, including against Indigenous communities. AID-ESEP leader Alberto Pizango was forced to seek asylum in the Nicaraguan embassy to avoid sedition charges.

FOR MONTHS GARCIA HAS been accusing the Indigenous of opposing "development." In reality they want development, but have raised the question: what kind of development? What they do not want is "progress" that destroys their entire way of life, dispossesses them and undermines their cultural autonomy. The killings at García's initiative are an acute outbreak of the violence inherent in the capitalist type of "development"

pushed by Peru's ruling class, centering on driving Indigenous and poor people off communal lands and small farms to open them up to intensive, eco-destructive exploitation by transnational corporations.

Faced with this vicious attempt to destroy their movement, thousands of native people armed with spears vowed to maintain highway blockades to defend their ancestral lands. Hundreds of thousands demonstrated across Peru on June 11, in conjunction with a general strike. Solidarity protests were held that day in Quito, Ecuador; Washington, D.C.; and several cities in Europe and Canada. In Lima 20,000 marched, chanting, "The forest is not for sale."

Thousands of Indigenous communities have built this movement, led from the local level in their own decision-making structures. They have raised the banner of another kind of development as against global capitalism's push to commodify all resources and reduce the population, aside from a small elite, to landless wage-workers or slum-dwellers without formal employment. An ever-growing number of other sectors of society have stirred in revolt alongside them, from highland peasants and Indians to labor unions and students. In his drive to open up the Amazonian areas to globally integrated capitalist exploitation, García has forced a showdown. If he fails to crush the movement, the door will be opened to a transformation far greater than his possible fall from power.

—Franklin Dmitryev

L.A. schools protests

Los Angeles—On June 9, 700 to 1,000 mostly Latina/o and some Black students from inner-city high schools, along with teachers and community activists of all races, marched to the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) downtown, where the Board of Directors were meeting to cut more positions.

Several signs read "Black & Brown = Most Teachers Cut." A woman professor of Chicana Studies said, "We won't stop until they bail out our teachers and schools." A 10th grade teacher said, "Of the \$1 billion stimulus money received, half has been put into a savings account." There are hunger strikes at various schools to try to hold on to the terminated teachers. Teachers and activists plan to camp out in front of the LAUSD building.

The struggle started on May Day, then, on May 15, 38 teachers along with A.J. Duffy, president of United Teachers of Los Angeles (UTLA), were arrested for blocking traffic in front of the LAUSD, protesting the termination of 2,500 teachers and larger class sizes. They chanted, "Don't raise class size" as the police moved in to arrest them.

The same day, 1,000 teachers, students, parents and supporters, dressed in black, demonstrated outside the LAUSD. Hundreds of students from many different high schools and colleges walked out to support the teachers.

On May 19, Californians overwhelmingly defeated five state propositions put on the ballot by the state legislature. Essentially, they were cuts on various social services to help balance the state budget.

The governor is also proposing drastic cuts in healthcare—including for the very poor—in welfare and education, borrowing local property tax money, forcing cities to cut fire protection, libraries, and state employee wages. He is leaving in place corporate tax loopholes and the Republicans' historic "No new taxes" which refers to taxes on corporations and the very rich. He now supports offshore drilling to help balance the budget. Many teachers are protesting by going on a fast.

—Basho

Museum murder is attack on thought

The murderous attack on the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., was an attack on all of humanity. It was an attack on a human attempt to intellectually comprehend an event of utter inhumanity, the Nazi attempt to annihilate the Jews of Europe.

In addition to the museum's displays and exhibits, it houses a library, an archive and the Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies, an important institution for scholarly efforts of Holocaust documentation and interpretation. Among the recent undertakings the archival collections of the Center has supported is the work of Father Patrick Desbois, a French priest who is systematically documenting the Nazi campaign to destroy the Jewish population of Ukraine after the invasion of the USSR in 1941. Desbois and his colleagues record interviews with elderly villagers who witnessed the events and carry out forensic work on the mass graves that are pointed out to them. He describes his experiences in a recent book, *The Holocaust by Bullets*.

The Holocaust denial movement, one thriving form of contemporary anti-Semitism of which the perpetrator of the museum attack was an adherent, persists in part because of the Holocaust's utter inhumanity. That is to say, it was so inhuman that to certain minds of an empirical bent, it approaches unbelieveability. It is no accident that one of the first prominent American Holocaust deniers, Arthur Butz, is a professional engineer.

The murder of six million European Jews did happen, however, and the artifacts, images and archival documents gathered in the Holocaust Memorial Museum prove it. In this respect, the attack on the Museum can be said to have been an attack on the human power to think critically.

The bullets fired by the museum attacker killed Steven P. Johns, an African-American security guard carrying out his duties. We cannot let those same bullets intimidate us and prevent us from thinking and acting critically.

—Kevin Michaels

Caterpillar divestment

Chicago—On June 10 a diverse coalition rallied outside a shareholders meeting of Caterpillar.

Caterpillar sponsors Israel's illegal occupation of Palestine through its sales of equipment to the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). Caterpillar's equipment is used to build both the separation wall that illegally annexes Palestinian land and the illegal settlements. Caterpillar also sells weaponized bulldozers to the Israeli army, which uses them to demolish Palestinian homes. Despite years of condemnation, Caterpillar refuses to halt sales to the IDF, or even condemn the abuses.

While we rallied against Caterpillar's deadly profiteering, on the opposite side of the street, a smaller group of demonstrators voiced their support for the Israeli occupation. One man held a sign which read "I [heart] Nakba." Nakba is the Palestinian word for "catastrophe" and is used to refer to the forced dispossession of tens of thousands of Palestinians from their ancestral lands in 1948.

THE CAMPAIGN AGAINST CATERPILLAR is part of a growing movement to target corporations that profit from the occupation in Palestine. In February of this year, Hampshire College, a small liberal arts school in Massachusetts, became the first U.S. college to divest from companies that profit from the occupation of Palestine. Hampshire was also the first college to divest from apartheid South Africa in the early 1970s.

Divestment at Hampshire was brought about only as a result of tireless and organized pressure from Hampshire Students for Justice in Palestine (HSJP). In my two years of working with HSJP, I learned that it is possible to win against the odds. It was an international divestment movement that helped bring the apartheid regime in South Africa to an end. Today, divestment from corporations that profit from the occupation of Palestine has the potential to help stop the racist and colonial oppression of Palestinians.

It is important to remember that we are not alone, and that together we can win. Please, join the movement and the struggle. Do it diversely and diligently, with dignity and with delight.

For more info see <http://www.bdsmovement.net/> and <http://www.hsjp.org/>

—Student militant

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WORLD VIEW

China 20 years after

Over 150,000 people marched in Hong Kong in the largest demonstration since 1989 to honor the thousands of workers and students killed by tanks and soldiers in and around Tiananmen Square 20 years ago on June 4. This demonstration represented dissent that China's rulers suppressed elsewhere.

The anniversary struck as the global recession has deepened, ending China's double digit annual economic growth. Wishful thinking official projections of 7.9% GDP growth for 2009 would fall just short of what is needed to absorb the growing workforce. But in light of exports dropping 25% since February, unemployment may rise this year by as many as 40 million workers—a tinderbox for unrest.

Therefore China's rulers employed extraordinary means to silence not only the Tiananmen generation of dissenters, but also the post-1980 generation that remade China as the world's workshop. Zhang Shijun, one of 300,000 soldiers ordered to clear Tiananmen



Square, was detained in March for expressing public regrets for the army's role. Ding Zilin and other members of Tiananmen Mothers were confined to their houses by force on June 4 this year.

As Beijing Spring unfolded over seven weeks in 1989, tens of millions of students and workers demonstrating in over 400 cities used technology like television and fax machines to bypass official control of information. This year, in advance of June 4, the government shut down social networking sites used especially by youth, like Twitter and Flickr, and even Hotmail, not unlike Iran blocking texting before and after the June elections.

The government has now threatened tighter control of each internet user by mandating that all personal computers sold after July 1 include built-in software allowing central blocking and monitoring of "pornography and other unhealthy information." Thanks to companies like Google and Yahoo customizing their systems for easier surveillance, reporters and essayists, or prominent satirists like Lu Di, have been jailed even before that new technology.

As the economic downturn began, 25,000 factories in the city of Dongguan alone shut their doors as of February. Guangdong provincial officials were pushing Beijing to suspend the Labor Contract Law, which legalized unions, though only for the foreign-owned export industry, in 2008. Workers in closed factories have had to challenge companies and local officials for even severance pay provisions in the law.

Companies like Wal-Mart and FedEx, which are virulently anti-union in the U.S., accepted the government's company union as their own company union. Yet reporters have found sweatshops supplying hi-tech products for companies like Apple and Microsoft that have kept even this weak union at bay, continuing to pay less than the minimum wage to workers locked in and working up to 100 hours a week.

A new round of strikes, each one a wildcat strike, has broken out among workers left holding the bag. Despite the new labor law, which was intended to reduce industrial strife, 85,000 strikes and other incidents were officially recorded in 2008.

It made news this spring that Zhao Ziyang, the Party Chairman removed from power in 1989 and placed under house arrest until his death in 2005, recorded his memoirs while confined and got them out to be published posthumously this year. They confirmed that the fear of workers' participation, particularly creation of autonomous unions, motivated Communist Party reaction to mass demonstrations for freedom and democracy, and ultimately to bloody suppression.

Six decades of questions in opposition to China's rulers—of workers' control, Marxist Humanism, freedom and democracy—have been suppressed but never fully answered. They remain alive for the next generation of students, intellectuals and workers.

—Gerry Emmett

—Bob McGuire

Sri Lanka tragedy

A tragedy continues to unfold against the Tamil people in Sri Lanka. Tens of thousands of unarmed Tamil civilians—men, women and children—died in the last weeks of the war in Sri Lanka, as they faced wanton government shelling, as well as Tamil guerrillas' desperate maneuvers to survive by using these fleeing civilians. They died as the world's governments, did little but issue abstract humanitarian appeals with no substance, with India and China actively supporting the Sri Lankan government's murderous last campaign.

Hundreds of thousands of displaced Tamil refugees are in Sri Lanka government camps (called welfare camps or internment camps), in the aftermath of the civil war. They are completely dependent on government officials and humanitarian aid for their survival. How authoritarian these camps are, and to what end they will be put, remains to be seen.

Within Sri Lanka, the principal Tamil opposition force, the Tamil Tigers, which have conducted a quite contradictory campaign for Tamil self-determination over the past 25 years, have been decisively defeated in a final murderous military campaign.

While for the moment, the authoritarian, militaristic Sri Lankan government rides high, it is clear that all the questions of decades-long racism and denied self-determination of the Tamil minority remain.

The right to self-determination lies in the divisions that were already present in the birth of Sri Lanka (Ceylon) as an independent nation in 1948: Sinhala-Buddhist Ceylon/Sri Lanka with a large minority of Hindu/Christian Tamils within. The more than half a century since has witnessed demands ranging from autonomy to a full-fledged independent Tamil nation. Massive bloodshed does not stop these demands.

—E. W.

North Korean threat

In its latest confrontational declaration, North Korea's rulers promised to weaponize its stockpile of plutonium and to pursue uranium enrichment in defiance of a UN sanctions resolution. This follows two recent nuclear bomb tests, one of which was successful, and a number of ballistic missile tests.

The proposed sanctions included interdiction of North Korean ships at sea, which the U.S. administration has talked up as an option. North Korea says it will "wage war" against any interference with its shipping. The confrontation with the U.S. has been deepened by the show trial of two American women reporters, who have been sentenced to 12 years of hard labor in a North Korean prison camp.

While North Korea's nuclear bomb tests have met with condemnation from most quarters, including neighboring China, this criticism is unlikely to sway Kim Jong Il or his presumptive successor, his son Kim Jong Un.

North Korea's official ideology, "Juche," or "self-reliance," was never a form of Marxism, or of genuine self-reliance. It was a philosophy created to bolster the fortunes of the North Korean ruling class, the Kim dynasty, as it maneuvered in a world in which state-capitalist rulers competed for single-world mastery, whether as the "socialist camp" against the "imperialist camp," or later as the rivalry of Russia and China for domination of the Communist world.

Kim Jong Il added the principle of "songun," or "military first," in which all scant resources are directed to serving military purposes above all. U.S. president George W. Bush's stance on the "axis of evil" did a lot to fan life into the dying embers of Kim's ideology. Now Kim seems to be forging a role for North Korea as a minor nuclear power, in a world in which nuclear weapons are a threat even in local conflicts.

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 nuclearly 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 recreation 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.