

NEWS & LETTERS

THEORY / PRACTICE

“Human power is its own end”—Karl Marx

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WORKSHOPTALKS

Do job, get fired

by Htun Lin

Under the Affordable Care Act, it's standard HMO practice to offer patients the opportunity to fill out an advance directive as an exercise in considering one's quality of life, not just its prolongation. Frontline healthcare providers have a concrete reason for quality-of-life care concerns. But in the HMO business campaigns promoting quality of life over quantity, things are not really what they appear.

Some questions are quite blunt: “While you're under our care, if your heart stops working, do you want us to resuscitate you? Do you want us to take any extraordinary measures?” At times the patient gives a puzzled look and responds with, “I sure hope so” or “Isn't that what I'm here for?”

QUOTA ON LIVES

It all depends on whose definition of “extraordinary measures.” This debate goes on among healthcare workers during a medical emergency. What to a worker is ordinary concrete care might be deemed “extraordinary” by management. When frontline care providers take the time necessary to provide quality care, often they run counter to management's quota of labor time allotted for those tasks. No wiggle room is given to accommodate variations in patient care needs.

Contrary to corporate slogans in their marketing campaigns about quality care, today's HMO under the Affordable Care Act is about controlling quantity of

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The anguish that is Flint, Michigan

Flint, Mich.—The crisis in Flint, whose people are still being poisoned by the water coming through pipes into our own homes, has finally received widespread national exposure. People know about the sometimes monstrously elevated lead levels and the epidemic of Legionnaires' disease that quickly followed Gov. Rick Snyder's decision, through his dictatorial emergency manager, to switch Flint from Lake Huron water in April 2014 to water from the Flint River.

The state government was trying to balance its budget on the backs of mostly poor Blacks while cutting taxes for businesses and the wealthy. When Flint residents began to experience the lethal consequences of this decision, some of which they shared with *N&L*, state agencies denied problems and relentlessly attacked those who spoke out.

MONEY SAVED, CHILDREN SICKENED

On April 30, 2014, Flint began receiving water from the Flint River as a way to save money while a pipeline of the Karegnondi Water Authority was being completed, although even the first emergency manager in 2012 had rejected a plan to switch to Flint River water after consulting with the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality.

The former director of Flint public works revealed that the decision to use water from the Flint River over all objections came directly from the governor's office.

In the next months, tests showed elevated levels of coliform bacteria. In December 2014, tests showed dangerously high levels of total trihalomethanes, which can lead to cancer and other medical problems.

Starting in June 2014 in Genesee County, there was a sharp increase in cases of Legionnaires' disease, caused by waterborne bacteria. There were 42 cases in

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ONLINE: www.newsandletters.org

Women battle war, terrorism and anti-abortion fanatics

by Terry Moon
Managing Editor, *News & Letters*

Much of the women's movement in the U.S. today seems unable to counter the juggernaut that the anti-abortion crusade has become. Now, perhaps the greatest challenge to these fanatics has been boldly and creatively given by Black women. In February, Black History Month, Trust Black Women offered their “formal solidarity with Black Lives Matter.” (See their statement on page 2.) That Black Lives Matter accepted the alliance was clear in a joint press conference where leaders from both movements spoke together.

Black women had already deepened the concept of abortion rights to that of Reproductive Justice. Alicia Garza, a founder of Black Lives Matter, spoke to that:

“Even though Black Lives Matter gets talked about as being primarily focused on transforming law enforcement, Black Lives Matter has always been an intersectional organizing approach and intersectional organizing project. Reproductive justice is very much situated within the Black Lives Matter movement...The way we talk about it, it isn't just about the rights of women to be able to determine when and how to be able to start families, but also our ability to raise families.”

STOP THE SHAMING OF BLACK WOMEN

There was great anger at the anti-abortion zealots who not only targeted Black women for shaming, but also tried to appropriate the language of the movement. La'Tasha D. Mayes, founder and executive director of New Voices for Reproductive Justice, said of a bill opportunistically called the “All Lives Matter Act,” which would declare a fertilized egg a person:

“We look at Cleveland where we see the death of Tamir Rice and Tanisha Anderson, and then to co-opt our language in talking about access to abortion is absolutely insulting. We believe it's necessary to have a proactive approach in changing the culture and stigma around Black women and abortion.”

Racist anti-abortion billboards targeting Black neighborhoods with messages aiming to shame Black women like “Black children are an endangered species” and “The most dangerous place for an African American is in the womb” also angered activists. Monica Raye Simpson, executive director of SisterSong: National Women of Color Reproductive Justice Coalition, said:

“At the end of the day, no matter how one feels about abortion, there's no question that these laws make safe abortion harder and is definitely harmful for Black women. Time and time again, politicians have tried to

exploit and divide Black communities on these issues, whether by putting up billboards attacking Black motherhood, or even the latest attempt to co-opt Black Lives Matter language to justify their anti-woman agenda.”

WOMEN WILL CONTROL OUR BODIES & LIVES

The moribund nature of today's “pro-choice” movement is seen in the sad fact that so much seems to hang on a decision by the Supreme Court. Rather than being on the ground of freedom and the right to control our own bodies and lives, much of the more established abortion rights movement is arguing legalisms and doing damage control.

Some of that defensiveness may come from the fact that the war on women in the U.S. is most vicious around the right to abortion—now a “right” in name only. There is not

enough space to go into the over 400 laws that were proposed in 2015 and the more than 100 bills already introduced in 2016 to shame, discourage and stop women from controlling their own bodies.

ULTRASOUNDS ARE NOW A WEAPON

Ultrasounds have become a club in the hands of Republican lawmakers who force women who want to abort to have them (and pay for them), to listen to a doctor forced to describe it, to hear a fetal heartbeat. Now ultrasounds are being used as a way to club doctors too. A new North Carolina law would force abortion providers to submit an ultrasound for every abortion and induced miscarriage performed after the 16th week of pregnancy, even though the procedure is legal up to 20 weeks. In arguing for yet another bill involving ultrasounds, Idaho Republican Representative Pete Nielsen blathered utter nonsense to offset criticism that his bill would further traumatize women who had been raped: “[I]n many cases of rape,” he pontificated, “it does not involve any pregnancy because of the trauma of the incident. That may be true with incest a little bit.”

Although the dishonest video misleadingly edited to show that Planned Parenthood profits off of fetal tissue has been completely discredited, that has not stopped legislators in seven states from defunding Planned Parenthood and thus denying poor women top-notch healthcare, and in many cases any healthcare at all.

After Texas defunded most of their clinics in 2013, a new study estimates that between 100,000 and 240,000 mostly young women tried to self-induce abortions using herbs, teas, and drugs from Mexico.¹

Existing clinics have to contend with mobs of

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Members of New Voices for Reproductive Justice, an organization dedicated to the health and well-being of women and girls of color, say they are “in the house and we say to #SCOTUS #StoptheSham & #Trust-BlackWomen! @BlackWomensRJ #BlackGirlMagic.”

EDITORIAL Syrian Revolution continues

It is too early to tell what will come of the partial ceasefire that was supposed to begin in Syria as of this writing. We have already seen hundreds of violations by Assad-allied forces. The depravity of that genocidal regime—including its Iranian and Russian imperialist allies—gives little reason to hope for lasting results.

When Assad was threatened with defeat in 2014, Iran stepped up its military intervention. It wasn't enough. As Assad again faced defeat in 2015, Russia began its bombing campaign, which escalated this year into targeting hospitals, schools, markets and mosques to depopulate liberated areas. No decency can be expected from such war criminals.

It marks a moment for taking stock. That a ceasefire had to be proposed is testimony to one fact: the unrelenting, courageous, creative opposition that has since 2011 been the essence of the Syrian Revolution. On March 4, demonstrations around the country declared: “The Revolution Continues!” The interventions by Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Russia in particular have

obviously been interventions in defense of their own despised and fragile reactionary regimes.

LIMITS OF ARMED STRUGGLE

Armed struggle became a necessity in Syria because a non-violent freedom movement that lasted far longer than anyone could have expected faced the brutal attacks of a heavily armed fascist state.

Five years of war taught some important lessons about the limitations of armed struggle. First is the question of who provides the arms and what they ask or demand in return. In too many cases, this has led to a separation between the original ideas of the Revolution and the armed fighters. At worst it went some way toward enabling ISIS to enter Syria. Revolutionaries have had to fight ISIS as well as the regime, while knowing that Jabhat al-Nusra will also be a problem to be dealt with.

Likewise, the unity between Kurdish People's Defense Units (YPG) and the Free Syrian Army that was so

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Trust Black Women in solidarity with Black Lives Matter

**WOMAN
AS
REASON**

Editor's note: Because of its importance we print the statement from Trust Black Women Partnership in its entirety.

OUR MISSION AND HISTORY

The mission of the Trust Black Women Partnership is to develop a strong network of Black women's organizations and individuals mobilized to defend our human right to make abortion and family planning decisions for ourselves. We work to counter the growing anti-abortion movement in the African-American community and defeat race- and gender-based campaigns and legislation that limit abortion access for Black women. We educate our communities, legislators and leaders of color about Reproductive Justice issues from Black women's perspectives. We also stand for the human right of every Black person, regardless of their gender identity or expression, to end a pregnancy, continue a pregnancy, build a family, and raise children with health, dignity, and freedom from violence. After five years of building power and organizing, we are now re-launching Trust Black Women, and we are stronger than ever.

The Reproductive Justice movement, created in 1994, the Trust Black Women Partnership, created in 2010, and the Black Lives Matter movement, created in 2012, were created because the lives of Black people were in peril. All were born out of a demand for the self-determination and liberation of Black people in this country. And all were born because of the leadership of Black women.

OUR SHARED STRUGGLE

For more than 20 years, Reproductive Justice advocates, grounded by an intersectional power analysis and commitment to centering the most marginalized, have articulated the pressing need to value Black women and families, respect the decisions of Black women, and assure the basic human right to determine our own destinies. This encompasses the ability to prevent or end a pregnancy, to live and build and raise a family with dignity, and to have the resources to do so. Through and through, we have asserted the value of Black lives by fighting systemic racism, economic injustice, state-sanctioned violence, and the denial of our

reproductive self-determination.

Fundamentally, Trust Black Women, rooted in Reproductive Justice, and Black Lives Matter are movements to affirm the value of Black lives, to protect the dignity and autonomy of Black bodies, and to dismantle the systems that harm and oppress Black communities. As we recognize our common values, we stand stronger against those who would co-opt our language or strategies to use against Black women, or any member of our communities. As we learn from the past, we must recognize the harms of de-centering Black women and the need to support Black women's leadership and well-being.

Trust Black Women and Black Lives Matter assert — unapologetically — that Black people must be at the center of progressive work for social justice and moral progress.

STANDING IN SOLIDARITY

As Black women leaders, activists and supporters of the Reproductive Justice movement and members of the Trust Black Women Partnership, we offer our formal solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement. The United States has a long history of over-policing and over-criminalizing Black bodies that started with the forced removal of Africans from our homeland. Ever since we were brought here against our will, this country has been a hostile birthing environment for Black women, and a dangerous place to raise Black children. This nation has yet to prove that Black Lives Matter, and it has yet to prove its ability to Trust Black Women.



A group of Black women assembled at SisterSong in 2010 to conceive what was to become Trust Black Women.

Trust Black Women is grateful to Black Lives Matter for building the movement for Black lives to a critical tipping point: no longer can the public or our political leaders ignore our struggle. We also recognize the role of Reproductive Justice and Trust Black Women in contributing to this tipping point. We walk in one another's footprints even as we stand side by side.

We offer to the Movement for Black Lives the analysis that brought Trust Black Women into being: an analysis that centers Black women, low wage workers, LGBTQ people, and those living at the crossroads of these identities. We offer to the Movement for Black Lives our commitment to hold gender justice as dear as racial justice, with Reproductive Justice as the core of both these aspirations.

We seek community, fellowship, and connection with Black Lives Matter, and we know that we must stand together or fall separately. Our lives are at stake. To realize a future where Black Lives Matter, we must Trust Black Women. To Trust Black Women is to affirm that Black Lives do Matter.

So we say, in the same breath, in the same freedom

Celebrate International Women's Day and Women's History Month by learning about

- ♀ How women started the Russian Revolution of 1917
- ♀ Women's contribution to the revolution in Portugal in 1974
- ♀ That 100,000 women marched for abortion rights in Italy and brought down the government in 1976

♀ AND SO MUCH MORE ♀

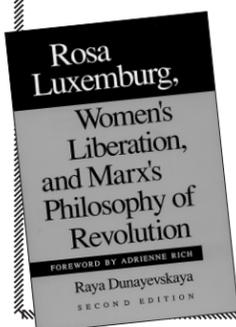
Special offer for March:

Get both *Women's Liberation and the Dialectics of Liberation: Reaching for the Future*

and *Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and*

Marx's Philosophy of Revolution by Raya Dunayevskaya a \$50 value, for only \$30 including postage.

To order see page 7.



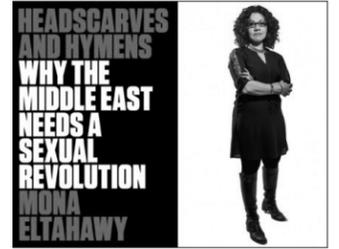
song: Trust Black Women. Black Lives Matter. Together we march toward justice for us all.

To see the signatories go to: <http://www.trustblackwomen.org/solidarity-with-black-lives-matter>

Review: Headscarves and Hymens

Headscarves and Hymens: Why the Middle East Needs a Sexual Revolution, by Mona Eltahawy (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2015).

Mona Eltahawy, an award-winning journalist and speaker, grew up in the Middle East and the West and travels between the two. She participated in the Arab Spring demonstrations and convinced CNN to



change their tag line from "Chaos in the Middle East" to "Revolution in the Middle East." She became a feminist as a teen when exposed to patriarchal men's horrific treatment of women in the Middle East and women's complicity in it.

Eltahawy demolishes both Middle Eastern and Western excuses for not recognizing these atrocities towards women as oppression. Indeed, violations of women's human rights must be fought in order to establish a just society. While Western liberals often turn to cultural relativism to ignore the violations of the human rights of women (and only women) in other countries, Eltahawy shows how women in the West have fought and continue to fight similar oppressions.

FEMINISM INDIGENOUS TO THE MIDDLE EAST

She says that while religion should never be used as an excuse for sexism, these same religions, including Islam, have been interpreted in feminist ways. While misogynists in the Middle East claim that feminism and sexual liberation are Western imports, she describes how Arab women have been fighting sexism and writing erotic poetry for centuries.

As a teen, Eltahawy wore the hijab, or headscarf, but later rejected it along with the notion that her agency in choosing something she saw as reactionary could be a feminist choice. Her agency in expressing Muslim pride was invisible to sexists who approved condescendingly because it made her "chaste" and "marriageable."

Women everywhere are told it is our responsibility to "cover up" to control men's sexual desires. However, Eltahawy found that even being completely covered never protected any woman from the vicious sexual harassment and violence on the street. That these behaviors are not caused by patriarchal men's sexual desires but by their desire to completely control women became obvious. A man even groped Eltahawy when she was covered up in a segregated female group worshipping at Mecca and observed by a policeman.

In order to keep women from participating in public life, patriarchy requires harassment along with infantilizing laws like those mandating women to be accompanied by a male relative, segregated, and restricted from driving. Propaganda claims that women are most suited to the "feminine" private life of the home which they supposedly "rule." The reality that women are not even safe at home is shown by the prevalence of domestic violence, marital rape, child marriage, and "honor" killings of women who have sex or are raped outside of marriage. Private violence is as rarely punished as public violence.

WOMEN 'WILL FREE OUR COUNTRIES'

Eltahawy explains how the constant quest for safety can lead women to oppress their own daughters, even going so far as female genital mutilation (FGM), which causes severe pain and health issues. FGM and the insistence on virginity, symbolized by the presence of a hymen, are supposed to make a woman marriageable but lead to sexual frustration and relationship problems. Eltahawy reclaims the rights to sexual pleasure and to make one's own sexual decisions as a vital part of being human.

To Eltahawy, consciousness-raising through sharing of personal stories is important to helping women understand oppression. She describes telling a class in the U.S. about her stress caused by the obsession with virginity in the Middle East and hearing students make the connection with their experiences with Christian fundamentalist purity culture. She started consciousness-raising groups in the Middle East and urges the importance of letting the survivors of violence, including FGM, not feel like victims. She states, "women—our rage, our tenacity, our daring, and our audacity—will free our countries."

In order to succeed, a revolution needs to be a radical one of self-determination for all in both public and private relationships.

—Adele

WOMENWORLDWIDE

by Artemis

In February, women in Chicago's comedy improv scene held a blackout in which they did not perform or attend comedy class or shows. They held a panel discussion with the YWCA about sexual harassment and sexism in the comedy community and how to create safer spaces for women. The action was the result of women comedians in both Chicago and Los Angeles speaking out on facebook and in news articles about the culture of constant sexual harassment including demands for sexual favors from teachers and directors and sexual objectification onstage that had been going on for years. Belinda Woolfson, a comedian who has worked in both cities, has started a documentary on the subject.

* * *

The Toronto Newsgirls Boxing Club has been providing a safe space for women to explore the sport of boxing since 1996. In February, they made news by threatening to show up wearing their boxing gloves at a meetup planned by a misogynist "men's rights" blogger who advocates legalizing rape. The meetups, which were planned in several cities worldwide, were cancelled with the statement that the planner "could no longer guarantee the safety or privacy of the men who want to attend." Several mayors of Canadian cities made statements on Twitter that these meetups would not be welcome in their cities.

* * *

In January, in Manila, The Philippines, women in their eighties held a demonstration outside the palace where President Benigno Aquino was welcoming Emperor Akihito of Japan. The women had been kidnapped and raped as so-called "comfort women" by the Japanese army in World War II and were demanding the same acknowledgement from their government as their counterparts in Korea had received from theirs. They also demanded an apology and compensation from Japan. They will not accept the conditions that Japan has placed on the Korean women that anyone compensated loses any right to discuss what happened to them.

Workers rejected Nexteer-UAW deal

Detroit—The recent Big Three contracts with the United Auto Workers (UAW) illustrated the huge difference between rank-and-file workers and the bureaucracy. Workers at Fiat-Chrysler rejected the contract the UAW recommended. That rejection resulted in an increase in benefits and other financial rewards over the provisions in the first contract, with the adjustments the bureaucracy and company were forced to make.

The workers approved the revised contract, which became the template for the contracts proposed to the Ford and GM workers. While Ford and GM workers approved the upgraded contract, the margins of approval were very slight. The UAW and auto corporations all held their breath waiting for the results to come in from the voting by GM and Ford workers. While the workers did approve the contract, the slim margins reflected how much difference there was between rank-and-file workers and the UAW bureaucracy.

Topping the concerns of the rank and file were the differences in pay in the two-tier wage system negotiated in the 2007 contract, which paid starting workers \$10 less than veteran workers. From the opening of contract negotiations during the leadership conference held ten months ago, the demands of rank-and-file workers were to bridge that wage gap.

Workers demanded increased bonuses and other financial provisions and more information on health-care benefits. The Big Three met all these demands. The rank and file correctly interpreted its power going into negotiations.

Following contracts with the Big Three, the UAW negotiated with Nexteer Automotive, which had been a part of GM and incorporated in the previous Delphi Corporation before it was transferred several years ago.

The contract with Nexteer that the UAW brought to its members was rejected by 97% of the workers. No one was more surprised than UAW President Dennis Williams. This forced the bureaucracy to go back and renegotiate a contract that narrowed the gap between new hires and veteran workers and improved health-care benefits, among other demands. While Nexteer workers approved the revised contract, they again displayed the huge difference between the rank and file and the bureaucracy.

Unfortunately, there is little hope among workers for any change in the UAW bureaucracy given its contempt for the rank and file. If anything, the determination of the bureaucracy to force agreements after rejection by the rank and file indicates that the bureaucracy will harden its attitude toward workers. —Andy Phillips

Remembering Olga Domanski



We remember Olga Domanski (left), pictured with Genora Johnson, who led the Women's Emergency Brigade, a historic part of the victorious 1936-37 Flint Sitdown Strike, and later Olga's roommate when both worked at the GM plant in Flint, Mich.

Stop anti-union Brod

New York—Bakery workers established the Hot and Crusty Workers Association a little over three years ago in their historic struggle for the rights of workers and immigrants. But in January, after the union contract with Brod expired, management launched an all-out campaign to destroy the rights the workers had won with so much sacrifice. Bakery owner Hugo Uys threatened to close the unionized store on 63rd Street, claiming financial motives. Yet Brod recently opened a non-union store on West 4th Street, and plans another non-union outlet in Hoboken, N.J.

On Jan. 28, 200 members of more than 15 New York City unions, immigrant and community groups, and students from New York University and City University of New York rallied on West 4th chanting, "Brod workers, we are with you!" The Central Labor Council backed the protest.

The company put up huge posters signed by the restaurant manager openly displaying its hatred for labor, denouncing the union and calling for people to cross the picket line. The next day, Uys fired union president Mahoma Lopez and union member Marcelino Cano. When unionists continued leafleting in defense of the workers, Brod fired another union activist, Leyla Mejía, an Afro-Latina mother of four.

Brod management has now moved to decertify the union. But the union and its supporters are not taking this lying down. On Feb. 19, they held another rally at the bakery on West 4th near NYU. As a consequence, Brod management has now announced plans to shut down both bakeries in Manhattan, rather than dealing with a union driven by the rank and file. The workers have vowed to continue the struggle.

—Worker and union supporter

Fighting Uber pay cuts

New York—Uber, the rideshare company, promised drivers the sky when the company first hit New York: thousands of dollars a month while being your own boss and setting your own schedules. But drivers are learning that behind those promises there is yet another ruthless capitalist enterprise out to gouge them out of every penny it can. Now workers are fighting back, nationwide and in New York.

Over 100 drivers went on strike and rallied at Uber headquarters in Long Island City on Feb. 1, demanding the company cancel new lower pay standards. While Uber is lowering its rates for customers, it is demanding an increase in the commission that drivers pay to the company. There is less money in the pockets of the drivers both because fares are lower and because they have to turn over more to the company.

Uber helps drivers purchase their cars, but with a high interest rate. Drivers are responsible for gas and insurance. Consequently, as one driver put it, they have to work extra hours just to support their families. Three quarters of Uber drivers drive full time, so they have no other income. Some are talking about joining a union. Others, embittered by past experiences with top-down business unionism, are talking about organizing their own union. As one driver put it, "We need our rights, we need equality, we're not being treated fairly."

—Natalia Spiegel

Letter from Mexico

Meaning of Mexican workers' struggles

by J.G.F. Héctor

A revolt of agricultural workers in San Quintín, Baja California, burst out into the open in March 2015. Workers demanded a 200 peso (\$16) daily salary, improved working conditions, and the right to create their own independent union. They were conscious of their own exploitation: "I know strawberries and blueberries are the most expensive fruits...A box was sold for 350 pesos while we were paid 14 pesos."

They took their protest to Mexico City several times this past year, speaking about the universal character of their struggle: "I believe that this movement of *jornaleros* (day laborers) is a movement of all workers, both national and international."

In the 1990s they fought for a place to live that was not attached to the working area, as well as for schools for their children. Their history of struggle is rich, and in it the women—as mothers, wives and workers—have played a key revolutionary role.

In December 2015, workers' protests exploded simultaneously in four multinational companies in Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua. After being unfairly fired, the workers, a majority of them women, demanded their jobs back and the overtime, vacation and social security payments the companies owed them.

PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN

They organized themselves to maintain a *plantón* (occupation) outside the factories, asking for support. They also traveled to Mexico City, addressing other workers: "I believe that Ciudad Juárez is the worst-paid place in Mexico. It's not fair. We work for the Americans, where they pay in dollars. Besides, we don't have a union to defend ourselves...Why does the government allow this if it is us, the workers, who make Ciudad Juárez develop with our labor?" As in San Quintín, the participation of women proved crucial.

To these two struggles we should add the almost 30-year struggle of teachers from the National Coordination of Educational Workers (CNTE). Since its separation from the official union in 1989, the CNTE has been trying to construct a democratic organization, eliciting the thoughts and ideas from rank-and-file teachers.

In 2013, the state began pushing a so-called "educational reform." CNTE has been speaking and struggling against it, since that "reform" is really a labor or worker discipline that seeks to ignore teachers' rights and turn them into a cheaper, easier to displace labor force. The resistance of the CNTE is the struggle of all workers against "modern" labor laws. It is no surprise that the government has responded with extreme repression and imprisonments.

There are many resistance movements taking place, especially in the central region of the country. Workers are demonstrating after being unfairly fired, either by private or state companies, and struggle to be paid or to get their jobs back. As well, there are groups of informal workers or unemployed fighting for the right to work without being harassed by the police. Most of these movements are majority women.

All these struggles are a clear indication of workers' resistance against the attack of capital and its state, which want to make labor cheaper and cheaper in the search for more and more profits. The workers' actions—demonstrations, strikes, *plantones*, etc.—trying to put a limit on the greed of capital, are the sharpest practical/theoretical critique of this system.

'FIRST NECESSITY OF LIFE'

At the same time, they pose implicitly the urge for a new kind of work, one in which the worker is not a mere means to produce gains for capital. Rather, workers are demanding that work become "the first necessity of life," "a free self-activity." In that sense, their struggles are not just a negation of capital, but the first step in overcoming its very being.

In other words, there is a positive arising from the workers' resistance. In its fullest expression, this positive is the idea and the actions toward the construction of a new society, based on truly human foundations.

How can we concretize the positive—this authentic philosophy of human liberation, already implicit in workers' thoughts and actions—to its fullest? What is our responsibility as collectives and organizations of activist-thinkers in the face of all these social movements taking place from below?

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WORKSHOPTALKS

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care, by means of big data, to maintain the bottom line.

In the first chapter of *Capital*, Marx described capital as a phenomenon with appearance vs. essence, by beginning with the commodity form. This has meaning for me as a worker, because our daily experience on the shop floor is full of this contradiction between the professed goal of quality vs. the real game of measuring its quantity, especially labor time.

That is essentially the conflict exemplified recently by a brave nurse in Oregon. Linda Boly was fired after she complained to management that cost-cutting measures were jeopardizing patient care. Hospital management accused this conscientious nurse, a 30-year veteran, of violating work rules by working off the clock, not meeting her daily quota of patients and not being able to care for several patients at the same time while feeding the computer.

COURT VICTORY FOR ONE WORKER

The whole controversy revolves around how much time a nurse like Boly is spending on each patient. Boly was written up three times for failing to meet productivity quotas and for working off the clock to complete chart work at the end of the day. During a disciplinary hearing Boly had been told, "We all slow down as we age," as though her spending "too much time with patients" were her issue and not the hospital's design.

Boly testified before the Oregon Legislature twice—using real-life examples from her job to speak the truth publicly about how Legacy Good Samaritan Medical Center endangered patients by rushing nurses—and that riled management. Boly fought for passage of Oregon's Nurse Staffing Law, which would give nurses more power to actually provide patient care.

Veteran nurses will tell you the subtext of not meeting quotas is, "You're spending too much time with each patient and we want to replace you with a new crop of workers." We workers know that management design of the work flow sets us up for failure. When something goes wrong, they scapegoat the worker.

WORKING AGAINST RULES

A lot of dedicated providers continue caring and/or charting after they've already clocked out. This is common practice for all care providers pressed for time. But we have seen even doctors at Kaiser suspended for having a backlog of "incomplete charts."

Administrators can, if they don't like you, do a "gotcha" and exclaim, "You've violated state labor laws." It's an offense to work off the clock. You take the blame, even though they set up the game.

The jury saw through the transparent hypocrisy of management at Legacy Medical Center, and Nurse Boly won her case with back pay. But it's not about winning in court. The battle over labor time is not just an individual battle. The labor laws which were put on the books by the collective effort of workers were not violated by workers but by management.

Only by acting as a collectivity can we workers overcome this separation between appearance and essence under capitalism, where there is a contradiction between quality vs. quantity of life and health.

FROM THE WRITINGS OF RAYADUNAYEVSKAYA

*Editor's note: At a time when Donald Trump's appeal to racism and reaction, echoed by other prominent candidates and demagogues in the U.S. and Europe, has won support from a part of the working class, we print the June 11, 1968, letter by Raya Dunayevskaya. She was responding to the Scottish revolutionary Harry McShane's newsletter, **The Marxist-Humanist**, which took up the Tory politician Enoch Powell's racist speeches and their impact on the working class. The original letter is held in The Harry McShane Collection, National Museum of Labour History, Manchester, England. It was printed in the July 1968 issue of **The Marxist-Humanist**, which is included in **The Raya Dunayevskaya Collection #4000**, and in a bulletin of letters by Dunayevskaya from May-June 1968, #4092. All footnotes were added by the editors.*

Dear Harry,

The June issue of *The Marxist-Humanist* just arrived and, if I may, I would like to explain why I consider the article on Powellism quite inadequate. Naturally, Marxist-Humanists "must spread the revolutionary message" and thereby win over the workers, including those who showed their own racist prejudices by coming out in support of the Tory Enoch Powell. But that hardly packs the concrete punch that Marx taught us to deliver when trade unionists take a reactionary position as they took in his day both on the Irish question and on the Paris Commune. Every British trade unionist who left the International Working Men's Association because of its enthusiastic support of the Paris Commune, Marx excoriated and, in their place, put the name of a Communard. As far as the "Irish Question" is concerned—and this, as I shall show later, is not as far removed from the race question today as might appear on the surface—here is what Marx wrote:

"The English working class... can never do anything decisive here in England until...it not only makes common cause with the Irish but actually takes the initiative in dissolving the Union established in 1801 and replacing it by a free federal relationship. And this must be done, not as a matter of sympathy with Ireland but as a demand made in the interests of the English proletariat. If not, the English people will remain tied to the leading-strings of the ruling classes."¹

I should like to approach the question of race at the present moment by (1) showing the historic background of the National Question in general and the Negro Question in particular during World War I, and during the Russian Revolution; (2) by comparing Winston Churchill's and Labor's stand during World War II; and (3) by raising the question of the African Revolutions as the only challenge to the decrepit "West" of the Suez War and the totalitarian Communism of the "East," which bloodily put down the Hungarian Freedom Fighters. It is time we faced the question that we are all products of the historic period in which we live, and that includes holding on to some of the ideas of the ruling class even when we fight exploitation.

NATIONAL QUESTION—WORDS VS. DEEDS

You are well acquainted, I am sure, with the Marxist position on the National Question, that "in principle" most stood for the right of self-determination of nations, and yet once the Russian Revolution succeeded, some Bolsheviks opposed it as "a step backward." Lenin, on the other hand, even before the Russian Revolution, insisted that "the dialectic of history and the dialectic of revolution" was such that the Easter Rebellion of the Irish played the vanguard role of bringing the proletarian revolution to the front of the historic stage. That is when Lenin was out of power, of course. He did not change when he was in power and Nikolai Bukharin then opposed giving some of the national minorities in Russia their freedom. On the contrary, he took issue with Bukharin both in content and even in the matter of language. Thus, when his co-leader dared bring in the question of the Hottentots [Khoikhoi], Lenin replied:

1. Nov. 29, 1869, letter from Karl Marx to Ludwig Kugelmann.

Racism, workers and freedom ideas

"When Comrade Bukharin said, 'We can recognize this right in some cases,' I even wrote down that he had included in the list the Hottentots, the Bushmen and the Indians. Hearing this enumeration, I thought, how is it that Comrade Bukharin has forgotten a small trifle, the Bashkirs? There are no Bushmen in Russia, nor have I heard that the Hottentots have laid claim to an autonomous republic, but we have Bashkirs, Kirghiz and a number of other peoples, and to these we cannot deny recognition. We cannot deny it to a single one of the peoples living within the boundaries of the former Russian Empire...."

"Scratch some Communists and you will find Great-Russian chauvinists...."

"The Bashkirs distrust the Great-Russians because the Great-Russians are more cultured and have utilized their culture to rob the Bashkirs. That is why the term Great-Russian is synonymous with the terms 'oppressor,' 'rogue' to Bashkirs in those remote places...."

"The past keeps fast hold of us, grasps us with a thousand tentacles, and does not allow us to take a single forward step, or compels us to take these steps badly in the way we are taking them."²

Now, in contrast to Churchill, who had answered India's demand for independence by the arrogant "I didn't become the King's Prime Minister to preside over the dismemberment of the Empire," British labor correctly branded him for the imperialist and their own oppressor that he was. India gained its independence, as did the African colonies, during Labor's reign. What has happened since then?

LABOR PARTY MESS FUELED RACISM

You, of course, know the answer better than I do: the Labor Government has made such a mess of the situation since their return to power—the unemployment, the wage freeze, the traveling in company with U.S. imperialism on the barbarous Vietnam War. All

this, and more, has brought out the very worst features of racism, not only in the ruling class, but also in parts of the working class—as if the West Indian immigrant, the British citizen of Indian or Pakistani descent, or the African student had brought these misfortunes on the British working class.

It goes without saying that the exploitative classes love it when the working people of the world fight among themselves and so make the

rule of their tormenters easier. My point, however, is that it is not enough to show that the capitalists have always lived by the principle "divide and rule." We must tell the proletariat of the technologically developed world that they lived largely on the crumbs from the imperialist table, which was so well set because imperialism lived off the fat of the land from the technologically underdeveloped countries.

Marx showed the relationship between labor's struggle for freedom and the fact that slavery was still in existence in Africa, in Asia, and the oppressed minorities **within** the developed country. This is why Marx hailed the British proletariat when they said that they would rather starve than perpetuate slavery on the other side of the Atlantic, i.e., in South USA.³ And this is why he called them a "bourgeoisified proletariat" when they moved away from that principle when it came to the establishment of a totally new form of society: the Paris Commune. He then moved away from the skilled workers to the unskilled, from the institutionalized workers to the unorganized, from what Lenin called the "aristocracy of labor" to what Marx called "deeper and lower into the masses," to find the true revolutionary core who would stand, not just for reforms, but for revolution.

What has happened since the end of the 1950s when Great Britain embarked on its imperialist adventure in Suez, and Russia (with the help of China) **on its destruction of the Hungarian Revolution**, is the

2. V.I. Lenin, Speeches to the Eighth Congress of the Russian Communist Party, March 19, 1919.

3. British workers, though suffering economic hardship from the North's blockade of exports from the South in the U.S. Civil War, demonstrated to keep their government from breaking the blockade and siding with the South. Dunayevskaya took this up in her *American Civilization on Trial and Marxism and Freedom*.

defeatism that always follows lost revolutions. Instead of looking down upon the "immigrants," the British, the American and the East European ought to hail the birth of the new Third World, especially the African Revolutions. We should hail them for once again showing us the power of the ideas of freedom, and that the will to freedom, even when unarmed and facing the mightiest empires, **can win**.

The struggle for the minds of men is still the mightiest weapon of all. And now that the French proletariat and the French students have shown that these forces of freedom have not been destroyed in technologically advanced lands,⁴ it is all the more quintessential that the British proletariat rise up to its full height and, as their ancestors showed the way to the **first Working Men's International**,⁵ so they should now pave a **new** road of world solidarity between themselves and all the "immigrants" of the world. The first step in that direction is the recognition of the fact that many of them have been repeating the reactionary ideas of **their own** exploiters.

**Comradely yours,
Raya**

4. This refers to the massive May 1968 student and worker revolt in France. See Dunayevskaya's *Philosophy and Revolution*.

5. The British workers' support of the North in the U.S. Civil War was a crucial step toward the formation of the International Working Men's Association, or First International.

Black youth and labor come together

Chicago—One of the most exciting developments here is the potential coming together of the struggle of labor against government cutbacks and austerity, and the Black Lives Matter network's powerful critique of racist inhumanity. These movements have been coming together in the streets to oppose Mayor Rahm Emanuel's and Governor Bruce Rauner's attacks.

The Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) is threatened with further salary cuts and may have to strike. By closing schools and shuttering mental health clinics, Mayor Rahm Emanuel's administration adds to the risks faced especially by Black and Latino youth. The notorious school-to-prison pipeline is one result of cutting human services to poor communities. The police murders of Laquan McDonald, Quintonio LeGrier and activist Bettie Jones, among many others, demonstrate the inhumanity that colonizes the community. Black Lives Matter activists have illuminated these brutal social relations for all the world to see.

VOICES COME TOGETHER

The Chicago Teachers Solidarity Campaign and Jobs With Justice have put together a forum to be held in March, which will bring the voices of labor—including CTU President Karen Lewis, along with speakers from the Amalgamated Transit Union and AFSCME—together with Black youth activists from Chicago State University and Black Youth Project 100 (BYP 100).

Chicago State University (CSU) is a perfect example of the racist austerity practiced by Illinois Governor Bruce Rauner. It serves over 4,800 mainly Black working-class students; it has hosted important Black cultural events. Massive budget cuts threaten its closure. It would be a huge loss to the community, and if it loses its accreditation, students won't even be able to transfer their credits to other schools.

The Black Lives Matter network, including BYP 100, has opened a new level of discussion, showing that this kind of insult isn't seen as "only" a budget decision. It is a continuation of the same U.S. history of slavery, Jim Crow, and the criminal injustice system.

TRIBUNE OF THE PEOPLE

The forum will also feature a speaker from ADAPT, the militant disability rights organization. People with disabilities, people with AIDS, and others of the most vulnerable (especially if they are also working-class and of color) have been fighting the effects of drastic cuts in spending for a long time.

The agencies that serve these communities are often vulnerable to pressure and hesitant to complain. Lutheran Social Services, the State's largest provider of services, recently announced a \$6 million funding shortfall and laid off 40% of its workforce. AIDS service agencies have also been driven to the brink.

Social services clients need a vocal movement as the kind of tribune of the people that will make these social relations transparent, as Black Lives Matter has done for so many issues, and as ADAPT has fought to do for the disabled.

It is a question of dignity and self-determination. This coming together of labor, Black youth, and all who are affected by cutbacks and austerity, should be a potent new beginning of the needed fightback. The focus on "financial" issues as being human relationships opens up new areas to both practical and theoretical development.

—Marxist-Humanist Activist



Photo by sarah-ji, flickr.com/photos/sierraromeo/24918727256/
Feb. 4 Chicago Teachers Union rally for a fair contract.

ESSAY

Revolutionary feminism & Hegel's notion of Life

Editor's note: For International Women's Day, we honor the important work of Olga Domanski (1923-2015) by presenting her essay "Revolutionary Feminism, 'Private Enclaves,' and Hegel's Notion of Life," originally printed in the March 1995 N&L and included in Explorations in Dialectical and Critical Theory.

by Olga Domanski

The concept of International Women's Day was rooted in struggle, from its birth in 1911 as an act of solidarity with the organizing struggles of U.S. garment workers, through its convergence with an actual revolutionary moment as in Russia in 1917, to its rediscovery at the end of the 1960s by a totally new Women's Liberation Movement (WLM) which forced the Left to confront the fact that the "new society" it was fighting for had to mean totally new human relations and that means and ends could not be separated.

What makes the struggle so difficult today is that two kinds of battles must be waged at one and the same time. One is the strongest action possible against the vicious demonization of welfare mothers, the lethal attacks on abortion rights, and the alarming increase in rapes, battering, poverty and unemployment. The other is the struggle against the retrogression in thought within the WLM that is manifested in the ever-widening gap between feminist theory, inside the academy and out, and the lives of Black and working women. The crisis has become so deep, with seemingly endless roll-backs on all fronts, that everything has to be rethought anew to find a pathway forward again.

It is significant that when the retrogressive "changed world," which has reached such an alarming point today, first appeared in the mid-1980s, Raya Dunayevskaya was impelled to call attention, in her Introduction/Overview to *Women's Liberation and the Dialectics of Revolution: Reaching for the Future*, to the "practicality of philosophy" when objective crises are so deep that you are facing an historic point. The specific philosophic point she was asking the WLM to investigate was Hegel's concept of "Life" in his *Science of Logic*.

It isn't that other feminist theorists have not seen the importance of studying Hegel to confront the challenges facing the WLM. Yet it is almost always the relevance of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Mind* they have debated (in particular the section on "Master and Slave," as seen most notably in Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*) while the *Science of Logic* has had very little discussion. It may be because Hegel's presentation of the dialectic he discovered in 2,500 years of humanity's struggle to be free is made in far more concrete categories in the *Phenomenology* than in his *Logic*. It has, in fact, been a matter of astonishment to many to find such a title as "Life" in so abstract a work.

Whether or not the very abstractness may help us to follow the dialectic more clearly, the section on "Life" Dunayevskaya was pointing to has enormous ramifications for what is facing us today. In Hegel, "Life" is key because it becomes the path to the Absolute Idea—the point he called "an absolute liberation" when he got to the final paragraph of his *Science of Logic*.¹ The journey to get there is so full of the contradictions from within that have to be overcome—indeed, that transcendence is the only thing that moves you forward—that, while it is important not to map Hegel to history too literally, a look into the chapter on "Life" seems to offer special insights for the WLM at this moment.

A LOOK INTO THE HEGELIAN IDEA OF LIFE

The chapter on "Life" appears, significantly, in the Doctrine of the Notion—which Hegel called "the realm of Subjectivity or Freedom" (p. 205). We have already been taken from the Doctrine of Being, through the Doctrine of Essence, to reach this final Doctrine, where Hegel develops the categories that will finally overcome the division between objectivity and subjectivity and reach "absolute liberation" in the Absolute Idea.

In the very last section of this Doctrine, "Life" is one of three chapters that comprise what Hegel calls "The Idea." That category does not mean, Hegel stresses, what is commonly thought of as "only an idea," which implies that it is merely an abstraction. Rather, Hegel's Idea is the unity of Notion and reality, for "whatever is actual is only insofar as it contains and expresses the Idea." Hegel tells any who think it strange to take up Life in so abstract a work, that it is only because they think of Logic as "empty and dead thought forms." In

1. G.W.F. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, Vol. II, trans. Johnston and Struthers (New York: Macmillan, 1929), p. 485. All quotations are from this edition, and hereafter page references will be cited in the text.

his Logic, Life is a form of the Idea.

Most important of all, Hegel's Idea is a "process." In his *Phenomenology*, which Hegel had written as an "Introduction" to his *Logic*, he described the process he would be tracing almost poetically: "Life is the universal fluid medium, quietly, silently shaping and molding and distributing the forms in all their manifold detail, becomes by that very activity the movement of those forms, or passes into life qua Process."² In the more rarified air of the *Logic*, he simply announces that the Idea as process has three stages: the Idea of Life, the Idea of Cognition, and the Absolute Idea—which turn out to be the titles of the three chapters of this final section. The first, on "Life," is the one we want to investigate here to see what illumination it might give us as Women's Liberationists.

Following his usual triadic structure, this chapter also has three sections: "The Living Individual," "The Life-Process," and "The Kind." We soon find that what permeates each of them is the movement from the Universal, through the Particular, to the Individual, as well as the reverse. These are not only the central categories of the Notion, but illuminate Hegel's whole "system."

INDIVIDUALIZED THROUGH HISTORY

What is key to this concept is that, either way—whether the movement is from Universal through Particular to Individual or Individual-Particular-Universal—the movement from abstract to concrete through particularization necessitates a first and a second negation. Far from the common misinterpretation that Hegel considers only the "Universal" as determinate, in his philosophy the "Particular" is the mediation. The urgent question becomes when does the abstract Universal particularize itself, in order for the Individual to become the concrete Universal?

Thus, in the first section on the "Living Individual," Hegel follows how the Individual finds the sensibility of "self-feeling," which turns to the "power of resistance," as the impulse to move outward and thereby discover one's "actual Individuality." We might say it is the kind of personhood we have all experienced as we have moved into the world. (It is surely what women experienced when they were drawn into the factories "to support the war effort" during World War II and then refused to be pushed back out again when it was over. It was the very threshold of the new WLM.) Yet, as soon as the Individual comes up against the objective world, a great "tension" arises. This is what Hegel discusses in the second section on the "Life-Process."

The tension results from the Individual relating to "an indifferent objectivity which is Other to it," and wanting to not lose itself but preserve itself within that relation. Hegel calls this tension between the individual and the external world an "absolute contradiction," identifying "pain" as the existence of this contradiction in life. But he considers this pain "the privilege of living natures"—because from the pain you gain the impulse to move forward by transcending the contradiction. And here is how Hegel describes that transcendence: "In the coincidence of the Individual with its objectivity... it transcends its particularity and raises itself into universality" (pp. 412-413). The movement here from Individual through the mediation of the Particular to the Universal describes, in my view, the point at which Women's Liberation moved from an Idea whose time had come to a Movement.

It was the point at which women refused to any longer consider the contradictions of life in a male-dominated society as only a private matter. The personal was political. We were making history and, far from any woman feeling lost in a collectivity, each "preserved herself within that relation," to use Hegel's terms, or felt "individualized through the historic process," as Marx put it. Most important of all, in moving from an Idea to a Movement, where every woman felt part of the whole, a totally new subjectivity was released for our age. In reaching this great new stage, I

2. G.W.F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Mind*, trans. J.B. Bailie (London: Macmillan, 1931), p. 223.

see the WLM reaching a stage that corresponds, philosophically, to the section of "Life" that Hegel calls "Kind."

WHAT KIND OF NEW RELATIONS?

Although none can deny the power of tens of thousands of women marching down Fifth Avenue in New York in 1970 to announce the birth of a new Women's Liberation Movement for our age, "Kind" is not merely a question of numbers but the way the word is used in asking: What kind of freedom are we fighting for? What kind of organization can help us get there? It

may or may not help to understand what Hegel means by this category to see that what Johnston and Struthers translate as "Kind" is translated by A.V. Miller as "Genus."³ Whatever the translation, what makes it clear that Hegel is not talking about either a "biological" or a quantitative question is his brief section on "Kind" in the *Encyclopedia Logic*, where he stresses that: "for the animal the process of Kind is the highest point of its vitality. But the animal never gets so far in its Kind as to have a being of its own; it succumbs to the power of Kind."⁴

It appears to me that Hegel wants to again show us the "privilege" of our humanity, as we are faced with how to overcome the contradictions we face even at this high stage. The contradiction is, he continues, that "In the process of Kind the immediate living being mediates itself with itself, and thus rises above its immediacy, only however to sink back into it again. Life thus runs away, in the first instance, only into the false infinity of the progress *ad infinitum*." To get out of this trap, we have to move from being only "Kind in itself" (i.e., implicitly) to become "Kind for itself."

BREAKING DOWN 'PRIVATE ENCLAVES'

This is the section we are most in need of working out, because 25 years after reaching such a great stage we are facing deeper contradictions and tensions within the WLM than feminists have perhaps ever before confronted, a contradiction that is seen the most sharply in the persistent separation between "theory" and "practice." The ground-breaking questioning of the "kind" of society we are fighting for is still only "in itself"—i.e., implicit. The task is hardly over just because of a "sensibility" to the need for totally new human relations. Without explicitly and concretely working out what "no separation of means and ends" entails, the movement runs the risk of "sinking back" into "immediacy"—or what Dunayevskaya called "private enclaves," in the same Introduction/Overview in which she challenged the WLM to grasp the "practicality of philosophy" to confront the contradictions today.

The expression "private enclaves" resonates with what Adrienne Rich critiqued as the "tendencies in feminism toward a kind of 'inner emigration'" which she spelled out as including "not just lesbian separatism" but the kind of thinking where "women-only space, often a strategic necessity, becomes an end in itself." It may also be what Patricia Altenbernd Johnson, in relating Hegel's *Philosophy of Mind* to the problems of the WLM in the 1990s, called the point where "we are generating a world of our own creation, but do not yet have freedom from and in this world." Gila Hayim, in an article on the *Phenomenology* that looked at what happens after we have gained a "mind of our own" put the problem this way: "this self...can posit itself as something beyond reach, enigmatic and unspeakable, or hide in a subjective land of its own making, detaching itself completely from the world, or emerge in the form of the preaching philosopher or cynical critic." Each of us surely knows some theoretical or activist tendency that fits one or another of these descriptions.⁵

When Dunayevskaya looked at this section of Hegel's *Logic*, she was not limiting the problem of "private enclaves" to the WLM alone. She was speaking to any attempt to escape from "Absolute Method," whether on practical, theoretical

continued on p. 8



Part of the historic August 26, 1970, Women's Strike for Equality.



Olga Domanski speaking at meeting for the centenary of Raya Dunayevskaya, Detroit, Mich., Sept. 18, 2010.

3. G.W.F. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, trans. A.V. Miller (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities, 1989), p. 772.

4. G.W.F. Hegel, *The Logic of Hegel*, trans. William Wallace (London: Oxford University Press, 1931), para. 214. This is commonly referred to as either the *Smaller Logic* or the *Encyclopedia Logic*.

5. See "Living the Revolution," by Adrienne Rich in *The Women's Review of Books*, September 1986; Patricia A. Johnson's discussion of Dunayevskaya's work on Hegel's Absolutes in *Quarterly Journal of Ideology*, Vol. 13, Number 4, 1989; Gila Hayim's "Hegel's Critical Theory and Feminist Concerns," *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, 16, 1 (1990).

ENVIRONMENT, LABOR, RACE AND PHILOSOPHY

“Paris climate accord’s suicidal complacency spurs protests” (Jan.-Feb. *N&L*) shows us how profound our vision about climate change should be. Surely, the Paris Agreement is insufficient, since it is not legally binding and doesn’t do anything substantial to reduce carbon dioxide emissions. However, it is not enough to pose ourselves against this limited Agreement, and look for “better” accords that could lead to a world with alternative energy sources. No, our vision should go beyond the limits of capitalist growth, in which all these accords are trapped. We need a humanist conception of social change. That is implicit in the demonstrations and protests seen both outside and inside the Paris Conference. But still that is not enough. We should, as the article poses, “make explicit what is implicit in today’s struggles for an alternative path of development,” and go deeper, to the self-activity of workers, Indigenous communities, women, students, etc. fighting against this capitalist society, while building a new one: to the place where this practical self-activity is, at the same time, the self-activity of the idea of truly human liberation.

**Activist
Mexico**

Under the banner of “our work is not done yet,” a variety of groups at the Dr. King march in Los Angeles reiterated the contribution of Dr. Martin Luther King to freedom struggles for Black civil rights. Among numerous banners, “We will not forget” was a pointed reminder of the senseless killing of Black youth by the police in our cities. The presence of many cops made some people feel not so secure after so much police brutality almost every other day. On the other side

were banners perverting Black Lives Matter: “Black money matters,” “Black business matters”—a reminder that capitalism even uses human tragedy to secure its well-being. Our work is truly not done until this system is uprooted and a new human society replaces it—a society that does not assassinate its heroes.

**Teacher
Los Angeles**



The tearing down of refugees’ tent housing at Calais, France, is awful. Nothing is spared, not even the churches and mosques. President Hollande had promised to keep safe. You want France, under the “Socialists,” to be better than this. But the French Left has long been complicit in anti-immigrant racism. In the 1970s, the Communist Party excluded immigrants from municipal housing projects. On Christmas Eve, 1980, a hostel for African immigrants was bulldozed by order of the CP mayor of Vitry, a working-class town near Paris. Far Right forces have taken over just enough populist rhetoric from that old, unprincipled Left to become a growing force throughout Europe. And a very vocal part of the Euro-American Left, fans of Milosevic and Putin, might be said to have been born on that Christmas Eve.

**Tim Finnigan
Chicago**

Retired autoworkers remember that the Flint River has been polluted for decades by industry, notably General Motors. At the same time as people focus

READERS' VIEWS

on industrial pollution and the national decline of infrastructure, don’t let go of the *preventable* human tragedy in Flint. Many see the crisis as a way to clear out Flint for new capitalist development, just as in Detroit tax foreclosure and unaffordable water is designed to displace existing residents to pave the way for new development.

**Community activist
Detroit**

Q: What do heroes look like? A: They can look like anyone. Some are scientists, like the ones who went to Flint from Virginia Tech to conduct an objective study of the water contamination’s effects. Also the pediatrician Dr. Mona Hanna-Attisha of Flint, and LeeAnne Walters, the Flint resident who called in the Virginia Tech scientists in the first place, and the other Flint residents who organized for action on the poisoned water.

**Environmental justice activist
Illinois**

QUEER LIBERATION

Most reviews of my book (see “Review: *Out In The Union: A Labor History of Queer America*,” Jan.-Feb. *N&L*) have neglected a topic that Adele highlighted: the activity of Queer workers to build unions and establish collective bargaining at LGBT-owned businesses and service centers. Her dialectical view of labor/LGBT politics shows how coalitions can make a dynamic difference in our communities.

**Miriam Frank
New York**

Thank you for an accurate writing about David Bowie and fascism (“David Bowie’s legacy,” Jan.-Feb. *N&L*). Thank goodness for people in motion, those who helped him come back to being for liberation and for Bowie inspiring so many to be for liberation. Being liberated to live in one’s true sexual orientation is one of the issues still in this world. It’s reflected in the current debate as to whether Bowie finally said he’s Bisexual, after saying early in his music career that he’s Bisexual, then in the 1980s saying he’s not. No matter whether he was Bisexual, writer Sally Kohn of refinery29.com, on Jan. 11, said: “We were never supposed to go anywhere but simply to find ourselves, guided by David Bowie singing for us all the infinite possibilities. Bowie was an artist in the truest, most original sense. With his music, with his personas and with his life, he painted a vision for a future we’re only just now starting to inhabit. And it’s amazing.”

**Mourning David Bowie
Chicago**

I’m proud to say that my friend and Queer rights activist Darrell Gordon was one of the people who received awards from Pathfinders Prevention Education Fund, a Chicago Westside community-based non-profit HIV/AIDS education and training organization. The awards were for dedication to equal access to healthcare for all and HIV/AIDS prevention.

**Kaitlin
Chicago**

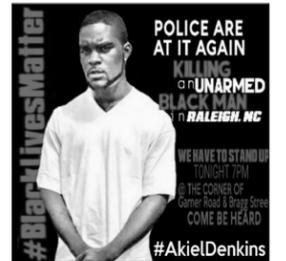
BLACK LIVES MATTER

Have you heard about the young man named Steven Kyle Askew killed by police while asleep in his car? This happened in Memphis. He was murdered by two police officers on Jan. 17, 2013, at 10 PM while he lay asleep waiting for a girlfriend to come home from work. These officers, Ned Aufdenkamp, who has a very checkered past, and Matthew Dyess are back on the force though the investigation has not been completed. The officers, who were at this apart-

ment complex investigating loud music, claimed that they saw Steven asleep and knocked on the window and gave “verbal commands” and that Steven pointed a gun at them. The autopsy showed that he was shot from the rear of the vehicle and in the back multiple times. Steven had no criminal record and was not doing anything wrong. Let’s try to get justice for Steven by signing this petition to the Federal Justice Department for an independent investigation: www.ipe-titions.com/petition/justice-for-steven-kyle-askew/.

**MarQuita
Memphis**

Akiel Denkins, a young Black man, was shot and killed by a Raleigh cop on Feb. 29. This was followed by marches and vigils. According to articles, some people told Akiel’s mom that he was unarmed and shot in the back while fleeing. The police say a gun was found near the body.



Even though the media will focus on Akiel’s arrest record, there is nothing more serious than law enforcement’s lethal force, nothing more serious than another dead young Black man. Black Lives Matter, no matter the details.

**White woman
Raleigh, N.C.**

BOLIVIAN SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

A referendum which would have allowed Bolivian President Evo Morales to run for another presidential term was narrowly defeated, 52% to 48%. Morales, the first Indigenous president, battled against a neoliberal elite, significantly reducing poverty, creating a far more progressive Constitution and ending significant parts of Bolivia’s historical racist rule against its Indigenous majority. However, the social upheaval carried out by Bolivia’s impoverished masses in 2000-2005 was demanding a far deeper social transformation than Morales and his party were prepared to undertake. Where 2000-2005 demonstrated a massive social movement from below as the motor of social change, post-2005 rule focused more on state intervention in the economy. Thus, conflict between social movements and the state, whether in the Indigenous city El Alto or in the fight for Indigenous rights in the TIPNIS region, came to the fore. Did this not set the ground for the defeat of the electoral referendum? Can the social movements from below now regain their initiative?

**Eugene Walker
Mexico City**

TRUMPERY’S FASCISM & RACISM

For months it has looked like the Trump campaign was modeled on the George Wallace movement and Mussolini’s rise to power, combined with Silvio Berlusconi’s control of the media. But as Trump keeps topping himself with baser slurs against Mexicans and Muslims, this birther candidate has gathered into the fold all manner of white supremacists, from the Klan leader and international genocide supporter David Duke to the prominent Nazi who roughed up a Black woman at a Trump rally in Louisville, Ky., at Trump’s instigation. The belated attacks from Republicans will likely have no effect, as the rest of the party is, as you hear Trump supporters say, thinking what Trump dares to say out loud.

**Disgusted
Chicago**

OLGA DOMANSKI’S REVOLUTIONARY LIFE, 1923-2015

Olga was/is a friend of mine as she was to so many others. Her transition leaves a corporeal void, but Olga remains as a viable, irresistible, important touchstone for all with whom she engaged, and beyond.

Her philosophical and humanitarian visions, her diligence, integrity, courage and activism will be—can be, must be—carried on by all those with universal humanitarian responsibilities.

**Professor Gloria I. Joseph
St. Croix, Virgin Islands**

I extend to all members and friends of News and Letters Committees my deep condolences on the passing of Olga Domanski. Olga was a very welcoming person. Towards myself, yes, and I witnessed it over and over towards so many, whether the people came regularly or occasionally to News and Letters Committees’ events. I also witnessed her deep knowledge of and commitment to Marxist-Humanism, a philosophy that can save humanity and, indeed, the world. Thank goodness every day for Olga, who helped spread the life-saving philosophy of Marxist-Humanism when she worked in the office, spoke at meetings and to people inside and outside the office!

**Elise
Chicago**

The news of Olga’s death made me very sad. I met Olga on May 1, 1990, in a very symbolic site: in the cemetery where the martyrs of Chicago Haymarket are buried. I had the opportunity to talk with her and she always seemed to me a marvelous woman.

May she rest in peace, and her liberatory thought, learned from Raya Dunayevskaya, continue in each one of the brothers, sisters and comrades who continue in News and Letters Committees.

**Miguel Angel
Mexico City**



Michael Pearn / News & Letters

What a lifetime as a revolutionary—from Philadelphia and Flint to West Virginia, Detroit and Chicago. Olga was central to developing Marxist-Humanism, and continuing it after Raya Dunayevskaya’s death. We have much to learn from her worldwide correspondence.

**Bob McGuire
Chicago**

Condolences on the death of Olga. She will be missed as a dedicated socialist intellectual and a Jane Higgins in your movement. She was always open to suggestions in my phone conversations. Her dedication to *N&L* and its important activities was obvious.

**Stanley Rosen
Santa Fe, N.M.**

Olga’s memorial made me realize how she was *the* organizational person.

**Young Marxist-Humanist
Mexico City**

After numerous years of the baseball faction of *N&L* going to Wrigley Field and suffering through Cub games, we finally convinced Olga to join us. The stage was set for a Saturday afternoon July baseball game at the friendly confines. Early on, you could tell that Olga’s baseball acumen was lacking. Balls and strikes, “What’s that?” Stealing a base is allowed, “You’ve got to be kidding”; bunting, “Why would anybody do that?” Somehow we all lasted the nine innings with plenty of food and laughs. Olga’s knowledge of the game improved but when it came to the dialectic she was strictly a powerhouse home run hitter.

**Jerry K.
Chicago**

Enclosed is \$5 to renew my subscription plus \$45 for subs to prisoners, in honor of Olga. May she rest in power. In gratitude for your dedication.

**Bridgette
Raleigh, N.C.**

THE MOVEMENTS FROM PRACTICE AND FROM THEORY

Domanski talks about Dunayevskaya unearthing facts from history, and putting them in a new light (“Women as thinkers and revolutionaries,” Jan.-Feb. *N&L*). The movement of revolutionary masses being itself a form of revolutionary theory, is the “new light” Dunayevskaya gives to historical events taken for granted by official History. It is the responsibility of revolutionary intellectuals to be next to the masses, helping them to develop their movements to their full theoretical/practical expression. A fundamental topic is the philosophic ground we need for the Women’s Liberation Movement (WLM), which can’t be equated with liberation in general, as shown historically by the fact that even revolutionary men haven’t been as revolutionary as women. But the WLM can’t get stuck in its own “fixed particulars”: De Beauvoir’s Existentialism, the “party-to-lead,” men as the enemy, etc. Instead, it requires a total emancipatory philosophy, which can only be found in the dialectic movement from practice to theory and from theory to practice, as understood by Marxist-Humanism.



J.G.F. Héctor
Mexico City

A daylong conference on Armenians and Progressive Politics was held in Los Angeles on Feb. 6. with about 150. Richard D. Wolff gave the keynote speech on “Capitalist Crisis and Post-Soviet Socialism.” He defined the socialism of 2016 as cooperation among workers who take over factories. When the capitalist is not willing to negotiate with the workers for fair wages and walks away, the workers would, under the rule of eminent domain, take control of production. That would be a democratic method of running production as opposed to the Soviet manner where the Party leaders were directing it. This is not really what Marx said as Wolff implied. Marx suggested cooperation among freely associated labor and advocated a society beyond capitalist economic value: freely

associated labor produces for the good of society without state and/or market to regulate exchange. Marx raised the banner of “from each according to their ability, to each according to their need.”

Mannel
Los Angeles

BERTA CACERES

It was awful to hear of the murder of Berta Cáceres, Honduras’ champion of Indigenous rights and environmental justice. She had often been threatened for her opposition to hydropower projects and illegal logging. Capitalism has been doing this to Indigenous people for centuries: over 100 Honduran activists have been murdered since 2010. As she said last year, “The political, economic and social situation in Honduras is getting worse



Solidarity activist
Midwest USA

and there is an imposition of a project of domination, of violent oppression, of militarization, of violation of human rights, of transnationalization, of the turning over of the riches and sovereignty of the land to corporate capital, for it to privatize energy, the rivers, the land; for mining exploitation; for the creation of development zones.”

WHY READ N&L?

Benedict Anderson cited Hegel’s idea that “newspapers serve modern man as a substitute for morning prayers” creating an “imagined community” that reassures readers that the “imagined world is visibly rooted in everyday life.”

I am an anarchist who reads *your* paper as a substitute for prayer. I became interested in the Kurds of northern Syria when I learned that their political guru Abdullah Ocalan moved from a dogmatic Marxism-Leninism when he read the writings of Murray Bookchin in a Turkish prison. He read Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, which spurred him to move from a narrow conception of Kurdish nationalism. Anderson was a Hegelian-Marxist with an appreciation for the anarchist movement, as it was at the turn of the 20th century.

Lew F.
Oakland, Calif.

WOMEN’S LIBERATION

It is literally unbelievable that Supreme Court Justice Anthony Kennedy can doubt that TRAP laws close abortion clinics. That they do is a *fact*. These laws are directly responsible for the closing of clinics across the country and for the *fact* that now thousands of women—particularly in the South USA—have to travel hundreds of miles to obtain an abortion. If this isn’t an undue burden, then nothing is. The whole idea that an undue burden has to burden a huge number of women is obscene. If one woman is burdened by a ridiculous law thought up by an anti-abortion fanatic “think tank” for the sole purpose of making abortion hard to get, that is one too many.

Women’s Liberationist
Chicago

VOICES FROM BEHIND THE BARS

As a state prisoner, I write to request a subscription to your publication. Though I’ve been imprisoned for two decades, I was not aware of *N&L* until one of your contributor writers, Urszula Wislanka, shared a copy of your latest issue while I was at my federal jury trial in San Francisco this past November (see “Prisoner beats legal odds to win guard retaliation suit,” Jan.-Feb. *N&L*). I found the publication engaging and inspiring, and really enjoyed reading it. I am currently unable to forward the subscription fee, but I anticipate that will

change (I prevailed at trial and damages were awarded by the jury) and intend to furnish the fees at that time.

Jesse Perez
Delano, Calif.

I truly appreciate the perspective I get through *N&L*. In the USA we are trained to believe that *our* capitalism/imperialism is the greatest thing in existence. I now believe that we can, should, and are obligated to do better than this. I love the solidarity that your newspaper shows by commenting on the whole world. Please do continue to send me *N&L* if you can.



Prisoner
Represa, Calif.

I am a political prisoner who works with the youth. U.S. prisoners’ lives matter. We are building a Prison Multi-Cultural Conscious Group as part of a movement to end the new Jim Crow.

Prisoner
San Diego, Calif.

I am writing to request a subscription to *N&L*. I’ve been incarcerated in the Illinois gulag system since 1967, and trying to keep up with the outside world from this side of the wall is rather trying, to put it mildly.

Prisoner
Mt. Sterling, Ill.

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

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS FROM NEWS & LETTERS

by Raya Dunayevskaya

- Marxism and Freedom: from 1776 until Today**
Foreword by Joel Kovel \$24.95
- Philosophy and Revolution: From Hegel to Sartre and from Marx to Mao** \$24.95
- Rosa Luxemburg, Women’s Liberation, and Marx’s Philosophy of Revolution** 1991 edition.
Foreword by Adrienne Rich \$24.95
- Women’s Liberation and the Dialectics of Revolution: Reaching for the Future** \$24.95
- The Power of Negativity: Selected Writings on the Dialectic in Hegel and Marx** \$24.95
- Crossroads of History: Marxist-Humanist Writings on the Middle East** \$10.00
- The Marxist-Humanist Theory of State-Capitalism** \$10.00
- The Philosophic Moment of Marxist-Humanism: Two Historic-Philosophic Writings**
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by Charles Denby

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

Pamphlets published by News and Letters Committees

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

by Robert Taliaferro

In a world of constant change and struggle, it is rare to know a person who has had such an impact on the history and revolutionary idealism of social change and Marxist-Humanist philosophy as Olga Domanski. She has been a pillar that has defined the foundation of News and Letters Committees for decades.

In 2002, at 78 years old, she wrote her first letter of support for a prisoner going before the parole board. She had never met this man, but the power of his writing and art she felt revealed “a man with exceptional intellect and a great feeling for humanity in all the colors, ages, nationalities and genders it includes.”

When someone receives that type of endorsement from someone who is so well-respected, it is impossible not to feel humbled and honored that a person so dedicated to the cause of justice and equality would take the

VOICES FROM THE INSIDE OUT

Olga knew ‘what a revolution entails’

Olga Domanski is greatly missed. Although the word “revolution” has recently returned to the mainstream of U.S. political discourse (it has never been absent from the lexicon of the advertising industry), the reality is that the number of people who truly understand what a revolution entails, let alone desire one, is so small that if you have met one or two in your life you are fortunate. Olga was one of those people.

Among the things that I will miss are the personal details, like her love of music, and the wealth of casual anecdotes from her life as part of an American Left that has all but disappeared. A Philadelphia native, her father was a stamp collector of such renown among aficionados that he received mail addressed simply with his name followed by the word, “Philatelist.”

I don't know what radicalized her, but Olga joined the Workers Party, a small socialist group, at the start of World War II, only to discover that she had become a member of a small but lively political minority, the state-capitalist tendency, within the larger group.

She and her comrades strove to carry their message to the wartime working class, standing at factory gates and knocking on doors on what they called “Red



Olga Domanski flexes the muscles she built working in auto factories.

Sundays” to distribute the group's newspaper.

It was a hard life. She, like many of the radicals of the period, voluntarily “colonized” herself in an industrial job, at one point working in the historic Fisher Body assembly plant in Detroit.

She vividly detailed this experience in a document titled, “Pages From a Shop Diary.” (See “Olga Domanski: Embodiment of Woman as Reason,” Jan.-Feb. *N&L*.) She also lived and worked in a West Virginia coal-mining town during an important wave of post-war wildcat strikes against mine operators and the United Mine Workers leadership.

Sharp factional battles accompanied these efforts. Life was certainly made no easier as she and her co-thinkers set out on their own independent course in 1955, only one year after Joseph McCarthy was censured by the U.S. Senate. She put in decades of grinding labor to produce and distribute *N&L*, managing much of the organization's affairs in addition to producing a long record of journalistic and theoretical work (see p. 5 for one example).

The ranks of the organization were never large, but Olga took encouragement from events that seemed to confirm the group's perspectives, like the massive June 1963 Civil Rights March in downtown Detroit that she would often recall. The rapid emergence of entirely new and powerful movements, particularly the Women's Liberation Movement, inspired and sustained her.

Olga was no stranger to periods of serious reaction and defeat. Her tireless and cheerful presence is sorely missed in today's world, threatened as it is by so many dire challenges to human dignity and well-being.

—Kevin O'Brien

time to write such a supportive letter.

Such were Olga's instincts and beliefs. Such was her understanding of justice. Such was her recognition of the potential of every human being and her ability to exemplify and display the humanity of Marxist-Humanism in her life.

There was a truly humbling aspect to the way

Olga approached Marxist-Humanism. Her thoughts and opinions carried considerable weight, because she exuded Marxist-Humanist philosophy.

OLGA—THE BEST OF NEWS AND LETTERS

Olga represented the best of what News and Letters Committees members and supporters should strive to achieve: furthering the cause of Marxist-Humanism in every aspect of our human society, and doing our part to infuse youth with the revolutionary spirit and energy which she shared with us for over 60 years.

To be able to recognize that a person's intellect—though that person may be incarcerated—should be respected and allowed to flourish is one of those things that Olga championed throughout her life.

For one prisoner, and his family, her kindness, understanding and humbling magnanimity will be another of her legacies that will not be forgotten.

The true measure of a human being is not what they are required to do to enhance the common good, but the sacrifices that they are willing to make that are above and beyond what is expected of them.

We have a noble legacy. One of the most important aspects of that tradition is to make sure that we do everything possible to share that legacy with youth, so that News and Letters Committees continues to be at the forefront of revolutionary thought and the champion of Marxist-Humanism in this century and beyond.



Olga Domanski with poet Adrienne Rich in 1994. They maintained a correspondence until Rich died in 2012.

Part of ‘a generation of revolutionaries’

Revolutionaries aren't easy to memorialize. They become part of our shared historical memory, their lives gathering ever-new meaning as the fight for freedom cuts deeper and becomes more concrete. They are above petty “last words,” and will converse with unborn generations as they did with us. This is the light in which I think of Olga.

Olga had tremendous strength of character. Her responsibility to Marxist-Humanism was her responsibility to struggling humanity, with no hint of condescension, vanguardism, or academicism. A discussion with a worker or refugee could open a window or door to a new, more human world. State power or bourgeois honors meant nothing in comparison.

This attitude to life is powerful in itself. The miracle of human creativity is that a generation of revolutionaries (Raya Dunayevskaya, Olga, Charles Denby, Andy Phillips, a handful of others) managed to embody it in organizational form. A “philosophic moment” became a world-historic revolutionary tendency.

In my experience as a member of News and Letters Committees, which has sometimes been fraught, Olga was always encouraging of philosophic questioning and development. Her loyalty to Raya's body of ideas wasn't (and couldn't be) a dogmatism. It was at one with her confidence in human beings.

Olga loved music and culture. She sang in choir. She enjoyed attending the Lyric Opera. When I worked there it was fun discussing my conversion to Verdi with her. You could discuss most things with her; we once had an interesting conversation on the question, “Why is there something rather than nothing?” The kind of discussions people will still have after the revolution.

She wasn't just an influence on my own life. By taking responsibility for the organizational expression of the idea of freedom, by making that exist, Olga made my life possible. What can one say? We miss you, comrade, and we'll pay it forward.

—Gerry Emmett

‘Taking organizational responsibility’

Ever since first working with her in Detroit in the 1970s, Olga Domanski impressed me as one of the warmest and most caring persons I've known. Along with Olga's unassuming, amiable manner came a steely resolve, what she called taking organizational responsibility.

When the ailing Thurgood Marshall, who had risen as a voice in the legal arena for the great Civil Rights Movement to be the first African American on the Supreme Court, decided to step down, Olga was furious. She exclaimed, “That's not taking organizational responsibility!” George H.W. Bush's choice to take this African-American “slot” was Clarence Thomas, who continues to be the most reactionary justice on an increasingly reactionary Court.

Olga's total commitment to organizational responsibility never stopped as she grew older and frail. Greater than any individual's life is the power of the idea of freedom that needs to be cherished even in the makeup of the Court.

Olga's incredible talent came out in her many lead articles for *N&L*. In her self-effacing manner, she repeatedly said the leads “wrote themselves.” Any who write leads for *N&L* know that is not true, but Olga was saying that, when one is disciplined by the idea of freedom, facts emerge in a way that illuminate whatever issue one is taking on.

Olga reminded us in various ways that, as important as is catching the power of the Idea as it emerges in and transforms the world, that is only the beginning. Crucial then is to capture the power of the Idea “explicitly” to overcome the ever-present risk of the movement “sinking back” into “immediacy,” as Olga put it in her 1995 essay, “Revolutionary Feminism, ‘Private Enclaves,’ and Hegel's Notion of Life” (see p. 5).

In that philosophic dialog and elsewhere, Olga made it clear that organization has to begin from an organization of thought, namely, Absolute Method, Hegel's idea of freedom as a self-moving process, which could itself make a difference when humans realize in our heads and in life the self-determining Idea of freedom that spans “generations.” Though something of Olga's organizational responsibility lives on in those she left behind, nothing will replace her presence, which will be sorely missed.

—Ron Kelch

ESSAY On Life

continued from p. 5

or organizational questions. Absolute Method is the method of “absolute negativity,” the simultaneously subjective-objective, continuous process of becoming that Hegel had discovered, which made his philosophy so revolutionary. Absolute Method is not discussed by Hegel until the very last chapter of the *Science of Logic* on the Absolute Idea, but we have been seeing Hegel working toward it in this section on “Life.” Indeed, the critical nature of Hegel's chapter on “Life” is that it becomes the transition to the Idea of Cognition, in the process of dialectically working out our way to Freedom.

Hegel says that this transition is achieved once we grasp the Idea as **totality**, through what he calls “Intro-Reflection.” I would call it taking a hard look in the historic mirror and asking ourselves what **are** the totally new relations we need, between woman and man, woman and woman, and most of all between the movement from practice and the movement from theory, to achieve a new integrality between the Idea and the lived experience of each and all of us.

THE TASK THAT REMAINS TO BE DONE

What still remains for us to investigate in the chapter on “Life” is what we can make of Hegel's discussion of “the living generations” at the very end of the chapter. This question of “the living generations” appears to be closely connected with his concept of “absolute negativity,” which Hegel implies has to permeate every facet of our lives, as individuals and as a movement, to ensure a forward movement to Freedom. Whatever else it means, I want to suggest it means that for the dialectic to live it has to be constantly re-created by every new age. Marx re-created the Hegelian dialectic as “revolution in permanence.” Standing on that ground, Dunayevskaya recreated it as Marxist-Humanism and, returning to Hegel for a new age, saw “absolute negativity as new beginning.”

If we do not take responsibility for continuing that revolutionary dialectic for today, if we think “philosophy” is not our job but for someone else, if we don't see there is no “organizational answer” for women's liberation or any other question that doesn't begin with a profound organization—or a re-organization—of our thought, we will not yet have escaped the “private enclave” that prevents us from finding the way out of the deadly retrogression that threatens to destroy us today.

Oil: bad both ways

The price of oil has fallen over 70% in less than two years. Previously high oil prices were blamed for recessions, as in the global economic crisis of the mid-1970s, in which the 1973 “oil shock” was one factor. Now low oil prices are proving economically disastrous in oil-producing states like Texas and North Dakota, and numerous countries from Russia to Nigeria. Worldwide, an estimated 250,000 oil industry workers have lost jobs, and many other people are being hit by economic weakness.

Pundits who crow about the way this undercuts governments like Vladimir Putin’s in Russia callously disregard the real suffering by working people there. At the same time, that suffering stokes discontent and even labor unrest, which so far Putin has kept in check. In Venezuela, the fall in oil prices highlighted how much “building socialism” had meant an oil-funded welfare state, and how dependent it remained on the capitalist world market—which the right wing was quick to exploit. (See “Venezuela’s election,” Jan.-Feb. N&L.)

The world economy continues to show tendencies to crisis. That includes oil-importing China, whose decreased demand has hit exporters from Europe to Africa to Latin America. That is one reason the price of oil has been falling, along with the tremendous increase in oil production brought about in the U.S. and other places when oil prices were high. Much of that increased production uses especially expensive sources and technologies, such as shale oil fracking in North Dakota and tar sands mining in Canada—and they are more polluting, with more greenhouse gas emissions.

HIGH OR LOW, ECOLOGY & PEOPLE SUFFER

The same is true for some projects that have, for now, been abandoned, like drilling in the Arctic Ocean and Utah’s tar sands. Industry plans to revisit these when prices rise again.

The decimation of jobs in some regions shows starkly how, whether the price of oil is high or low, either way is a catastrophe for the common person.

In addition to the serious economic effects, it shows how capitalism is locked into climate change. Low oil prices stimulate more consumption of oil. High prices stimulate investment in production of the most environmentally damaging sources of fossil fuels.

This perversity inherent in capitalism’s law of motion reinforces what some scientists have been saying in response to the pathetic emptiness of the Paris climate change summit agreement: we need a different foundation to the economy. That is the kind of thing that Karl Marx referred to in the work of a scientist of his day as “another unconscious socialist tendency!”

—Franklin Dmitryev



by Suzanne Rose

Students with mental health needs are denied an equal education as a result of their placement in a segregated school operated by the Pasadena Unified School District (PUSD), according to a class action lawsuit filed in federal court in Los Angeles by the Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law on Jan. 27. The complaint says that PUSD and its superintendent are violating the Americans with Disabilities Act by warehousing scores of children with mental health needs at PUSD’s Focus Point Academy, a separate school where children receive an inferior education and are subjected to dangerous physical restraints and forced isolation and they are threatened with repeated arrests and suspensions for minor offenses.

* * *

The Florida Department of Corrections routinely denies disabled prisoners access to wheelchairs, canes, sign language interpreters and hearing aids, claims a disability rights group in court. The lawsuit was filed in Tallahassee Federal Court on behalf of 32 inmates. According to the complaint, filed in February of this year, the Florida Department of Corrections chose to purposely violate the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Rehabilitation Act, the Eighth Amendment and the due process clause of the U.S. Constitution.

* * *

The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission said in February that it is proposing a rule that would require federal agencies to work toward a 12% workforce representation rate for people with disabilities and a 2% representation rate for those with targeted or severe conditions including intellectual disability. The rule calls for government agencies to provide personal assistants to employees with disabilities who need help with eating, using the restroom and other basic human functions at work. The hiring goals would apply to all levels of federal employment.

No coal trains in Oakland, California

Oakland, Calif.—On Feb. 16, pastors from several African-American churches, Jewish rabbis, Native American spiritual leaders, Sierra Club, System Change Not Climate Change, and representatives from many other groups spoke and rallied outside City Hall against allowing trains from Utah to pass through Oakland to unload millions of tons of coal at a new port terminal. We then lined up to speak at the City Council hearings, which went on late into the night.

At issue was the Council’s proposal to hire pro-development Environmental Science Associates to evaluate Terminal Logistics Solutions’ plan to open the new terminal for exporting coal in exchange for a \$53 million investment



Ron Kelch / News & Letters

from four Utah counties.

Terminal Logistics Solutions had solicited support from Oakland’s African-American community with a promise to bring jobs. Speakers not only saw these jobs as a mirage but as immoral because furthering the extraction of fossil fuels is subjecting the world to ecological suicide.

Some spoke of the need for jobs in alternative energy. All recognize this ploy as a form of environmental racism in light of all the toxic particulate matter coal trains would release in an already asthma-inducing area of West Oakland.

Margaret Gordon of the West Oakland Environmental Indicators Project said coal was never mentioned as part of the terminal project in her neighborhood. “I don’t need it at this stage of my life.” She added: “Flint, Michigan, coming to Oakland.” The Council put off any action on an Environmental Science Associates contract in the face of this widespread community opposition.

Several local trade unions formally announced their opposition to the coal trains. Only labor in everyday life that is not a mere means to earn a living, but one with life and a rational metabolism with nature, can turn this insanity around. While the fossil fuel industry may have bought most of the politicians in Washington, locally there is not only deep opposition but a sense of global responsibility for the planet. Utah coal shipped through Oakland would be burned mostly in China and exacerbate global warming. People here don’t want to be a part of that. There’ll be no coal in Oakland.

—Ron Kelch

EDITORIAL

continued from p. 1

significant during the heroic defense of Kobane against ISIS has been undermined as the U.S. and Russia became patrons of the YPG. This has led the YPG leaders into unprincipled attacks on the FSA, abetted by Russian airstrikes. This will have negative consequences for Kurdish self-determination, and these “leaders” will ultimately have to answer to the Kurdish people.

Second, there is the problem of imperialism’s fundamental hostility to freedom and revolution and a situation like the present, with U.S. and Russian imperialism playing good cop and bad cop. The U.S. may also be compared to William Burroughs’ description of the heroin dealer: he can control you through the supply or control you by cutting off the supply.

Civilian demonstrations have long called on the armed groups fighting to free Syria to put aside their differences—often a result of their patrons’ demands—and focus on fighting Assad and ISIS. There have been indications of this happening, under the impact of the carpet bombing. The war of ideas could become clearer and more powerful if the armed struggle comes more firmly under the influence of civilian opinion. Only in the continuing creation of new human relations can the Revolution develop to its full potential.

REVOLUTION DEEP AND BROAD

Despite the world’s seeming indifference, and in the face of the failure of the supposedly “internationalist” Left, Syrian revolutionaries have demonstrated a profound humanism by keeping open lines of communication. The people of Kafranbel, for example, week after week demonstrate with slogans and cartoons despite regime bombardments, ISIS assassination attempts against Raed Fares, the main slogan writer, and attempts by Jabhat al-Nusra to intimidate them.

In many Syrian neighborhoods and villages, despite sieges and barrel bombs, local councils have continued to function democratically. Elections are held, services the state has long abandoned are delivered when possible. The civil defenders of the White Helmets day after day risk their lives to dig victims of bombings out of collapsed buildings, knowing that the regime is likely to bomb the same spot again.

Organizations like the Syrian American Medical Society and Karam Foundation aren’t just “NGOs,” but extensions of the new human relationships that began on the streets in 2011. Where the world looked away, these Syrian-run projects took upon themselves the medical care, education, feeding, and the effort to keep the coming generations alive in the face of genocide. Syrian women have been central. “Never again!” lives in their dedication and heroic efforts.

REVOLUTIONARIES CHALLENGE THE LEFT

Despite world imperialism, despite much of the Left’s failure of solidarity, all this revolutionary activity and principle have had an impact. More and more, revolutionaries are beginning to challenge the Left. In the U.S., grassroots efforts like the Committee in Solidarity with the People of Syria (Minneapolis) and the Antiwar Committee in Solidarity with the Struggle for Self-determination (Indiana and Illinois) are relating to the Syrian Revolution with the kind of thought, passion and perspective that marks a possible new beginning for internationalism.

The Syrian Revolution has been the test of world politics. As Marxist-Humanists, it has deepened our understanding of the philosophy of revolution in permanence, and we offer our philosophic as well as material solidarity.

QUEERNOTES

by Elise

Thousands of Queer people and their supporters participated in the Pride Parade in Mumbai, India, in early February. They were celebrating in part the decision of India’s Supreme Court to re-hear its 2013 decision to reinstate British colonial-era law Section 377, which criminalizes homosexual sex.

* * *

After a Herrin, Ill., neighbor of Transgender Girl Scout Stormi told her, “Nobody wants to buy cookies from a boy in a dress,” she wound up selling more than 3,000 boxes via Digital Cookies, the Girl Scouts’ online portal. Stormi’s determination inspired a New York comedy duo to give free tickets to audience members who bought Stormi’s cookies, and a California multimedia musical donated a box of her cookies for every ticket sold. Stormi, a foster child, will donate some of the proceeds to foster children.

* * *

Activists in Chile’s Observatorio de Legislación y Derechos Humanos have moved the Chilean Ministry of Health to order the suspension of so-called “normalizing” irreversible surgery and other treatments for Intersex children. Children will be encouraged to decide what, if any, treatments they want when they reach an age when they can make these decisions on their own. The report calling for the suspension said that Transgender and Intersex children’s situation is a “cross-cutting issue relevant to substantive rights protection.”

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Women battle war, terrorism and anti-abortion fanatics

continued from p. 1

fanatics screaming at women going for healthcare. This so-called “sidewalk counseling” consists of zealots yelling “Murderer, murderer, don’t kill your baby!” trying to block every woman’s way, taking pictures and videos of patients, passing out literature full of lies, and much more.

CLINIC ESCORTS ARE HEROES

Heroes of the movement are the escorts, all volunteers, who show up early every morning the clinics are open, no matter how cold or wet, and put their bodies between the fanatics and women trying to access healthcare as they escort them to the clinic door.

The death of Supreme Court Justice Scalia may mean the overturning of the Texas law requiring abortion doctors to obtain admitting privileges at a nearby hospital and requiring clinics that offer abortion to have the same standards as hospitals. But if it is a tie vote, which is likely, then the Texas law and others like it stand. If that happens it opens the door for reactionary legislators to pass similar laws and savage any clinics left in their states.

WAR, TERRORISM DESTROY WOMEN’S LIVES

Women’s lives, worldwide, have gotten worse. International Women’s Day 2016, March 8, which will occur after this issue has gone to press, may well be one where women will, by necessity, be demanding an end to violence, rape, war, trafficking and murder, and will be fighting for freedom and a new society.

Terrorism and war have created some of the most brutally inhuman conditions women are now facing.

In **South Sudan**, war between the government and opposition forces run by the former vice president targets women and children for what has been described as an “unprecedented level” of violence. The UN charges that it amounts to war crimes and crimes against humanity. It includes mass rape and murder, being burned alive after rape and torture, and children and women being kidnapped. It is estimated that up to 15,000 child soldiers are being used by both sides.

ISIS has helped turn **Syria** into a killing field. They also practically wiped out the Yazidi people in **Iraq**. Mimicking the Nazis, ISIS created an organized method for murder and for turning women captives into sex slaves. It includes buses with covered windows to move women and girls from place to place, camps to hold them, a method to distribute them to ISIS fighters, laws about how the “slaves” should be treated and mass graves of women considered too old to be sexually useful. It is dehumanization on a massive, meticulously planned scale.

Boko Haram, an affiliate of ISIS, is purposely impregnating women captives in **Nigeria** and surrounding countries. The 300 schoolgirls kidnapped into sexual slavery in 2014 have never been found. Boko Haram recently destroyed the village of Dalori, killing hundreds, abducting women and children, burning the village and incinerating people alive. Their use of girls as bodies to carry bombs is a measure of their depravity and their view of girls and women as dispensable things. In Nigeria as in Syria, Iraq, etc., women brutalized by the original rape are often rejected by family and friends if they are lucky enough to return home.

Thousands of women with their children are running for their lives from **Central America**—including 66,000 children in 2014. They are fleeing attacks by gangs, rape, killings, forced gang recruitment of their children and extortion. They also run from abusive partners and husbands who rape and beat them, sometimes almost to death.² The trip north includes the danger of rape, beatings, abandonment and death at the hands of those paid to guide them. In the U.S. they are often brutalized again, by the U.S. government, which locks them into detention centers—prisons run for profit—with no activities and food so terrible that their children lose weight and sicken. Women have attempted suicide in such places as well as staging a hunger strike at the Karnes immigration detention center. Rather than improving conditions, these private prisons try to rename themselves “childcare centers.” Women immigrants detained at Yuba County Jail staged a hunger strike, and women citizens in criminal custody in the jail joined the strike in solidarity with them.

Women of the world are struggling for a safe life with dignity—whether in Syria or **Yemen** suffering wars that are aimed at killing civilians (see p. 11), or in the refugee camps in countries such as **Jordan** and **Turkey** being sold off to men decades older, who use them for a month or two and then abandon them.

In **El Salvador**, **Brazil**, and **Colombia**, women are exposed to the Zika virus epidemic that likely causes birth defects and yet abortion and birth control are difficult to obtain or illegal.

WOMEN FIGHTING BACK

In some of the most oppressive of occupations, despite seemingly impossible organizing opportunities, women have made remarkable progress. One of those occupations is domestic workers. As we wrote last year at this time about women in Lebanon: “[D]omestic workers—mostly women from other countries, including Nepal, Sri Lanka, Philippines, Madagascar and Ethiopia—have organized themselves into a union two years in the making despite threats of violence from the Lebanese government. Such a union is unprecedented in the Arab world. The Minister of Labor tried to prevent their founding conference, directly threatening the organizers as well as saying the police would attack the conference. The workers held it anyway. Two hundred made it to the founding meeting.” (See “From Turkey to USA, women as force & reason fight inhumanity,” March-April 2015 *News & Letters*.)

Since then, domestic workers in many countries have continued the fight. In **Colombia** and

Uruguay women were helped by international agitation translated into laws and an International Labor Organization treaty which set standards for domestic workers. Now the struggle on the ground is moving towards enforcement since the standards are routinely ignored. Black Colombian woman domestic worker and union organizer Maria Roa said as much recently: “*We are invisible; it’s as though we don’t exist.*” Determined to show the world she and others do exist, she helped begin a social media campaign, “Let’s Talk about Domestic Workers.” In Uruguay domestic workers forced the government to raise their minimum wage.

Domestic workers in **Mexico**, like their sisters in Lebanon, have formed a union that was 15 years in the making, SINACTTRAHO. The new union—60 women strong—hopes someday to represent the two million domestic workers in Mexico. Their reach already goes beyond Mexico City, as workers from Colima, Chiapas, Puebla, Guerrero, as well as other areas took part in organizing. Isidra, one of the domestic workers who worked with the union, said, “*I am very excited for today because it is a historical victory for the domestic workers in Mexico. From now on, we will have rights and no one will be able to take them away from us. Our rights will be respected, no more low salaries and disrespectful treatment. Our work is valuable.*”³

Uganda’s recent ban on women going to Saudi Arabia to work as maids shows how intractable the problem is. An audio recording where young Ugandan women domestic workers in Saudi Arabia spoke of being tortured went viral, prompting the ban. A Human Rights Watch researcher explained some of the torture: women who “*didn’t earn salaries for up to two to three years...couldn’t afford to leave...Some were physically abused or sexually harassed. Some worked up to 20 hours a day with no rest or day off. Others were subject to food deprivation.*” The memo of understanding signed with Saudi Arabia last year that included worker protections was never enforced.⁴ Whatever is happening on the international and national level will only mean something when the women domestic workers organize themselves. It is they who will make sure that laws on the books are translated into action on the job.

BLACK WOMEN AS REASON OF REVOLUTION

In the U.S. too, it is the self-organization of Black Lives Matter and Trust Black Women Partnership that can make a difference in the struggle for women’s bodies and lives. Whether groups like NARAL or the National Organization for Women know it or not, this new development between the two is hugely important and not only because it creates a relationship between the struggle for reproductive justice and a movement of Black people that is challenging racism—the Achilles heel of American civilization. It is because what Black Lives Matter has established is a revolutionary movement founded by women, Queers and Transgender and disabled people who have refused to be erased as leaders of a movement, have refused to succumb to the appeal of “leaderlessness,” who insist on being who and



Photo by Clinic Vest Project
Clinic escorts at the Pink House, the only abortion clinic left in Mississippi.

what they are and are breaking new ground in the long struggle for freedom in the U.S. This alliance is just the latest step and it greatly deepens both movements.

Implicit in this new alliance of Trust Black Women Partnership and Black Lives Matter is that what they are fighting for cannot be realized under our present capitalist, racist, sexist, homophobic, anti-trans system, a system which feeds on racism, sexism and hatred and which, by its very nature, has an anti-human direction. What needs to be made explicit is that the call “for the human right of every Black person, regardless of their gender identity or expression, to end a pregnancy, continue a pregnancy, build a family, raise children with health, dignity, and freedom from violence,” is a call for a deep and total revolution that has the power and vision to transform all human relationships.

1. “Home Abortions Rise After Texas Law Closes Clinics,” by Reuters, Nov. 18, 2015, <http://www.nbcnews.com/health/womens-health/home-abortions-rise-after-texas-law-closes-clinics-n465451>
2. “Refugee crisis grows in Latin America as women ‘run for their lives,’” Reuters, Oct. 28, 2015.
3. “First-Ever Domestic Workers Union Launched in Mexico,” by Tula Connell, Sept. 11, 2015, <http://www.solidarity-center.org/first-ever-domestic-workers-union-launched-in-mexico/#sthash.lQdyYQiC.ZKju4Y4i.dpuf>
4. “Uganda bans maids from working in Saudi Arabia,” by Brenna Dalorph, Jan. 27, 2016, Women Living Under Muslim Laws, <http://www.wluml.org/zh-hant/node/9916>

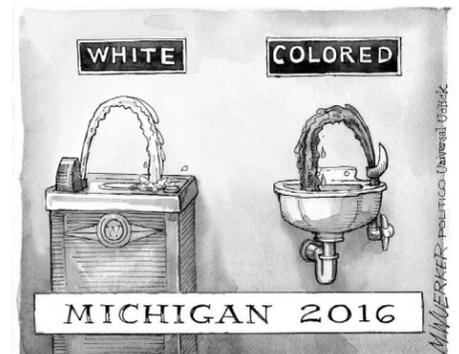
The anguish in Flint

continued from p. 1

2014 and 45 in 2015, with ten deaths. In the previous four years, 2010 through 2013, there were only four to 13 cases per year.

In February 2015 a Flint resident told the Environmental Protection Agency of tests showing elevated levels of lead in her water and in the blood of one of her children. The Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) blamed that on the woman’s plumbing. The EPA discovered that her plumbing was actually plastic, but when the lead service line between the water main and her house was replaced, lead levels dropped.

A Virginia Tech team that had done this first test sent 300 kits to people in Flint and received 252 back.



Forty percent had lead levels above 5 parts per billion (ppb), the maximum acceptable level. Several exceeded 100 ppb and one after 45 seconds of flushing had 1,000 ppb! The MDEQ claimed much lower lead levels in its own sampling. The Virginia Tech team concluded that it was not possible to safely use Flint River water, because it was far too corrosive to treat safely.

MDEQ DRAGGED ITS FEET

Dr. Mona Hanna-Attisha, a pediatrician and an Iraqi immigrant who would have been barred from the U.S. if Trump were president, noticed elevated lead levels in children in areas of Flint. In late August 2015, she heard the Virginia Tech results and subsequently issued a report comparing lead levels in Flint children in 2013 and in 2015. She found an alarming increase from 2.1% elevated lead levels in the 2013 period to 4.0% in the 2015 period, and in some areas an increase to 6.3%.

The MDEQ tried to discredit her. A few months later, they admitted she was right. In December 2015, a task force appointed by the governor informed him that the MDEQ had shown “scorn and derision” toward people criticizing the quality of water in Flint.

Flint finally switched back to the Detroit water system in October 2015. Although the Flint River water was flushed out in a few weeks, the effects of corroding pipes and fixtures remain. Nothing short of a total replacement of lead pipes, lead solder and fixtures containing lead will rid the water of lead, and it would be at a much greater cost than what was saved by using Flint River water.

Will what happened in Flint cause those in power to look closely at money-saving schemes and their potential for danger and death? The more general problem is capitalist neoliberalism trying to rescue falling rates of profit by imposing austerity on people who are considered weak and vulnerable.

—Dan B.

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Hospitals, children bombed: war zone care a nightmare

A Yemeni doctor speaks

'Share the pain I feel'

Taiz, Yemen—Pardon me, I know this story will make you so sad. But you have to share the pain I feel. The right leg of the little girl in the picture, Abrar, had been cut off by Houthis, a month ago. Since then she has cried because she couldn't go to school. That wasn't all. Now she is in the hospital because of shrapnel from a shell fired by the Houthis and Saleh's militia in the Addahy neighborhood of Taiz.



Our hospital has many miserable stories besides Abrar's. In the third bed, first room in the bone section there is a bus driver whose

dream was to become a footballer. Now his leg is hanging without a joint. His ambition reminded me of Karlos Baka, a bus driver who became a skilled footballer. Unfortunately, Mohammed's dream won't come true. He became disabled instead.

On the fifth bed in the neurology section there is a mathematics teacher. He works in his grocery store part-time in the afternoon. The war damaged his store and a fragment from a shell fired by the Houthis and Saleh's militia smashed his head.

Another man called Abu Arkan misses his little son and his second son, Arkan, had his leg cut off by a shell fragment. But that wasn't enough for the Houthis. They took his bike too, which was his only source of income. He sold his refrigerator to get medicine for his sons. I couldn't contact him for a long time. I was told he sold his phone to get medicine and food. I'm too sad and feel helpless.

We aren't used to telling the truth. We usually say that we are good, whereas the fact is that we are getting killed. We tell the patients that they are good, in spite of the fact that we know that they have no real chance to live.

Even Freddie Quell, the survivor of World War II in the film *The Master*, in spite of the spiritual ruin and the trouble he lived through during the war, would feel a deep sorrow for our situation. He would offer us help. He would smuggle some ampoules that aren't available in Taiz in his underwear.

Actually, I'm not able to bear this pain. Only the shroud seller will ignore this misery. Even Kafka, the best reader of the miserable details of daily life, would

Detroit schools need new ideas, political will

Detroit, Mich.—Mass teacher "sick-outs" and "walk-ins"—with strong parent support—have rendered a laughingstock of Detroit Public Schools' (DPS) Emergency Manager Darnell Early, who, before he abruptly resigned in February, claimed "a few radical teachers" were depriving students of education. That lie crumbled to dust as 88 of 97 schools were closed by sickouts in January. Early's lie that lost school days denied students their education was in strange contrast to the one-day suspensions he gave students who walked out to support their teachers!

In the aftermath, the Detroit Buildings and Safety Department suddenly discovered its responsibilities for the safety of school buildings. For the first time it has obtained consent agreements with the school administration to make repairs.

Meanwhile the state scrambles to "fix" DPS, which could go broke in April. Damage caused by the state, corrupt local school officials, and private capital's assault on teachers' unions may doom public education in Detroit. DPS, run by the state since 1999, struggles with decaying buildings, a teacher shortage, a hemorrhaging student population, increasingly massive debt, the lowest test scores in the country and a union consumed by internal strife.

Most school "reform" talk is about financing and governance. DPS debt skyrocketed to \$515 million under state control, yet the latest assault from the Republican legislature gives a free hand to charter schools while requiring eight more years of state mismanagement before Detroit residents could elect and empower our own school board! While the state wrangles over funding, 40% of the per-pupil aid in Detroit goes for debt service.

As for governance, all players are entrenched in

be exhausted by this horrific situation we are living. Gregor, a character in Kafka's *Metamorphosis*, would feel compassion for us. And he would take part as a volunteer.

I'm frustrated. Is there anyone who can give me a glimmer of hope? Enough, enough. Pardon me. I'm not able to talk to anyone. I'll stay and talk to myself.

—Ahmed Domainy, a Yemeni doctor
Translated by Khaled Al-Hamdani



U.S. spawns atrocities

In the early morning of Oct. 3, 2015, a Doctors Without Borders trauma center in Kunduz, Afghanistan, was bombarded by a U.S. Air Force gunship for over a half hour. Four days prior, hospital staff had shared its GPS coordinates with U.S. authorities. In the words of Doctors Without Borders head of programs, Heman Nagarathnam:

"The bombs hit and then we heard the plane circle round. There was a pause, and then more bombs hit. This happened again and again. When I made it out from the office, the main hospital building was engulfed in flames. Those people that could had moved quickly to the building's two bunkers to seek safety. But patients who were unable to escape burned to death as they lay in their beds."

On Jan. 11 Saudi Arabia's air force bombed a hospital in Yemen, killing five people and injuring ten. Doctors Without Borders said it was the third attack on one of its health facilities in Yemen in recent months.

On Feb. 15, a Doctors Without Borders-supported hospital in northern Syria took a direct hit that destroyed the three-story building, killing 25 people. Three days later, a Syrian military plane dropped a barrel bomb on another Doctors Without Borders-supported hospital near Damascus. A staff member lamented:

"I don't know how a pilot presses the button to bomb a hospital. It's weird. How does he sleep? How does he eat? And then he comes back and bombs the people who are trying to help the victims. Wherever I went, there was bombing."

Each action mentioned is a rancid war crime, but not an uncommon one. Doctors Without Borders' hospitals are not the only hospitals attacked, yet their hospitals are sometimes the only ones in a region, which will, as a policy, treat any injured person, including combatants regardless of what side they are on. This is at odds with government policy in Syria, Egypt, Bahrain, etc., countries that brutally forbid medical staff from providing treatment to opposition fighters and/or protesters.

It was reported by NBC that according to cockpit recordings, the pilots involved in the Kunduz attack had second-guessed the legality of the strike. Eventually, they decided to follow orders, but in an alternate U.S. society where there is grassroots support for pilots resisting illegal actions the result might have been different. It is up to the people of the U.S. to construct such a society and to, in a variety of ways, start hitting the brakes on U.S. misconduct.

their own demands. The elected school board, powerless under emergency management, rightly demands a return of their authority, noting that only poor Black districts are under state control. Detroit's white Mayor Duggan wants an elected school board, but pushes for an appointed Detroit Education Commission (DEC) with powers to close, open and locate schools, and with some regulation over charters. The charter operators want no control and no regulation (the status quo, because regulation of charters is not enforced). The Coalition for the Future of Detroit Schoolchildren, dominated by non-profits that would benefit from privatization, wants local control but an appointed DEC.

What we hear little about is a new mindset that would broaden the concept of education, and could improve Detroit education now. There are DPS schools that develop the whole child, not just test scores. These schools prioritize relationships with parents and community members. They hold high standards of critical thinking and appropriate behavior and help students to achieve them. They provide hands-on, experiential learning. They reject both the 20th century model that schools exist apart from their communities, and the 21st century emphasis on test scores.

Because Detroit is now a hodgepodge of school types, we need coordination, spacing and regulation of all Detroit schools, but not another appointed layer of bureaucracy. The elected school board should be governing DPS, but DPS serves fewer than half of Detroit students. Where are the ideas and political will to democratically establish a corruption-free, high-quality education system?

— Susan Van Gelder

In the same way, the crimes of less powerful states such as Syria and Saudi Arabia could also be slowed or stopped. Supposing the U.S. military legitimately held the relative moral high ground, neither of these countries would want to act so brazenly as to provoke the U.S. to actually invade or to cut off military support. Yet, as long as the brazen acts in question mirror what the U.S. has already done in Afghanistan or elsewhere, the danger of receiving said consequences is significantly diminished. By denying criminal options to their own country's military, the people of the U.S. would thereby lessen the range of options available to any other military.

In the case of a tyrannical regime, restricting the set of survival options available to the government might ripen the conditions wherein successful revolution is possible.

—Buddy Bell

YOUTH IN ACTION

by Natalia Spiegel

Campus protests against racism continue:

- After making a statement perceived as racist concerning students not fitting into a mold at **Claremont McKenna College** in California, the Dean of Students, Mary Spellman, resigned.
- Thomas Rochon, president of **Ithaca College**, where overt campus racism led to calls for his resignation, declared that he would continue to be president until 2017. Student protesters there say this is unacceptable.
- Two dormitories named after slaveholders at **Georgetown University** in Washington, D.C., were renamed by the university administration. Students are still demanding an Afro-American endowment and the recruitment of more Black professors.
- At the **University of Maryland**, the stadium, which was named after arch-segregationist Curley Byrd, was renamed Maryland Stadium.
- **Amherst University**, named after a British commander who gave smallpox-infected blankets to Native Americans, will retain that name, but will drop Lord Amherst as a symbol and mascot of the college.
- The faculty at **Brown University** voted to rename Oct. 12 Indigenous Peoples Day. As one student put it, "We don't celebrate genocide."

* * *



Incoming and outgoing Wits Student Representative Council Presidents Ulo and Shaera address the students and advocate for Fees-Must-Fall.

At the University of Witwatersrand in South Africa, student activists physically blocked registration for the new semester, noting that their demand that student fees must fall had not been granted by the government, and that a freeze on fees did not rule out future fee increases. Students are also protesting the outsourcing of campus jobs and are calling for the "decolonialization" of academic life, to make universities more inclusive to poor and working class students. The FeesMustFall movement is demanding the elimination of all registration fees so that poor students can also go to college.

* * *

On Feb. 1 students protesting University of Georgia's policy to ban undocumented students were arrested after they refused to leave the administration building. Undocumented youth are banned from being students and denied in-state tuition, although students from neighboring states are given that special tuition privilege. The student occupation was also a reaction to a Georgia Supreme Court ruling that the University could not be sued by the students, citing the legal justification of "sovereign immunity" (citizens cannot sue state governments).

* * *

Although student protesters at the University of Missouri who have been in the vanguard of fighting campus racism have won significant victories, especially the resignation of racist university officials, on Feb. 4-5 they tried to have a dialogue with the university's Board of Curators (Regents) and continued to demand that the university do more to eradicate racism. At the Curators meeting, Black students once again presented their demands, including more Black faculty members. The Curators and other university administrators said they were committed to act, but no specific new initiatives were announced.

WORLD IN VIEW

PM Modi's retrogressive vision for India

by Gerry Emmett

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's authoritarian capitalist rule extended in February to harsh attacks on campus free speech. Students from Modi's right-wing Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) complained about a demonstration at Jawaharlal Nehru University in Delhi. The president of the student union, Kanhaiya Kumar, was arrested along with other students and charged, on the basis of laws dating back to British colonialism, with making "anti-India" statements.

The demonstration marked the anniversary of the execution of Afzal Guru, a Kashmiri convicted of participation in a 2001 attack on India's Parliament. Some have questioned his trial and execution. But the decades-long dispute between India and Pakistan over Kashmir gave the BJP an excuse to inflame anti-Muslim prejudice as fuel against all forms of dissent. Muslims, Dalits, Leftists, secular Indians, and Indigenous peoples are often singled out as enemies in the eyes of Modi's Hindu fundamentalist supporters.

These events followed what many termed the "institutional murder" of Dalit Ph.D. student Rohith Vemula, who died by suicide after having been excluded from Hyderabad Central University for alleged "anti-India" protests.

BJP'S ATTACK ON HISTORY

Anti-Muslim attacks are typical of Modi. As Chief Minister of Gujarat he presided during the 2002 pogrom in which over 2,000 Muslims were killed and thousands more injured by Hindu mobs. The BJP defines India

UAE's two-tier society

On Feb. 9, President Barack Obama spoke via satellite to over 3,000 government and business representatives from 125 countries. They were meeting for the 4th World Government Summit in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, to discuss "Shaping Future Governments." Yet the UAE, a Gulf state ally of the U.S. and Saudi Arabia, is the perfect model of a two-tier society.

MORE IMMIGRANTS THAN CITIZENS

In a population of 9.2 million people, only 1.4 million are citizens. The rest are immigrants: over a million Indians, over a million Pakistanis, along with hundreds of thousands of Bangladeshis, Egyptians, Syrians, Palestinians, Iraqis, and smaller numbers from dozens of other countries. These are the people who produce oil and gas wealth, and built the 163-story Burj Khalifa, the world's tallest building.

Immigrants have few rights as workers. They can be deported if they strike. Unions are illegal. There is no right to collective bargaining. UAE citizens are employed in government jobs, or state-owned enterprises like property development and Emirates airline.

Obama and others expressed fine sentiments at the Summit. Beneath the rhetoric lay the reality of UAE and Gulf state support for Egypt's brutal police state; the Saudi-led intervention in Yemen which has killed thousands of civilians; and silence on Russia's state terrorist bombing of Syria, made worse by Saudi/UAE ally Bahrain's open courting of Putin. All was underscored by the Saudi-led "Thunder of the North," the largest military exercise held in the region, involving 20 countries.

The "future" on offer promises more of the same.

—G.E.

as strictly Hindu, the idea of "Hindutva," and Muslims (176 million Indians) and others are explicitly excluded from that historic identity.

Universities, schools, and culture are becoming battlegrounds. Some textbooks printed in Gujarat have claimed that aeronautics was begun in ancient times by the god Ram who flew from Sri Lanka to India in a swan-shaped chariot of flowers. Modi himself has made similar claims. In 2014 he lectured doctors in Mumbai: "We worship Lord Ganesha. There must have been some plastic surgeon at that time who got an elephant's head on the body of a human being and began the prac-

tice of plastic surgery."

Consider also Modi's appointment of the obscure Hindutva advocate Y Sudershan Rao as Chairman of the Indian Council of Historical Research. Rao decries standard research methods as "Marxist," and has declared that ancient history can be reconstructed accurately through study of the Hindu scriptures.

Many Indians are troubled, and disgusted, by this merger of religion and taxpayer-funded public education. The gross misrepresentation and vulgarization of ancient texts is a crime in itself.

A VERY MODERN FUNDAMENTALISM

Despite retrogressive religious views, Modi has eyes set on the future. He makes wide use of social media, with a Twitter following second only to Barack Obama's. He sees his ideology as representing the growing Indian capitalist class with an emphasis on high tech. They have profited by economic growth, unlike hundreds of millions who languish in poverty.

Modi's neoliberal economic policies, mixed with some populist promises like (so far undelivered) new housing for the poor, are key to understanding his aims. The vision of ancient India as a high tech land where exalted gods rule more or less benevolently over humans that may petition their favor, is also an accurate idea of Modi's vision for India's future. His use of holography to appear at simultaneous BJP rallies in different cities in 2014 was a would-be god's gesture.

This vision doesn't bode well for workers, women, Muslims, Dalits, or other minorities. Writer Pratap Bhanu Mehta summed it up in writing about the current attack on students: "The crackdown...was insidious in its remarkable ability to make ignorance the flaming torchbearer of nationalism. The government does not want to just crush dissent; it wants to crush thinking, as its repeated assaults on universities demonstrate" (*The Indian Express*, Feb. 16, 2016).

For a Free Syria!



Chicago—On Feb. 21, members of the Syrian community and activists demonstrated in opposition to Russian and Syrian regime bombing, and echoed the call of Syrian civil society organizations for a no-fly zone. The rally was organized by the Antiwar Committee in Solidarity with the Struggle for Selfdetermination. More rallies are planned here in support of the Syrian revolution.

Pope Francis in Mexico: pity and contradiction

Mexico City—Pope Francis's trip to Mexico drew audiences of hundreds of thousands. What was the substance of his visit?

The Pope has a partial, limited, critical view of certain transgressions of class-based industrial capitalism. He issued an important encyclical on climate change before his trip.

REVOLUTIONARIES, NOT 'VICTIMS'

In celebrating mass among Indigenous people in Chiapas, speaking to youth in Morelia, addressing the question of immigrants and refugees at the border with the U.S. in Ciudad Juarez—Francis called attention to their plight, to discrimination, exclusion, poverty, the threat of drug traffickers. He was calling attention to these groups as victims.

Seeing these groups of people primarily as victims shows the limitation of the Pope's view. Many of them see themselves, rather, as social subjects demanding social transformation. Indigenous peoples are seeking autonomy, control of their lives and lands. The Yaqui in the North, the Triqui in Oaxaca in the West, those under the umbrella of Zapatismo in the South—all refuse victimization.

Or take youth, and the activity of the Normalista rural school students. Since the disappearance and

probable murder of 43 students in Ayotzinapa in 2014, they have protested, demanding answers. Yet the Pope couldn't find the time to meet with perhaps the most active social subjects in Mexico, the mothers and fathers of the disappeared students. Was it because they don't see themselves as victims, but have been the crucial dimension in critiquing President Peña Nieto's failure to solve the crime? The Pope found time to see Peña Nieto, of course.

Pope Francis's prayer at the vulgar barriers the U.S. has erected along the border to keep out refugees fleeing violence and economic deprivation was an important symbolic act. But again, does he see the refugees from Mexico and Central America, and millions more around the world, as only victims, and not as human subjects seeking dignity and self-determination?

GRAVE HUMAN RIGHTS CONTRADICTION

Finally, in some areas of human rights, the Pope along with the Catholic Church as an institution is not only silent, but in opposition. The most prominent is the question of abortion, a right that has only recently and in a limited manner been recognized in Mexico. It is a right denied women in much of Latin America, where the Pope comes from. The result: vast numbers of women have died from thousands of illegal abortions. What about *their* human rights? —Eugene Walker

NEWS AND LETTERS COMMITTEES

Who We Are And What We Stand For

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

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

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

The articulation of the relationship be-

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

This body of ideas challenges all those desiring freedom to transcend the limitations of post-Marx Marxism. In light of the crises of our nuclear-armed world, climate change, and failed

revolutions, it becomes imperative not only to reject what is, but to further work out the revolutionary Humanist future inherent in the present. The recreation of Marx's philosophy as Marxist-Humanism is recorded in Dunayevskaya's archives, *The Raya Dunayevskaya Collection—Marxist-Humanism: A Half-Century of Its World Development*, deposited at Wayne State University in Detroit and available to all.

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

We participate in all class and freedom struggles, nationally and internationally. As our Constitution states: "It is our aim...to promote the firmest unity among workers, Blacks and other minorities, women, youth and those intellectuals who have broken with the ruling bureaucracy of both capital and labor." We do not separate mass activities from the activity of thinking. Send for a free copy of the *Constitution of News and Letters Committees* or see it on our website: www.newsandletters.org.